

FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 20 March 2019

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Prioritisation of Road and Pavement Repairs

1) **To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)**
From Councillor Barry Mugglestone

Given the Administration's policy of dealing with the worst roads and pavements first, would the Cabinet Member precisely confirm the process as to how the list of roads and pavements are arrived at by the Horizon system?

Answer

Horizons is the Council's system which aids the prioritisation of highway maintenance schemes.

As condition is the primary driver when determining the programme of remedial works, UKPMS (United Kingdom Pavement Management System) survey data is collected by specialist survey vehicles and through walked and driven visual inspections. This is in accordance with industry best practice.

To enable Horizons to come up with a meaningful works plan all current resurfacing treatment types that are carried out in Havering are included within the system, together with an approximate cost rate. Not all treatments are suitable for all classifications of roads and footways, so a set of rules has been written within Horizons to make the treatment selection process appropriate.

Horizons then assesses the worst condition highways, suggests the most appropriate treatment and calculates a cost for repair. A report is produced listing the locations for repair in priority order.

This list is then checked by suitably qualified and experienced engineers and consideration given to the feedback from residents, ward members and area liaison officers.

Finally the works are amalgamated into sensible work packages and then compared to all other works in the Borough, for example utility works, to ensure there are no conflicts.

A supplementary question asked for details of the Capital and ongoing costs of the Horizons system. The Cabinet member indicated that he would provide these to Councillor Mugglestone.

Newtons Primary use of Leisure Facilities

2) To the Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Families (Councillor Robert Benham)

From Councillor Natasha Summers

The Head Teacher of Newtons Primary School has told the Council that irrespective of the decision on Chafford Sports Complex, her pupils deserved to use the brand new facilities at Sapphire “as the school was being offered the opportunity”.

Please explain what “as the school was being offered the opportunity” means and does it involve Council support regarding travel, expenses and funding to relocate from Chafford to Sapphire?

Answers

Newtons Primary School were offered the opportunity to reserve a regular weekly spot at Sapphire so they would be able to continue swimming lessons for their pupils should the decision be taken for the Council to withdraw from the management of Chafford Sports Complex. The Head Teacher decided they would take up that offer, but then decided to start using Sapphire from January irrespective of any decision being taken on Chafford Sports Complex.

The costs to the school remained the same, as they already hire a coach to transport pupils to Chafford Sports Complex so the coach now drives them to Sapphire rather than Chafford. The Council are not contributing any costs towards Newtons Primary School using Sapphire.

CCTV in the Borough

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

From Councillor Denis O’Flynn

Will the Lead Member set out her proposals for extending and improving CCTV in the Borough?

Answer

An independent review was commissioned into Havering Council’s CCTV system in 2017, which highlighted that much of the CCTV infrastructure for both Housing and within town centres is over 10 years old, and in some areas beyond economical repair. The Council has committed £250,000 in capital investment for the new financial year and prioritised the investment in the short-term for purchase of wireless mobile cameras.

Wireless mobile CCTV can be used anywhere. Mobile cameras can be quickly set up on buildings or street lamps wherever there is access to electrical power. This will enhance enforcement capability and increase the council and police’s

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ability to respond quickly to issues such as violent crime, antisocial behaviour and fly-tipping.

Deployment will be strictly prioritised on an intelligence-led basis at the direction and oversight of the Tasking Enforcement Group.

A wider review, in line with the Havering's CCTV Strategy will be undertaken over the next 12 months in consultation with the Council's current contractor on upgrading and modernising the existing system to maximise the life of CCTV and continue to assist the reduction of crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime in Havering.

A supplementary question asked if money on CCTV would be better spent elsewhere given that cameras would have had very little effect on the recent murder incident in Harold Hill. The Cabinet Member stated in response that the decision on where wireless CCTV cameras were located was led by the intelligence that was available.

Legal Action in respect of Travellers

**4) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Martin Goode**

Last year, we had traveller incursions on council land all over Harold Hill, Harold Wood and other parts of Havering. Could the Cabinet Member confirm the progress of the Legal Action that the Council was taking last year and what actions are being proposed to prevent this from happening again in the coming months of Spring and Summer when it seems to be the peak period for travellers?

Answer

The Council at present is reviewing its position and working on obtaining key evidence for a case in respect of unlawful encampments within London Borough of Havering. Action under The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1988 may be considered if further encampments take place within the Borough as has been the case previously.

A further response will be provided to all members following this meeting giving further detail which is exempt from publication.

Void Properties

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

Would the Cabinet Member confirm what steps are taken to ensure that Council properties that are re-let after becoming void are fit for purpose?

Answer

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When a property becomes void, a survey is carried out by a Council surveyor and a specification is prepared detailing any works required to bring the property up to Havering's Void Lettable Standard. The works are then carried out and, on completion, the surveyor will re-inspect the property to ensure the works have been completed in accordance with the specification and to the required quality. This is to confirm that the Lettable Standard has been achieved and is fit for purpose. The property will then be returned for re-letting.

A void inspection allows a decision to be made on whether a property meets the Council's lettable standard. The fit to occupy standard requires a property to meet a number of criteria including having drinkable water, acceptable sanitary ware, clear food preparation surfaces, no infestation, being clear of rubbish, swept out and washed down. A welcome pack is also provided to new tenants.

A supplementary question asked if inspections of void properties were deteriorating in quality. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that he was happy to look into this specific case if details could be provided by Councillor Nunn as returned properties had to be of the highest order. Havering had some of the best void turnaround performance in the country.

Traveller Sites in Noak Hill

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

Has the Council Leader sought an explanation for the police raid on traveller sites in Noak Hill, including who was in charge, what forces and how many police were involved, what was it all about, what was the outcome and will he be sharing that information with Members?

Answer

The raid carried out on 6th was a Metropolitan Police operation and the Police are not answerable to the Leader of the Council.

The Council was made aware of the raid so that we could provide support for residents who were displaced – If members wish to discuss this further then the Crime and Disorder sub-committee is the correct forum for this to be initiated.

A supplementary question asked if the Leader of the Council would seek from the Police an explanation for the raid. In response, the Leader of the Council stated that the operation had been of interest to all members of the Council and that requests such as this should be referred to the Crime and Disorder Sub-Committee.

Domestic Violence

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

Are Council Housing Officers trained to identify victims of Domestic Violence?

Answer

Yes, we take this very seriously and we train our housing officers to recognise victims of domestic violence. There are a number of courses arranged each year to improve staff awareness and how to deal with complex situations. The training includes Domestic Abuse Procedures, Coercive and Controlling Behaviour and specific training for Domestic Violence Champions.

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member was aware of recent failures in domestic abuse cases such as not logging cases properly. The Cabinet Member responded that a domestic violence response was about the coordination of expertise and specific teams were available such as anti-social behaviour teams in Housing. There was also a Housing MASH link officer who dealt with safeguarding concerns and housing management was represented across multi-agency groups.

Lease arrangements for Council Held Properties

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

At January Council, Cllr Mugglestone asked the Leader of the Council to confirm that all council owned properties that are occupied by third parties all had current and up to date leases in place. The response was that the information could not be provided in public because of commercial sensitivity. I challenged this response on the night and I have since been advised that the response provided to the Leader was indeed incorrect. Would the Leader of the Council advise why he did not challenge the initial response provided by officers in the same way that I did?

Answer

As you know, officers have apologised to me and also to Councillor Mugglestone and to you Councillor Morgon for giving incorrect advice at the last Council meeting.

A few days before the last Council meeting, officers provided me with a draft written response that addressed the question in relation to Council owned properties that are occupied by third parties and whether they all had current and up to date leases in place. However, on the night a different written answer was given to me that said that the information could not be provided in public because of commercial sensitivity.

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It is rare for officer advice to be incorrect and as you should be fully aware it is not possible to stop proceedings for the opportunity to query with officers during the Full Council meeting, the advice provided.

As is usually this case, I relied on the advice given to me by officers just prior to the meeting, but on this occasion it was later found to be incorrect.

I hope you accept this apology and we can now move on.

A supplementary question asked why the Leader of the Council had not challenged officer advice. The Leader of the Council responded that the relevant answer had been e-mailed to all Members and he would ensure that these circumstances would not happen again.

Veolia Grant Funding

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

Please provide details of actual and promissory Veolia grant funding to Havering groups and schemes over the last 12 months and in particular details of the £50,000 payment to Queens Theatre mentioned by the Council Leader during the budget meeting.

Answer

Since funding became available from Veolia Havering Riverside Maintenance Trust, 87 Successful applications have been submitted.

From October 2017 to February 2019, 50 of these bids are from the Council, that total £1,824,676 and 37 are external bids which total £1,331,390.

This makes a combined total of £3,156,066 actual and promissory Veolia grant funding to Havering groups.

Funding applications from ("the Trust") was originally established to provide an endowment to enable long term funding to ensure aftercare of the restored Rainham landfill as public open space, as part of Rainham Wildspace.

Councillor Tucker has requested information regarding an application for The Queens Theatre. This application was originally made in May 18 and was subsequently reviewed and agreed at the February Board

The application was made by The Queens Theatre, Relationships Officer and this project was awarded £50k. The application is appended to this report.

A supplementary question asked if the Leader of the Council agreed that the health of people in the south of the borough was as important as that of the rest of Havering and that the Chafford swimming pool should therefore remain open. The Leader of the Council responded that the Administration was committed to delivering a new sports centre for the south of the borough. The Chafford

complex was not owned by the Council and required significant capital and revenue investment. A report to Cabinet regarding the new sports centre was due to be tabled later this year.

“Living in Havering” Magazine

**10) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Keith Darvill**

What arrangements are in place to ensure each publication of Living in Havering complies with the Parliaments code of recommended practice on Local Authority Publications?

Answer

Living in Havering is an efficient, effective and well-received way of keeping residents in-touch and involved in what the council is doing. Residents in the borough, when surveyed by the Local Government Association, were 10% more likely to say their council keeps residents informed than the national average. More residents in that survey said that *Living in Havering* is their main way of hearing from the Council than any other means of communication.

The officer team within the communications department prepares copy and layout for each issue of the publication, which the Chief Executive signs off.

The publication meets the principles set out in the MCHLG Code of Recommended Practice and the frequency of publication is right for the Borough given the alternative in raising awareness of issues as diverse as homelessness, healthy living and fostering would be prohibitively high advertising spend.

A supplementary question asked if the Leader was certain that *Living in Havering* satisfied the code requirements re objectiveness and even-handedness. The Leader responded that he was happy to look at specific examples if Councillor Darvill felt this was not the case.

Dedicated Ward Officers

**11) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Reg Whitney**

This Council was advised that Dedicated Ward Officers (DWO) would only be taken out of their wards in very rare circumstances. Would the Cabinet Member advise why this Administration has allowed the regular abstraction of DWO's from their wards and explain how this keeps Havering safe?

Answer

As I am sure that Cllr. Whitney should be aware, operational policing matters are the responsibility of the Metropolitan police. Permission to make changes to Dedicated Ward Officers (DWO) deployment is not required from this

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administration/or Council. The Council has no influence on how DWO's are deployed in Havering, to state otherwise is misleading.

DWO abstraction levels are monitored and reviewed by the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a Quarterly basis, and concerns can be raised with the Borough Commander at this forum and through the appropriate channels.

However, the location of the DWOs will be influenced by current policing needs, which by its very nature is often unpredictable and subject to change.

A supplementary question asked if the local policing system was working. The Leader of the Council responded that tri-borough police arrangements were decided by the Metropolitan Police and MOPAC and were not the responsibility of the Council. The crime and disorder sub-committee could be asked to establish a topic group looking at the abstraction of DWOs away from Havering.

Knife Crime in the Borough

- 12) **To the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Safety (Councillor Viddy Persaud)**
From Councillor Jan Sargent

In light of the recent stabbing in Harold Hill in which a beautiful young soul lost her life.

Can you please explain how the Administration will be working with the Police, Ward Members, Senior officers and the Community in addressing the youth knife crime epidemic which has now reached the front line of Havering.

Answer

Like all Members, I was deeply affected by the news of Jodie's murder. That a life so rich in potential should be callously taken away appalls us all and Jodie's family and friends are in our thoughts tonight.

I want to pay tribute to the police who have investigated the incident with pace and professionalism. Our police really are the best in the world. I also want to thank the Council officers who have supported Havering Sixth Form College in the aftermath of the incident.

As awful and tragic as this murder was, it is a dreadful symptom of a much wider issue and we have been working hand-in-hand with community safety partners to tackle violent crime and knife crime in our borough, including the preparation of a serious group violence and anti-knife crime strategy which is due to come to Cabinet in April.

Work already underway includes targeted engagement with young people and at front-line professionals from a range of services. Many of these interventions

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are frank, hard-hitting and are delivered alongside emergency services and those who specialise in talking with young people about these issues, including former gang members like Junior Smart from the highly respected St Giles Trust.

As part of the delivery of the strategy, the borough is developing an adolescent safeguarding hub which will be a multi-disciplinary team working across the partnership, to earlier identify and intervene with those children, young people and their families who are potentially susceptible to crime and exploitation. This means identifying and working with children as young as ten who, without intervention would be susceptible to peer pressure and criminal exploitation, in particular related to the drugs market.

At the same time the hub will work with those already victims of criminal exploitation such as used to sell drugs and going missing, potentially involved in 'county lines' activity. Many have prior trauma in their lives and the systemic practice model, working with families and their children, will be a factor in the work of the hub.

In October, the Council held an all member briefing, attended by 21 members, to provide members with an understanding of issues related to gang and knife crime. A further all member briefing is scheduled for April to discuss wider community safety concerns. We are also working on a crime summit with neighbouring boroughs, key partners and members of the local community later in the year.

Compensation for Personal Injury and Damage to Vehicles

**13) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Paul McGeary**

What is the total annual amount of compensation paid by the Council for the past three financial years arising from claims against the Borough as a result of personal injury and damage to vehicles caused by pot holes and poorly maintained surfaces of the Borough's footpaths and highways?

Answer

We know potholes and road repairs are a major concern for our residents. This is why we are investing £40 million over the next four years to improve our roads through resurfacing and fixing potholes.

However, due to the weather and heavy use, problems do arise. And this can lead to claims for compensation from drivers. Over the last three years we have paid out, on average, £200,000 in compensation claims which is exactly why we need this investment programme.

A supplementary question asked if the paving gaps Priory Park, Harold Hill caused by the hot summer weather could be prioritised. In response, the Cabinet Member explained that the first list of roads for the investment programme was currently being awaited. The Cabinet Member was happy to

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meet with ward Councillors to resolve the issue or conduct a walkabout. It was not possible however to guarantee that any specific roads would be included in the programme.