

FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 25 September 2019

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Planning Committees of the Council

1) **To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)**
From Councillor Stephanie Nunn

Given the lack of planning applications coming forward to both the Planning and Strategic Planning Committees, would the Leader of the Council agree that it is time for the two committees to be merged back together in order to save valuable Council resources?

Answer

Towards the end of 2017, the Council was at risk of designation by MHCLG as a poorly performing Local Planning Authority, based on the quality of its major planning application decision making at committee. An associated review of the former Regulatory Services Committee by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) at the time made several recommendations about the role and quality of the committee.

In March 2018, Council agreed to the creation of a new Strategic Planning Committee to deal with strategic matters, with a separate Planning Committee to deal with smaller proposals. A range of amendments to the Constitution was also agreed. These outcomes responded to the recommendations of the PAS review and reflected best practice amongst Local Planning Authorities. The changes were implemented in May 2018.

The creation of Strategic Planning Committee has rightly enabled those Members sitting on it to focus on placemaking. The ability for applicants to present to Committee at pre-application stage has also enabled Members to engage with proposals at an early stage of the process. From the applicants' perspective, a focussed committee delivers value for money from the paid for service provided and encourages those who are considering investing in the Borough to engage with the Council on a pre-application basis. The receipts received help to fund the planning team.

In short, the Strategic Planning Committee has resulted and will continue to result in improved outcomes for the borough and our residents.

For the reasons set out, it remains the intention to retain both Committees.

A supplementary question asked if achieving best value applied to the Special Responsibility Allowances earned by members of the Conservative Group. In response, the Leader of the Council stated that the Strategic Planning Committee had generated some £100,000 in fees from developers that had not

Council, 25 September 2019

been payable under the previous arrangements and was hence achieving best value.

Special Edition of *Living Magazine*

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

The government introduced guidelines to prevent Council magazines being used and abused to promote “party politics on the rates”! However it appears the guidelines are being ignored if the numerous appearances of the Council Leader and Cabinet in a single issue is anything to go by and this is particularly noticeable in the special edition of *Living* produced for the three Wards in the South of the Borough. How much did the special edition cost to produce and deliver?

Answer

It is not true to say that the guidelines are being ignored. The communication department adheres to these guidelines when producing the magazine. As the administration that leads the council, it is perfectly acceptable for images and stories that include both myself and the Cabinet to be produced in the magazines that explain to residents what the council is doing.

It is also acceptable to promote cabinet members who are involved in campaigns and other related council planned activity.

The title *Living in Havering* is a brand name and while regular publications are delivered to all households in the borough, the title has significant name recognition from residents, which means it is a very effective and efficient way of reaching residents on major issues such as regeneration.

The special *Living* edition for the three wards in the South of the Borough updates residents on the exciting and ambitious regeneration taking place which will not only offer new homes for local people, but improve their communities with new facilities and transport infrastructure and therefore improve the place they live.

Residents care about health, homes, journeys and jobs and our proposals for the south of the borough will improve life chances, strengthen communities and provide new opportunities for skills, jobs, infrastructure and housing.

The cost to produce this edition was just under £4000 which is being covered in entirety from sponsorship.

This Administration intends to champion the south of the Borough, and in the same way that perceptions were changed about Harold Hill through the “Harold Hill Ambitions” programme 20 years ago, we intend to spend time and resources on targeting areas of deprivation and poverty that will benefit hugely from regeneration.

A supplementary question asked if the special edition of the Council magazine for the south of the borough was designed to promote a potential election candidature by the Leader of the Council and if the Leader would confirm if he was planning to stand as a candidate at the next general election. In response, the Leader of the Council stated that the Administration intended to champion regeneration in the south of the borough as it had done with the Harold Hill Ambitions programme. The issue of standing at the next General Election was a matter for the internal arrangements of the Conservative party and not relevant to the Council.

Preparations for Brexit

**3) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Gillian Ford**

What preparations has the Council made for Brexit?

Answer

Havering Council has a nominated Brexit Lead Officer (Sandy Hamberger-Deputy Trevor Meers) and a Working Group in place to monitor, receive and disseminate relevant information, and to risk assess and carry out contingency planning. A risk assessment is in place which is regularly updated. Multi-agency EU Exit planning and risk assessment is carried out by the Havering Borough Resilience Forum. Weekly teleconferences and issue reporting will start again from September 2019, which will increase in frequency as Strategic Coordination dictates. The Working Group meets weekly, and members attend Pan-London and Essex Resilience events to capture current information.

To date the Council has and still is providing EU Exit information for staff, residents and business through a variety of channels, and run a business continuity event for Care Providers. Each risk critical service area has already updated their business continuity plans to include the implications of Brexit, which is reflected in the Corporate Business Continuity Plan.

The Council has robust emergency and business continuity plans in place to address the anticipated outcomes from Brexit, with appropriate command and control arrangements that can be stepped up as and when required.

A supplementary question asked how Government funding for EU exit preparedness had been spent by the Council. The Leader agreed to supply a detailed breakdown of this.

Sunday Parking Charges

**4) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Paul McGeary**

Will the Council review its "pay to pray" policy which is having an adverse impact on Havering Town centres and its communities?

Answer

The question is misleading – I assume you are referring to the introduction of Sunday parking charges. There is no reference to the other religions in the borough, and this administration is proud its unfailing commitment to champion all forms of religion.

The administration is proud of the investment we have made into the highway, and the Sunday charges will provide an extra forecasted £1.5m investment.

A supplementary question asked if the Leader of the Council would reconsider the introduction of Sunday parking charges. In response, the Leader stated that the introduction of these charges would generate approximately £1.5 million in revenue which would be invested in Havering's road network. There were alternative means for people to attend church such as walking or public transport and modal shift of this type was encouraged in order for the Council to meet its clean air targets.

Charging points for Electric Cars

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

Could the Cabinet Member please outline the Council Policy and plans to ensure there are appropriate charging points for Electric Cars in residential streets where there is no off-street parking available for householders whom may live in a flat or in a cul-de-sac and thus have no access to the frontage of their properties to provide their own electric recharging facility?

Answer

In 2018 Cabinet approved the Havering Air Quality Action Plan 2018-2023 setting out the key actions that the Council will take to improve local air quality. This includes a commitment to investigate the feasibility of delivering Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure across the borough. This work is ongoing and will consider the practical implications presented by different forms of development as far as charging infrastructure is concerned.

The Council will continue to review EV usage and infrastructure across the borough and delivery of additional facilities will be considered as demand is identified.

The Council's Local Plan recognises the importance of suitable charging infrastructure being provided to support the use of electric vehicles and in future all major planning applications will have to include locations for electric vehicle charging points.

The Council will take into consideration any suggestions Members may have of suitable locations for electric vehicle charging points.

A supplementary question asked if more funding would be made available for electric charging points. The Cabinet Member responded that he would be happy to make feasible recommendations for further charging points if Members would like to make suitable recommendations.

Hornchurch Country Park

**6) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Gerry O'Sullivan**

Hornchurch Country Park was recently voted in a Council competition as the most popular park in Havering. Does the Cabinet Member agree that this demonstrates what the Residents Group have been saying for years that you don't have to waste residents money on getting a green flag to have a highly rated and popular park.

Answer

The Council's recent World Cup of Parks was a fun and novel way for residents to tell us the things they love about our parks, many of which have come about from our ambition to fly as many Green Flags as possible.

The Green Flag Award is the national standard of excellence for green spaces and sites that achieve this are promoted across the UK.

We certainly don't consider this a waste of money. This Council and our residents alike are proud of our record haul of 14 Green Flags flying in parks across the borough.

To achieve this is no mean feat. Award parks must meet certain criteria that may not be possible without the high standards set out in the Green Flag accreditation process.

The annual process of applying for the award includes updating the management and improvement plans for each site. This means that residents and park users can enjoy higher quality award winning parks. Having this external accreditation for parks in the borough can also attract visitors and businesses.

External accreditation such as the Green Flag award also contributes towards successful grant applications. Several projects have been funded externally for improvements in Green Flag parks. It's worth noting that the improvement plans for two additional 2020 applications at Hornchurch Country Park and Spring Farm Park have been funded externally. The Green Flag Award® scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, including country parks, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom.

The Resident's Association clearly wish to see a return to how our Parks & Open Spaces were previously managed and led them into rack & ruin.

This Administration have invested in our Parks & Open Spaces, and realise the benefits these bring to our residents especially to those who do not have access to an open space within their own homes. We have some of the best Parks & Open Spaces in London and we are deeply proud of them.

At a cost of £4,650 for all the applications each year, we consider this scheme good value for money. I believe with the benefits outlined, not to mention the great sense of recognition the awards bring to our parks staff, friends of groups and local residents, the more Green Flags we have flying in Havering, the better!

(No supplementary question).

Sunday Parking

**7) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Jan Sargent**

Parking charges have been increased and now include Sundays. Certain areas retain the 30 mins free parking and the altered machines show this includes Sundays. However many residents tell me they cannot obtain the 30 mins free ticket on a Sunday (and not available on the Pay By Phone app either) only the flat rate ticket. Please can the Council Leader provide an update on the situation?

Answer

The 30 minute free parking applies on Sunday's in the areas where the free 30 minutes still applies. This should be the case using both the P&D machines and the phone and pay service. We have checked with the supplier of the P&D machines and the pay by phone service at Hilldene shopping parade, a glitch in the system has now been rectified so residents will receive the free 30 minutes.

(No supplementary question).

Cost of Signage

**8) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Chris Wilkins**

Officers have confirmed that the Council's strategy to promote the ongoing Highways Investment Programme is behind the popping up of blue 'Another road fixed by Havering Council' signs. At a cost of £36.18 including installation, how many of these signs have been installed that could have gone towards filling pot holes?

Council, 25 September 2019

Answer

- . Not a single penny of Council money spent on the signs, and it is misleading to suggest otherwise.

The Contractor has been very generous in supporting the investment in highways programme:

Completed roads = 41

Completed pavements = 27

Malborough Surfacing installed these signs without any additional cost to the Council under the highways contract, as part of enhanced partnership working and collaboration. Therefore, with regards to potholes, the installation of signs has not adversely impacted the repair of potholes in any way. In fact it is the opposite, it highlights where the work has been done.

It is worth noting that with the significant additional investment in resurfacing the boroughs roads from 2019/20, the number of potholes being formed in the borough should be significantly reduced going forward.

A supplementary question asked if the strategy indicated that Havering residents were not considered intelligent enough to realise that their roads had been resurfaced by the Council. The Cabinet Leader responded that the strategy was not patronising and that the biggest investment in Havering roads for many years should be celebrated.

Section 92 Police Officers

- 9) **To the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Safety (Councillor Viddy Persaud)**
From Councillor Tele Lawal

In view of the Government's recent announcement to increase police numbers does the Executive intend to revisit the decision of Cabinet relating to additional police officers appointed under the MOPAC Partnership Plus Scheme for S92 Police Officers?

Answer

We of course welcome the announcement by the Government to increase police numbers nationally and congratulate the forward thinking approach of the new Prime Minister for the recruitment of 20,000 new police officers across the country.

However, it will take some time before we will benefit from the new investment, as officers will need to be recruited and trained.

Council, 25 September 2019

Councillor Lawal has confused these new officers with the S92 officers the Council has agreed to, who will concentrate on resolving local crime and anti-social behaviour problems and not exclusively Metropolitan Police East BCU priorities.

Therefore, we have no intention of revisiting the Cabinet decision to bring in more police officers through the MOPAC PartnershipPlus scheme.

We are deeply proud of the stance this administration has taken, which demonstrates a vote of confidence for both police officers and S92 officers alike.

The Council welcomes the acquisition of the option to purchase Hornchurch Police Station to further ensure a presence and location for reporting crime within Havering.

A supplementary question asked if it was correct that Hornchurch police station would only be open for three hours a week. The Cabinet Member responded that she was proud to maintain a police presence in Hornchurch that had been in existence for many years.

Note: Due to limitations of time, all remaining questions were dealt with by way of written response.

Security in the Town Hall

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

Could the Cabinet Member please provide an update regarding what security measures are being taken to enhance the Security, Protection and Safeguard for all Council workers, Officers, Members and the general public when visiting or carrying out their duties within the Town Hall building?

Answer

The Council has a duty of care to safeguard all Council workers, Officers, Members and the general public when visiting or carrying out duties within Council buildings. There are existing controls in place which ensure that any persons visiting the Town Hall, whether for work or for any other reason, can do so in an environment without intimidation or threats to personal safety.

As with all duties for which the council is responsible there is an obligation to review to ensure that resources are allocated in the most efficient and effective

Council, 25 September 2019

way and that policies and procedures remain fit for purpose. To that end the Council has engaged the services of a security expert to undertake a review of the Council's approach not only to Town Hall security but also to the operation of security around formal council meetings and to the personal safety and wellbeing of Members and officers whose duties often extend far beyond the confines of the Town Hall.

That review is currently ongoing, the results of which will be made available to Members in due course through an All Member Briefing.

Service Charges to Council Tenants

**11) To the Cabinet Member from Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman)
From Councillor Ray Morgon**

Given that Council tenants pay separately for a variety of services, would the Cabinet Member confirm how the Council demonstrates that tenants actually receive the service which they have paid for through various charges?

Answer

The Council can only legitimately levy service charges for benefits that the tenants receive. Each year, costs relating to service charges are reviewed and apportioned appropriately by accountants from the Finance Team based on activity data provided by the Housing Team. This exercise ensures charges are accurate, fair and meet the contractual obligations set out to tenants.

The demonstration of our services can be evidenced in various ways.

Firstly, a review was completed in December 2018 by the Chief Financial Officer (s151 Officer) to ensure the split of costs between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account is correct and that tenants only pay for services that they receive.

In addition, our staff such as caretaking and grounds maintenance team are seen daily across the borough and are responsive, which is itself a demonstration of the service provided to our tenants. Residents also benefit from improvements to our service including from our most recent investments such as body cams for use whilst patrolling.

More generally, service provision is determined through engagement with residents and is monitored by carrying out inspections, both routine and following complaints. If ever an issue is identified, monitoring frequency would be increased to ensure that service is kept to standard and monitoring can be evidenced via time logs.

This Administration is very serious about both engaging with residents and ensuring that they only pay for services that they receive.

Unit Bedroom Sizes in New Developments

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

Could the Council Leader advise us of the percentage breakdown of the unit bedroom sizes i.e. 1, 2, 3+ of all the approved residential planning applications since April 2018?

Answer

The breakdown is as follows:

1 Bedroom - 31% (660 units)
2 Bedroom - 43% (903 units)
3+ Bedroom - 26% (538 units)

Controlled Parking Zones Consultations

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

A number of parking restrictions have been put on hold across the Borough due to the role out of the Administrations CPZ consultations. Could the Cabinet Member advise this Council how long this process will take to be rolled out across the Borough?

Answer

I believe that the Leader has already addressed this in his opening remarks.

For completeness, I can confirm that there is no hold on CPZs or parking restrictions and any that have gone through the process and are forthcoming shall be signed off and implemented.

We have announced that we will be reviewing parking around the key town centres and key transport points and a report will be brought to cabinet to outline how this will be achieved.

I am very happy to meet with Cllr Linda Van de Hende to discuss the matter further, should this be desired

Environmental Policies

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

When will the Executive commence it's review of Environmental Policies as

Council, 25 September 2019

determined at the Full Meeting of Council on 10th July 2019

Answer

The review of various policies relating to the Environment is ongoing. The Air Quality Action Plan continues to be implemented, Traffic and Parking Policies are designed to incorporate environmental factors, a Trees Policy is being formulated and waste minimisation behaviour change measures continue to influence our residents reducing the need for either recycling or disposal.

Further, resourcing to develop a local Climate Change Programme based on robust data and actions is being organised. Officers are now working with members and regional partners to ensure a strategic approach is adopted to prepare for and minimise its impacts on the environment and climate change, including working towards becoming carbon neutral.

Therefore, it's early days, however the Council is fully committed to showing, via our actions, how serious it is taking its moral and social responsibility to keep our amazing and special environment safe for the current, and future, generations.

80-84 Market Place, Romford

**15) To the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property (Councillor Roger Ramsey)
From Councillor Ray Morgon**

Would the Cabinet Member provide a full set of accounts, both revenue and capital, for 80-84 Market Place, Romford since the Council signed a lease back in August 2016.

Answer

We will be very pleased to provide the requested financial analysis.

Prior to the end of the funding for the Retailery in March 2019, the Council worked with the operator (Things Made Public CIC) to assist them with an application for charitable status. Unfortunately, the submission for charity status for the Retailery (which would have meant a reduction in business rates) was refused, they also applied for discretionary rate relief which was declined. Unfortunately, as they were unsuccessful in reducing the running costs of the workspace it was no longer financially viable for them to continue to operate the Retailery.

In order to ensure the protection of the existing businesses within the workspace and the Council's reputation the Council took control of the building and looked to procure a new operator. Through an open procedure, KingsHeart was

Council, 25 September 2019

selected as operator and have been granted a concession contract which commits them to providing wraparound business support. They are also committed to upgrading both floors of the premises and to reinvesting any surplus generated back into supporting the businesses. The Council will continue to pay the rent, utilities and business rates on the property during the rest of the leasehold term.