

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Note: Questions 1 to 12 were answered at the meeting. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.6(a), the remainder were treated as if put for written answer

1 PENALTY CHARGE NOTICES: INCOME

To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)

By Councillor John Mylod

Income from Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) amounted to £2.157 million in 2011/12 compared with £1.602 million in 2010/11, an increase of 35%. Would the Cabinet Member explain the reasons behind this significant increase?

Answer:

Income from Penalty Charge Notices amounted to £2.157 million in 2011/12 with a total of 47,001 PCN's issued.

37,420 PCN's were issued in 2010/11 generating an income of £1.602 million. Reasons for the increase in issuing numbers included the Civil Enforcement team being fully staffed. In previous years the service had vacant posts which of course led to less PCN issuance.

More focussed operational changes were also made ensuring that the service concentrated their enforcement presence at locations highly problematic (i.e schools) and at locations specifically requested. These requests were via residents, local traders, transport and emergency services. Our resources were effectively deployed at the right places and at the right times. Since the introduction of the Traffic Management Act, the policy and issuing of PCN's has been the subject of statutory regulation.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member explained that the Council's parking enforcement policy in town centres was based on a number of factors including amount of footfall, preventing commuter parking and income generation. It was also necessary to use the policy to establish access and the free flow of traffic through the borough, particularly for buses.

2 VETERANS' CHAMPION

To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Michael White)

By Councillor Denis O'Flynn

Will the Administration support the Labour Group proposal that the Council appoint a 'Veterans Champion' to act as a single point of contact and support for Armed Forces Veterans and Service leavers?

Answer:

Thank you Councillor O'Flynn for your question.

I think this is an excellent idea and I would like to request that Governance Committee brings forward a recommendation to Annual Council.

3 RAINHAM LIBRARY - DELAY

To the Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns & Communities (Councillor Andrew Curtin)

By Councillor Jeffrey Tucker

Can this Council inform residents the reasons for the delay in building as promised, the proposed new Rainham Library?

Answer:

The new library, lifelong learning centre and flats in Rainham Village Conservation Area were a joint project between Havering Council and The London Thames Gateway Development Corporation.

As a result of the impending winding up of Thames Gateway Development Corporation, their role in the project passed to the Greater London Authority in April 2012

The Greater London Authority is responsible for £2,105,000 of the funding for the project.

The GLA approval process to enable them to commit to the project was finalised in late October 2012.

In December last year GLA solicitors forwarded the necessary draft legal agreements for construction to begin to Havering Council's solicitor.

The Council has done due diligence on the proposed agreements.

It is anticipated that final versions of the agreement will be signed off in early February.

As the construction contract has already been tendered, once the agreement is signed construction on site can begin.

Should the agreement be signed in early February it is hoped that construction can start in March 2013.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that he would continue, with officers, to keep a close watch on progress with the project and was hopeful that it would now proceed in accordance with the schedule he had outlined.

4 TREE REMOVAL POLICY

To the Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns & Communities (Councillor Andrew Curtin)

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member confirm under which criteria of the council's tree policy were the trees in Hornchurch High Street and King George's Playing Fields removed?

Answer:

The Council's Tree Strategy applies to street trees only, under the conditions of the Highways Act 1980. Trees in parks are not subject to the same pressure from items of street furniture, highways usage, transport and other issues which affect street trees, and so are not subject to the same legislative framework as that which affects trees on the highway. Parks Grounds Maintenance Teams, Parks Protection Team and Parks Development Officers examine and report any Health and Safety issues relating to trees in parks for necessary action. In this context, work at King George's Playing Fields was governed by Policy DC60 on Trees and Woodlands of the borough's Local Development Framework. The Council's Regulatory Services Committee considered the proposals for King George's Playing Fields and concluded that they do accord with this and other relevant policies contained in the LDF, and so an area where trees have been removed will be replaced with alternative appropriate tree planting in accord with that decision.

Removal of trees in Hornchurch High Street was carried out under the terms of section 8 of the Council's Tree Strategy. 18 native trees will replace 13 trees which have been removed in accord with both this policy and decisions taken by Highways Advisory Committee. The new trees will be semi-mature species which will be more appropriate to this town centre location. The use of root deflectors will ensure they do not disrupt the footway, will ensure the robustness of the new footways, and maintain a level, trip free pavement. As part of a wide range of measures to strengthen nature conservation in and around Hornchurch, the new trees will extend some aspects of nature corridors on the edge of the village through the High Street itself, strengthen the link between the centre of the village and the natural environment around it, and link some aspects of nature corridors at either end of the village, which are currently divided by the High Street.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member asked Councillor Morgon to submit his request that the damage to highways policy be applied to all roads in the borough to the Cabinet Member for the Environment who would provide a written response.

5 HOMELESS PEOPLE IN HAVERING

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Paul McGeary

How many people in Havering are currently:

A) Registered as homeless and the Council have a statutory duty to house them; and

B) Rough sleeping?

Answer:

A) There are currently 535 households whose circumstances have been investigated and the Housing Service has concluded that they are homeless and a duty to secure accommodation applies. Of these:

- the vast majority, 498, are currently housed in good quality private sector accommodation leased and managed by the Council under the Private Sector Leasing, PSL, scheme. Typically a homeless household lives in PSL accommodation for three to five years during which time housing officers work with them to secure council, housing association or alternative private rented accommodation
- another 35 households are temporarily housed in one of the Council's hostels awaiting PSL or alternative accommodation – the average hostel stay is 12 weeks
- two households are living in specialist women's refuge accommodation.

B) Based on the Housing Service's work with London Street Rescue, the charity specialising in outreach to homeless people in East London, the Housing Service estimates that three people were rough sleeping in Havering on any one night during the period October to December 2012.

As soon as someone is reported as rough sleeping in the borough either an officer from the Homelessness and Housing Advice Team or London Street Rescue attends to try to find the person and make contact. Both the Housing Service and London Street Rescue are able to provide temporary accommodation to rough sleepers if required.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that she was aware of the Hope for Havering project and had held discussions with the project officers. The Cabinet Member felt that there was a need to bring together all parties involved in homelessness issues locally.

6 **EMPTY ROOMS IN COUNCIL PROPERTIES**

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Michael Deon Burton

As one who proudly supports local residents with family members who heed the call of their country, I am deeply concerned upon hearing of plans to penalise people in council housing who leave bedrooms empty for more than 13 weeks.

The results of which I am told will mean households with serving members of the Armed Forces will lose hundreds of pounds.

If this is the ramification of the clumsy construction of the governance, I ask the Executive to give assurance that they will accede to my request 'That we in Havering will take all

necessary steps to obviate this most unfair affect upon a most cherished section of our community'.

Answer:

Councillor Burton is referring to changes in Welfare Benefit rules that have been introduced by Central Government. The rules on the changes to Housing Benefit apply to all households who are in receipt of benefits, irrespective of their occupation. There are no special exemptions for people who are in, or who have been in the Armed Forces.

All households where the head of household is under the age of 61, will only receive benefit for the number of bedrooms that they need, as opposed to the number of bedrooms in the property. Therefore, households that under occupy their homes by one bedroom, will have their Housing benefit reduced by 14%, and those who under occupy their homes by two bedrooms will have their Housing Benefit reduced by 22%.

All households in this situation have a number of options. They can move to a home, that meets their housing needs, rather than under occupying their home. They can take in a lodger. They can meet the difference in costs themselves from their other resources. The final option available to a claimant, who wants to remain in the same homes, is that they can obtain employment.

In Havering we are doing our best to ensure that all claimants in this situation are aware of the impact of the changes to welfare benefits that will take place in April, and we are discussing those options with claimants face to face.

This measure however is designed to ensure that homes are occupied fully and also to pay benefit that meets household's needs, rather than to support them in homes that are larger than they need.

Briefings on the welfare reforms are being arranged for all Councillors.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet member explained that the Council's allocations policy did give priority to armed forces personnel. As regards welfare benefits however, there was very little the Council or individual Councillors could do as this was a central Government directive.

7 PENALTY CHARGE NOTICES: MISUSE OF PARKING FOR THE DISABLED

To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)

By Councillor Barbara Matthews

Of the 47,001 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued in 2011/12, would the Cabinet Member disclose how many were for parking in a disabled bay without a legitimate blue badge?

Answer:

Between 01/04/2011 and 31/03/2012, a total of 245 Penalty Charge Notices were issued to vehicles parked in designated Disabled Persons parking places without displaying a valid disabled persons parking badge.

8 GREATER LONDON FIRE STATION CLOSURES AND REDUCTION OF FIRE ENGINES

To the Cabinet Member for Community Safety (Councillor Geoffrey Starns)

By Councillor Denis Breading

What representations do the Administration propose to make to the Commissioner of the London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority about his proposals to close 12 Fire Stations and reduce the number of fire engines at 7 other Fire Stations, reducing the fire fighting capacity in Greater London significantly?

Answer:

The draft fifth London Safety Plan set out proposals for how the London Fire Brigade will deliver its services in the current economic climate while maintain its existing response times. Part of these proposals included plans for the closure of some fire stations across London, some loss of appliances as well as a reduction in firefighter numbers. However, Havering's Fire Station located in Harold Hill, which opened in 2010, is not on the planned list for closure and Havering was not proposed to be negatively affected by these proposals, which I am sure we will all agree is to be welcomed.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet member explained that plans would allow the transfer into Havering of additional appliances should any Havering appliances be in use at instances in central London. There would be no change in response times nor any adverse effect on Havering.

9 LAND IN WILLOUGHBY DRIVE

To the Cabinet Member for Individuals (Councillor Steven Kelly)

By Councillor Mark Logan

Why have a family of gypsies been allowed to park and stay on a parcel of council owned land at Willoughby Drive Rainham RM13 7SX?

Answer:

There are two sites to the north of Willoughby Drive where temporary planning permission has been granted for the stationing of a mobile home and residential use. Neither of these sites is owned by the Council.

There is a site, known as 1A Willoughby Drive, with a mobile home on it which is subject to a Planning Enforcement Notice, served in October 2011. This land is not owned by the Council. Any action in relation to the non-compliance with the planning enforcement notice will be considered once the Council has adopted its Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan.

Further east along Willoughby Drive is an area of land containing two private plots, with a third plot being confirmed as in Council ownership. There are no families living on these plots.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member stated that it was not the role of the Council to forcibly move people from one property to another. Planning enforcement was under way at the 1A Willoughby Drive site but this was a very lengthy process.

10 COST OF HORNCHURCH LIVE EVENT

To the Cabinet Member for Community Empowerment (Councillor Robert Benham)

By Councillor John Wood

Would the Cabinet Member disclose the cost of the 2012 Hornchurch Live event against the allocated budget?

Answer:

£50,000 was allocated for Hornchurch Live and a total of £49,959 was spent. The 2012 event was a pilot and there was not therefore any base budget. Many of the infrastructure costs were shared with the Havering Show.

11 WARD COUNCILLOR CONSULTATION AND BRIEFING

To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Michael White)

By Councillor Pat Murray

Will the Administration ensure that before specific decisions are made and/or it is decided to put proposals out formally for public consultation which decisions or proposals impact on particular Wards and areas of the Borough, the Ward Councillors for those areas are informally consulted and/or briefed before they are formally announced to the public?

Answer:

The Administration welcomes this suggestion put forward by Cllr Murray. I have asked the Chief Executive to remind all staff to ensure that where consultations are being carried out

that affect particular wards, the relevant ward councillor should be notified before the consultation is made public.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council confirmed that the Administration would always listen to the views of residents as it had done in the past. It was however necessary to consider the position in the whole of the borough rather than any one ward in particular.

12 **PROTECTING COUNCIL ASSETS**

To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)

By Councillor David Durant

The Town Hall and Mercury House are valuable Council assets.

Therefore is it wise to outsource the Town Hall and Mercury House security staff or is it more prudent to put staff loyalty and the protection of these buildings before the prospect of a small financial gain?

Also is the possible outsourcing of security staff to make savings, beyond that needed to reach departmental targets - and is the process of tendering costing more than the anticipated saving?

Answer:

No firm decision has yet been taken to outsource the Building Superintendent service.

The Facilities Management service is required to deliver its proportion of the corporate savings requirement, in this case £110,000 p.a.

The cleaning specification for back-office areas in Council buildings has already been reduced although this measure will only deliver part of the overall savings requirement. Having considered an options report for future service delivery, Corporate Management Team have agreed that the building cleaning and building superintendent services should be market tested by seeking external tenders for these services - tenders are due next month. The cost and timescale for the tender exercise are significantly reduced by use of the Government Procurement Service (GPS) comprising 8 companies who have already passed a pre-qualification process. Furthermore, the tender costs are a one-off expenditure whereas savings delivered to the service will be a recurring reduction in spend.

The valuable service provided by the individuals is recognised and in the event of the service being outsourced, these staff would be protected by TUPE regulations whereby they would transfer to the new service provider. Consequently, in such an event it is likely that the same personnel would continue to provide security to these buildings.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member emphasised that a large degree of further savings across the Council would have to be made in the coming years. The Council did not take security lightly and the good work put in by staff was valued. Savings would however have to be made.

13 **DUPLICATE PAYMENTS****To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)**

By Councillor Clarence Barrett

Would the Cabinet Member set out how much was paid out in duplicate payments in each of the last three years?

Answer:

Year	Identified
2009/10	£44,168.37
2010/11	£11,402.98
2011/12	Currently not available *

For 2011 – 12 we are now working to identify the duplicate payments, with an aim of completion for the end of the year, due for the following reasons:

- IT issues with both the interrogation software and the new Oracle set up.
- Implementing the new Procure to Pay system.
- Training of staff in Dec 2012 who have now commenced work on the backlog - expected completion of backlog April 2013 (this will incorporate two years of payments)

14 **COMPENSATION AWARDED TO CLAIMANTS BY THE COUNCIL AS A RESULT OF POORLY MAINTAINED HIGHWAYS IN HAVERING****To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)**

By Councillor Denis O'Flynn

What was the total amount of compensation paid by the Council to claimants for each of the past three financial years in respect of claims for personal injury and damage to vehicles caused by poorly maintained highways?

Answer:

Year	2012	2011	2010
No of claims	121	257	329
No of claims paid	1	19	39
Cost * of claims £	1,755	40,727	378,323

15 **MAKING SAVINGS**

To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)

By Councillor Jeffrey Tucker

Will this Council will now consider all points on how to save and make money, that will benefit the Council Tax paying Residents of Havering?

Answer:

Perhaps the member has not noticed the £40 million savings programme that has been underway, can I suggest he look at the savings report of July 2010 and 2011 and to the information contained within last week's Cabinet report.

16 **REMOVAL OF HIGHWAY TREES**

To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member advise why there is a reluctance for StreetCare to remove trees from the highway even when there is a long history of damage being done to the footway?

Answer:

Each possible tree removal is taken on its own merits. By working together the Area Liaison Officers and the Highway Tree team look at the tree maintenance history and footway repairs are considered prior to any work being carried out to either the footway or the tree. If a mature tree can be saved by root pruning or repairs to the footway then every effort will be made to save it.

17 **HOMELESS FAMILIES IN BED AND BREAKFAST ACCOMMODATION IN HAVERING**

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Keith Darvill

How many homeless families are currently placed in bed and breakfast accommodation and how many of them have been placed in such accommodation for more than six weeks?

Answer:

The Housing Service has not routinely used bed and breakfast accommodation to house homeless families or single people since 2004, and there are currently no homeless families or single people in such accommodation.

During 2012, unfortunately eight households had to spend some time in a B&B during the refurbishment of Abercrombie House. The average stay, however, of these eight households was only three nights.

With Abercrombie House now fully refurbished and completion of the Will Perrin Court conversion anticipated in March, the Housing Service does not envisage the need to use bed and breakfast accommodation in anything other than the direst unforeseen emergencies.

18 REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY: ABANDONMENT

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Mark Logan

What are the implications for Havering of the recent national Government decision to stop the Regional Spatial Strategy for housing?

Answer:

The Secretary of State announced the revocation of regional strategies on 6th July 2010, although there have been some challenges since to this.

This change, however, did not extend to London where the Mayor of London has separate powers granted under the Greater London Authority Act 1999 to produce spatial strategies. The consequent spatial strategy, known as the London Plan, continues to provide the planning framework for London Boroughs .

Implications of the revocation of regional strategies outside of London therefore are negligible.

19 INTRODUCTION OF “LIVING WAGE”

To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member confirm whether Havering will be introducing a 'Living Wage' along with other councils and organisations?

Answer:

I assume that the member is referring to what has been described as the “London Living Wage” covering the Greater London area. This has been adopted as a minimum by some London boroughs. The current Havering position is to include consideration of this issue in the review of a Pay and Reward review strategy paper which will be presented to CMT in late spring.

20 SUNSET DRIVE CARAVAN SITE LICENCE

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Keith Darvill

Will the Council make urgent representations to the site owner to ensure that it grits the roadways serving the Sunset Drive Mobile Home Site during freezing weather conditions?

Answer:

An email has been sent to the owner asking him to grit the road and pavements as soon as freezing weather conditions are forecast for the area to ensure that he complies with the licence condition which states that:

"Roads shall be maintained in a good condition"

21 CHAFFORD SCHOOL: SIXTH FORM

To the Cabinet Member for Children & Learning (Councillor Paul Rochford)

By Councillor David Durant

Has the Administration any plans to restore a 6th Form to Chafford school, Rainham - and if not why not?

Answer:

With regards to the Administration's strategy for school places - whilst the number of primary pupils in Havering is set to increase by 2,833 (15%) between 2011/12 and 2016/17. At secondary level the pattern is different with projected decline until 2016/17. Currently there are 1,297 surplus places, 7% of total places.

There are no LA plans to expand the age range at any LA secondary school, including Chafford.

22 SPENDING ON RECRUITMENT

To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)

By Councillor Clarence Barrett

Would the Cabinet Member set out how much has been spent on recruitment over each of the last three years in the following two categories:

- a) Adverts in newspapers/journals/trade magazines
- b) Recruitment Consultants

Answer:

a) Havering works in partnership with other London boroughs as part of the London Boroughs recruitment partnership to provide recruitment advertising in newspapers, journals and trade magazines at very competitive rates.

All of Havering's recruitment is posted on the Council website at nil cost. In circumstances where the role may be difficult to recruit or we have a statutory obligation to advertise in an external publication, then spend is approved.

The total spend on adverts in newspapers, journals and trade magazine over the last three years was £128,292.

b) Recruitment consultants are only used in Havering to recruit to senior roles i.e. Head of Service and above. Where possible, internal resources are used to facilitate a recruitment exercise. The only roles at Head of Service and above recruited to in the last three years were:

Head of Children and Young People - facilitated internally, no spend on recruitment consultants

Interim Director of Adult Social Care - cost of recruitment consultants: £27,000

Head of Strategic HR and OD - cost of recruitment consultants: £20,217

Director of Social Care and Learning: cost of recruitment consultants: £22,404

23 QUEENS HOSPITAL: HYGIENE

To the Cabinet Member for Individuals (Councillor Steven Kelly)

By Councillor Mark Logan

Has the Queens hospital been meeting the required NHS hygiene standards?

Answer:

BHRUT have a formal policy for infection control and with that they have a suite of documents which relate to multiple different areas of infection prevention. BHRUT are updating their infection prevention control strategy and the commissioning organisation is reviewing this on Monday.

There is a comprehensive training programme for infection control and with that they have a training needs analysis of all staff and to ensure that the training programme is effective and the outcomes are improving they are running an audit programme. They have recently implemented the National Guidance for management of the Norovirus.

24 ACADEMIES AND FREE SCHOOLS: SEN ADMISSIONS

To the Cabinet Member for Children & Learning (Councillor Paul Rochford)

By Councillor Gillian Ford

There has recently been national concern over Academy and Free schools discriminating against SEN admissions. Would the Cabinet Member advise this Council if this has become an issue in Havering?

Answer:

No, this is not currently an issue; however it is something that we do keep under permanent review, so that we could intervene if necessary.

25 ACCESS TO DVLA DATABASE

To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)

By Councillor Nic Dodin

Would the Cabinet Member confirm whether this Council has been denied access to the DVLA database at any time over the past four years?

Answer:

No

26 BINS FOR DOG WASTE

To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member consider installing suitable bins which can be used for dog waste close to areas of green open space in the borough?

Answer:

Residents can utilise the existing street litter bins for dog waste so there is no need for installing additional bins on the highway.

27 SALE OF FORMER GARAGE SITES

To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)

By Councillor Ron Ower

Would the Cabinet Member reveal how much has been raised from the sale of former housing garage sites since 2010?

Answer:

The overall capital receipt from the sale of former housing garage sites since 1st January 2010 is £5,525,777.

The receipts are supporting the Council's overall capital priorities, including £2,088,010 provided as grant for housing associations to build new affordable homes for local people on the garage sites. This investment has in turn levered in £7,260,000 Homes and Communities Agency grant for housing associations to develop on further garages sites. The combined Council and HCA grants have funded a total of 135 new affordable homes on council garage sites since 2010, consisting of 113 houses, 6 bungalows and 16 flats.

Out of the overall 135 new homes, 84 have been completed to date with the remaining 51 currently under construction.

28 PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Michael White)

By Councillor John Mylod

It was recently reported that 337 councils have set up partnerships between each other to help drive down costs. Would the Leader set out:

- a) How many partnerships have we with other local Councils and which ones?
- b) Details of any savings achieved through these partnerships?
- c) Have we an indication whether they are successful?

Answer:

Due to the length of the answer I will provide a written to the Member.

29 STAFF SICKNESS

To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Michael White)

By Councillor Gillian Ford

Would the Leader set out the average levels of staff sickness over each of the last three years and the cost to the authority respectively?

Answer:

Financial Year		£ sickness cost
09/10	(8.90 average days per person)	£2,120,859.19
10/11	(7.11 average days per person)	£1,668,532.38
11/12	(8.16 average days per person)	£1,949,618.38

30 **AGENCY STAFF****To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)**

By Councillor Linda Hawthorn

Would the Cabinet Member set out how much has been spent on agency staff in each of the last two years broken down by division?

Answer:

Division	Total Charge April 2010 - March 2011
Culture and Community	£5,807,846
Finance and Commerce	£4,781,007
Legal and Democratic Services	£644,354
Social Care and Learning	£4,697,116
Grand Total	£15,930,315

Division	Total Charge April 2011 - March 2012
Culture and Community	£6,205,593
Finance and Commerce	£3,431,983
Legal and Democratic Services	£546,113
Social Care and Learning	£4,153,274
Grand Total	£14,336,962