

FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 10 July 2019

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Pavement Weed Control

1) **To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)**
From Councillor Reg Whitney

Now that road sweepers no longer sweep residential roads, would the Cabinet Member confirm how the weeds and grass are removed from pavements and kerbs?

Answer

It is misleading to suggest that residential roads are not swept.

Nothing has materially changed in how the street cleansing service is delivered except that, following the additional investment of £400,000, we have actually increased how often we clean our streets.

All residential roads are now serviced every 10 days by our street cleansing teams who take whatever action is needed to ensure the road is left clean. This could range from a litter pick to a full sweep using either hand brooms or mechanical sweepers.

The standard of cleanliness achieved is checked by a team leader

To compliment the street cleansing service and control weeds, all roads are sprayed four times each year by a contractor. The weeds can take up to 21 days to die off following spraying and any large dead weeds should then be scraped out and removed as part of the street cleansing service.

If there are particular areas of concern we will be happy to investigate.

A supplementary question asked for further details of how weeds were removed. The Cabinet Member responded that weeds were sprayed four times a year and were removed once they were dead.

Removal of Bubble Gum from Pavements

2) **To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)**
From Councillor Jeffrey Tucker

The Council received funding to remove bubble-gum from our pavements and a deep clean by Romford station, which certainly needed it, has been undertaken. However will the funding extend to Rainham?

Answer

As part of our Cleaner Havering campaign, in the same way we did with South Street in Romford, we will be seeking the support of local businesses by asking

Council, 10 July 2019

them to display posters after the clean up which we hope will deter people from dropping gum in the future.

Yes, plans are in place to arrange for a deep clean in Rainham village during August. This will include Bridge Road, Wennington Road (Broadway to the post office), Ferry Lane up to the station and Upminster Road South (Bridge Road to Rainham Recreation Ground).

The Council is pleased to bring forward investment in the street cleansing service and that a deep clean of all the town centres will take place, and be programmed for the future as a regular occurrence.

The Cleaner Havering Campaign will build upon this, to make our town centres welcoming to all visitors.

A supplementary question asked for assurance that such a clean would definitely take place in Rainham. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Rainham area would be cleaned in August 2019.

Tree Planting Programme

3) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish) From Councillor Gillian Ford

It is good to see street tree planting taking place across the Borough, improving air quality, including within the Cranham Ward. Could the Cabinet Member advise this Council:

- How many new trees have been planted across the Borough during this planting season;
- The average cost per tree and the total seasonal cost.

Answer

Between November 2018 and March 2019, 192 trees were planted across the Borough, costing around £120 per tree and totalling around £23,000 for last year.

A supplementary question asked how many of this season's new trees had to be removed due to their dying from a lack of water. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that he would obtain the figures for this.

Neighbourhood Plans

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

Will the Lead Member welcome the formation of neighbourhood forums in Havering with the aim of preparing Neighbourhood Plans introduced by the Localism Act 2011?

Council, 10 July 2019

Answer

The Council is committed to ensuring that Havering remains a place where people want to live and businesses wish to invest and will prosper. Havering's new Local Plan will provide an up to date, strong and responsive planning framework for this.

Its preparation included public consultation so that the community and other stakeholders could help shape the plan and ensure that it took account of their views.

The Council has welcomed the responses received and considered these when finalising the Local Plan.

Further planning work will be undertaken once the Local Plan is adopted to identify the sites necessary for development to enable the delivery of the Local Plan.

The Council will meet its responsibilities for further statutory consultation and engagement with the community and other stakeholders.

It is several years since the Localism Act came into force. The Council is not aware of any proposals since then to set up neighbourhood forums or to prepare neighbourhood plans.

The Council is satisfied that continuing to ensure that the community and stakeholders have a full role in its plan-making through effective consultation is the best way of making sure their aspirations are reflected in its plans.

A supplementary question asked what level of support the Administration would provide to local residents wishing to form a Neighbourhood Forum. The Leader of the Council responded that the Administration would provide any required statutory support to residents who wished to develop a Neighbourhood Forum.

Portal and process for reporting incidents and issues to Havering Council

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

From Councillor Martin Goode

Can the Cabinet Member please explain, if there are any enhancements underway, in order to improve the current system in identifying and escalating issues and reported incidents to the appropriate department/authorities? Currently the online reporting system is far from user friendly and telephone enquiries are quite often being transferred to the incorrect department with no follow up.

Answer

The Contact Centre based within Customer Services provides a front line service for a range of services. The Council invested in a new Website which

Council, 10 July 2019

went live 2 years ago, improving the residents online experience when searching for information and reporting issues.

There are a number of initiatives to further improve the residents experience and to ensure issues/requests are accurately recorded, tracked and monitored. The existing Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) is being replaced and due to go live in Autumn 2020. This will provide a single point to record all customer contact through the MY Havering portal, ensuring accurate recording, monitoring, escalation and progress, whilst routing requests accurately through to the correct department. Having a single view of all requests will also improve reporting and allow issues to be escalated quickly and resolved in a more timely fashion.

Environmental services are also implementing a new online application called "Love Clean Streets" allowing residents to report issues on any mobile device. This will provide the ability to upload pictures and categorise the type of problem, whilst also allowing the request to be tracked by residents.

Finally, the Contact Centre Telephony system is also being replaced with a new Cloud based solution. This will introduce greater functionality than the existing system, providing intelligent routing for all calls, improving the accuracy of transferring calls to the correct department first time.

The Customer Services department has been supported in a Service Review which uses established best practice to identify process and service improvements. Concept cases are being developed to take forward identified potential improvements.

A supplementary question asked if enhancements could be introduced as soon as possible. The Cabinet Member responded that new systems would have to be tested to ensure that they were robust enough before they could be introduced.

Fraudulent use of Blue Badges

6) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish) From Councillor Paul Middleton

Would the Cabinet Member confirm, for each of the past 3 years, how many Blue Badges have been confiscated by the Council for their fraudulent use?

Answer

Confiscated Blue badges over the past 3 years;

2016/17 - 9

2017/18 - 8

2018/19 - 4

Council, 10 July 2019

As part of our normal enforcement patrols, Civil Enforcement Officers may randomly inspect a blue badge where necessary but does require the driver of the vehicle to be present. An identity check is then verified by the CEO and information gathered so as to evidence whether the badge being displayed is genuine and is being legitimately used.

However, we want to reduce any form of theft or misuse and that is why our enforcement officers will confiscate badges they believe to be fake or out of date, or if they believe the person using it is not the genuine user. This is in addition to a Penalty Charge Notice being issued.

A supplementary question asked how much revenue had been lost due to fraudulent use of Blue Badges and how fraudulent use of the badges in school pick-ups could be addressed. The Cabinet Member replied that it was difficult to quantify the exact revenue figure lost and that more regular warden patrols were now undertaken at school pick-up areas.

Planning Developments

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

Could the Council confirm how many housing units have been passed for development by planning, by the Mayor or on Appeal since May 2018 and how that number splits between apartments and houses?

Answer

Between 1st May 2018 and 24th June 2019 the following number of approvals have been issued:

By the Council:

357 houses or bungalows
1234 flats, apartments or maisonettes
125 studios/bedsits

By the Mayor/Greater London Authority

64 houses or bungalows
472 flats, apartments or maisonettes

By the Planning Inspectorate on appeal:

16 houses or bungalows
103 flats, apartments or maisonettes

In total, 2371 homes have been granted permission.

A supplementary question asked if the Council should be putting more pressure on developers to deliver the type of family homes needed in Havering. The

Council, 10 July 2019

Leader of the Council agreed that the Council should provide the types of homes needed by residents, where this was possible and permitted.

Parking Consultation

**8) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Linda Van den Hende**

In relation to the decision to withdraw the 30 minutes free parking period, would the Cabinet member confirm how many objections were received and how many responses there were to the formal consultation following the publication of the Public Notice on 26 April?

Answer

The Fees & Charges 2019/20 were agreed by Cabinet on 13th February 2019, and Full Council on 27th February 2019 and were subsequently introduced on 3rd June 2019.

The Council have complied with their Statutory obligations by way of advertising with statutory notices displayed at every location whereby charges exist.

22 comments were received in response to the statutory notices, of which 4 related to the removal of the free 30 minutes.

A supplementary question asked for details of how many objections had been received. The Cabinet Member clarified that 16 of the comments related to parking charges and four of these to the 30 minutes issue. The Cabinet Member added that there did not necessarily need to be any changes made arising from a consultation process.

**9) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Carole Beth**

When will the Executive complete its review of pesticides used by the authority and bring a report to Cabinet in accordance with the Motion passed at Full Council on 21st November 2018?

Answer

Officers are reviewing the use of herbicides, which form just one of a variety of different weed control methods employed within Havering. Havering uses various weed control practices on the public highway, in parks and open spaces, and on council housing land, depending on local requirements and in recognition that no one practice can be viewed as an overall solution.

As part of this review, officers have contacted the Amenity Forum, the Pesticide Action Network and a number of different councils employing alternative weed control practices. Officers have also discussed various options, including indicative costs, with its current weed control provider, SH Goss, who are well-regarded in the industry and who have trialled a number of different alternative treatments in recent years. Furthermore, Havering has also received and

Council, 10 July 2019

reviewed a practical demonstration of a relatively new foam treatment, and discussed this with other councils that have adopted it.

A paper has been produced which outlines the current position and addresses alternative options for weed control based on officer findings. This is currently being reviewed and will be presented to Cabinet in October.

A supplementary question asked if carcinogenic pesticides were being used on any Havering streets or parks. The Cabinet Member responded that he would check this with the current contractor and confirm.

Unauthorised Traveller Encampments

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

From Councillor Keith Darvill

Will the Lead Member for make a statement to Full Council about the progress in obtaining an injunction in the High Court pursuant to Section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to help prevent further unauthorised traveller encampments in the Borough?

Answer

The case is almost prepared for issuing an application for a Without Notice Borough Wide Injunction in the High Court. We have been in the process of obtaining and preparing impact witness statements from individuals and local businesses affected by previous traveller incursions some of which has included criminal damage. This has taken longer than expected due to the availability and annual leave of external witnesses. This is key evidence and without this our case is considerably weaker which will affect the chances of success in obtaining an Order.

We are expecting to be able to issue the proceedings in July 2019 (provided all outstanding matters are dealt with and impact evidence as above is finalised).

Sponsorship of the Havering Show

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

Given that London City Airport are sponsoring the Havering Show and have created a promotional video about Havering, in which the Leader of the Council appeared, will this leave Havering Council in a difficult position to push back on future airport expansion plans that might be detrimental to Havering residents

Answer

London City Airport looks to support organisations which enable significant and positive change for communities near London City Airport.

Indeed Aaron Uthman, Community Relations Ambassador for London City Airport, recently said:

“Havering Show is shaping up to be a fantastic weekend of music, arts and fun, and we hope that families and friends in the borough turn out in force on the August bank holiday weekend to enjoy the array of activities, including many of our own airport employees who live locally.

“As a close neighbour of Havering, London City Airport is proud to support the show, which is another example of the creativity and community spirit on our doorstep.”

However, this sponsorship does not detract from our position as representatives of our Havering communities. If there is a need for us to lobby against any plans that adversely affect residents, then we will still do so.

I also hope you can support the Havering Show which is so popular with residents and not support calls to end it and stop funding this and other important public events throughout the year that bring our communities together and help foster social cohesion.

A supplementary question asked if the Council would press for further consultation on the proposed expansion of London City Airport and associated rise in numbers of flights over Havering. The Leader of the Council responded that it was important to ensure that both residents and Councillors responded to the consultation. Recent rises in flight numbers over Havering had been principally due to changes introduced by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The Leader had recently met with CAA representatives and would share details of their complaints process re aircraft noise.

Minute’s Silence at Council

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

At Council it’s custom and practice for the Mayor to call for a minute’s silence to pay respects to all ex/councillors who have died. However extending tributes beyond this, particularly to people we don’t know and with no connection to the Borough creates a problem of who to include and not include to avoid accusations of political bias and risk disrespecting both those named and those not included. Hence once you include some you have to include others and this cheapens the practice of paying respects, by encouraging virtual signalling and making it potentially party political and contentious.

The Council has received a growing number of requests from Government to lower flags and hold silences for certain events described as “terrorist”, which

Council, 10 July 2019

are heeded but without these requests, there should be **no** minute's silences to avoid the matter becoming arbitrary? Hence does the Council Leader agree there shouldn't be any one minute's silences beyond tributes to former councillors without agreement of all group leaders, unless the silence follows an official request from the Government to do so, as on previous occasions?

Answer

In this instance, the Mayor exercised his discretion in calling for a Minute's Silence to honour those who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks that took place in New Zealand and Sri Lanka.

I support the Mayor in his decision and am proud that along with other London Authorities, Havering chose to remember the victims in this way.

I cannot understand why Councillor Durant would wish to object to the Council paying its respects and find his objection distasteful.

Terrorism is indiscriminate and people from all cultures and creeds lost their lives in these events. I consider it fitting that we should take a moment to remember the victims.

A supplementary question asked if the Leader felt that the determination of whether to hold a minute's silence was a political matter for the Executive. The Leader responded that this was at the discretion of the Mayor and that he fully supported the Mayor's decision. The Leader was proud that the Council held an Annual Holocaust Memorial Day which remembered victims of terrorism and felt that this showed the strength of Havering's community cohesion.

Fire Risk Assessments for Council Housing Stock

**13) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman)
From Councillor Chris Wilkins**

Can the Cabinet Member for Housing confirm that all Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) have been completed for all of the Council's housing stock, in line with the Fire Safety Order regulations and in line with prescribed timescales; which are linked to the relevant Fire Management Plan?

Answer

All our housing stock currently have a valid fire risk assessments in line with the Fire Safety Order Regulations.

Previously all high risk buildings, (that is sheltered housing, hostels, housing of multiple occupation and high rise blocks) have previously had Fire Risk assessments undertaken every two years. This has now been changed to an annual inspection. Whilst this is not a legislative requirement we feel it is the right thing to do.

Council, 10 July 2019

Medium to low risk building (Blocks under 5 storeys) have Fire Risk Assessments carried out every 3 years.

A supplementary question asked if repairs identified as part of fire risk assessments had been carried out to timescale and with sufficient quality. The Cabinet Member responded that officers worked to fire risk assessment action plans and that required work was done to timescale.

Havering Community Wardens

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

What are the proposed alternative arrangements for Community Wardens in Havering?

Answer

The proposal has been to create a one Council approach to enforcement and ensure consistency and the effective use of resources to tackle these issues.

The community wardens alongside a number of other officers/ teams (including street scene, parks protection and community safety) transferred to the Enforcement group within Environment in late Summer 2017 to establish a cohesive enforcement approach for Havering.

The new model proposes that the existing roles of the community wardens change from purely engagement and patrol, to enforcement led across all our housing estates. As part of the daytime enforcement activity, there will be teams operating for a 12 hour daily period, Monday to Saturday, and dedicated ward and housing estate patrols.

In addition, there will be additional capacity and support from the new tactical enforcement team, to cover the night-time period from Thursday to Saturday alongside the recently agreed Council funded S92 Police Officers. This will further enhance enforcement with a visible presence across Havering's housing estates.

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member was aware of staff concerns re the restructure and what had been put in place to mitigate these concerns? The Cabinet Member stated that the restructure had gone through the Council's consultation programme and that he wished for staff to undertake retraining and to learn new skills.

Special Responsibility Allowance Paid to Committee Chairmen

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

In the last municipal year, several committee chairmen earned well over £1,000 an hour with the highest earning well over £2,500 an hour. Would the Leader of the Council confirm if he feels that the council has received value for money from these Chairmen?

Answer

Special Responsibility Allowances are awarded to those members by Full Council when tasked with undertaking additional duties such as being the chairman of a committee, for example. The allowance levels are determined by Full Council, having regard to the report by the London Council's Independent Remuneration Panel, the most recent of which was released in 2018.

I do not recognise the figures that Councillor Morgon cites in his question, however an hourly rate is not featured in the Member Allowances Scheme, nor in the Panel's report.

Anecdotally, it appears to be based on time spent chairing meetings. Councillor Morgon tries to get us to believe that the generous allowance paid to him as Leader of the Opposition is also for work undertaken outside formal committee meetings and similarly, the Special Responsibility Allowances paid to Committee Chairmen also reflect what informal work is done behind the scenes. This includes discussion with officers, undertaking research, attending training, reading agenda and briefing papers, amongst other things.

It is worth noting that the Special Responsibility Allowances paid to Chairmen fall below the levels recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel as we are committed to giving the ratepayers of this Borough value for money

I believe our committee chairmen are value for money Mr. Mayor and I congratulate them on their hard work and dedication.

A supplementary question asked whether, given the IPSOS MORI poll had indicated the Council gave low value for money, and that the peer review had called for better scrutiny, the cross-party scrutiny review should now be revived. The Council Leader reiterated his commitment to giving local people value for money and added that the Council had been highlighted as efficient.