



Havering

LONDON BOROUGH

PLACES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE AGENDA

7.00 pm

Thursday
14 September 2023

Appointment Centre
Room 10&11

Members 12: Quorum 5

COUNCILLORS:

Conservative Group (4)

David Taylor (Chairman)
Ray Best
Jason Frost
Osman Dervish

Labour Group (2)

Katharine Tumilty (Vice-Chair)
Matthew Stanton

Havering Residents' Group (5)

David Godwin
Sue Ospreay
Gerry O'Sullivan
Natasha Summers
Bryan Vincent

East Havering Residents Group (1)

Brian Eagling

For information about the meeting please contact:

Taiwo Adeoye - 01708 433079
taiwo.adeoye@onesource.co.uk

Under the Committee Procedure Rules within the Council's Constitution the Chairman of the meeting may exercise the powers conferred upon the Mayor in relation to the conduct of full Council meetings. As such, should any member of the public interrupt proceedings, the Chairman will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chairman will order their removal from the meeting room and may adjourn the meeting while this takes place.

Excessive noise and talking should also be kept to a minimum whilst the meeting is in progress in order that the scheduled business may proceed as planned.

Protocol for members of the public wishing to report on meetings of the London Borough of Havering

Members of the public are entitled to report on meetings of Council, Committees and Cabinet, except in circumstances where the public have been excluded as permitted by law.

Reporting means:-

- filming, photographing or making an audio recording of the proceedings of the meeting;
- using any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later; or
- reporting or providing commentary on proceedings at a meeting, orally or in writing, so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later if the person is not present.

Anyone present at a meeting as it takes place is not permitted to carry out an oral commentary or report. This is to prevent the business of the meeting being disrupted.

Anyone attending a meeting is asked to advise Democratic Services staff on 01708 433076 that they wish to report on the meeting and how they wish to do so. This is to enable employees to guide anyone choosing to report on proceedings to an appropriate place from which to be able to report effectively.

Members of the public are asked to remain seated throughout the meeting as standing up and walking around could distract from the business in hand.

What is Overview & Scrutiny?

Each local authority is required by law to establish an overview and scrutiny function to support and scrutinise the Council's executive arrangements. Each overview and scrutiny sub-committee has its own remit as set out in the terms of reference but they each meet to consider issues of local importance.

The sub-committees have a number of key roles:

1. Providing a critical friend challenge to policy and decision makers.
2. Driving improvement in public services.
3. Holding key local partners to account.
4. Enabling the voice and concerns to the public.

The sub-committees consider issues by receiving information from, and questioning, Cabinet Members, officers and external partners to develop an understanding of proposals, policy and practices. They can then develop recommendations that they believe will improve performance, or as a response to public consultations. These are considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and if approved, submitted for a response to Council, Cabinet and other relevant bodies.

Sub-Committees will often establish Topic Groups to examine specific areas in much greater detail. These groups consist of a number of Members and the review period can last for anything from a few weeks to a year or more to allow the Members to comprehensively examine an issue through interviewing expert witnesses, conducting research or undertaking site visits. Once the topic group has finished its work it will send a report to the Sub-Committee that created it and will often suggest recommendations for the Overview and Scrutiny Board to pass to the Council's Executive.

Terms of Reference

The areas scrutinised by the Committee are:

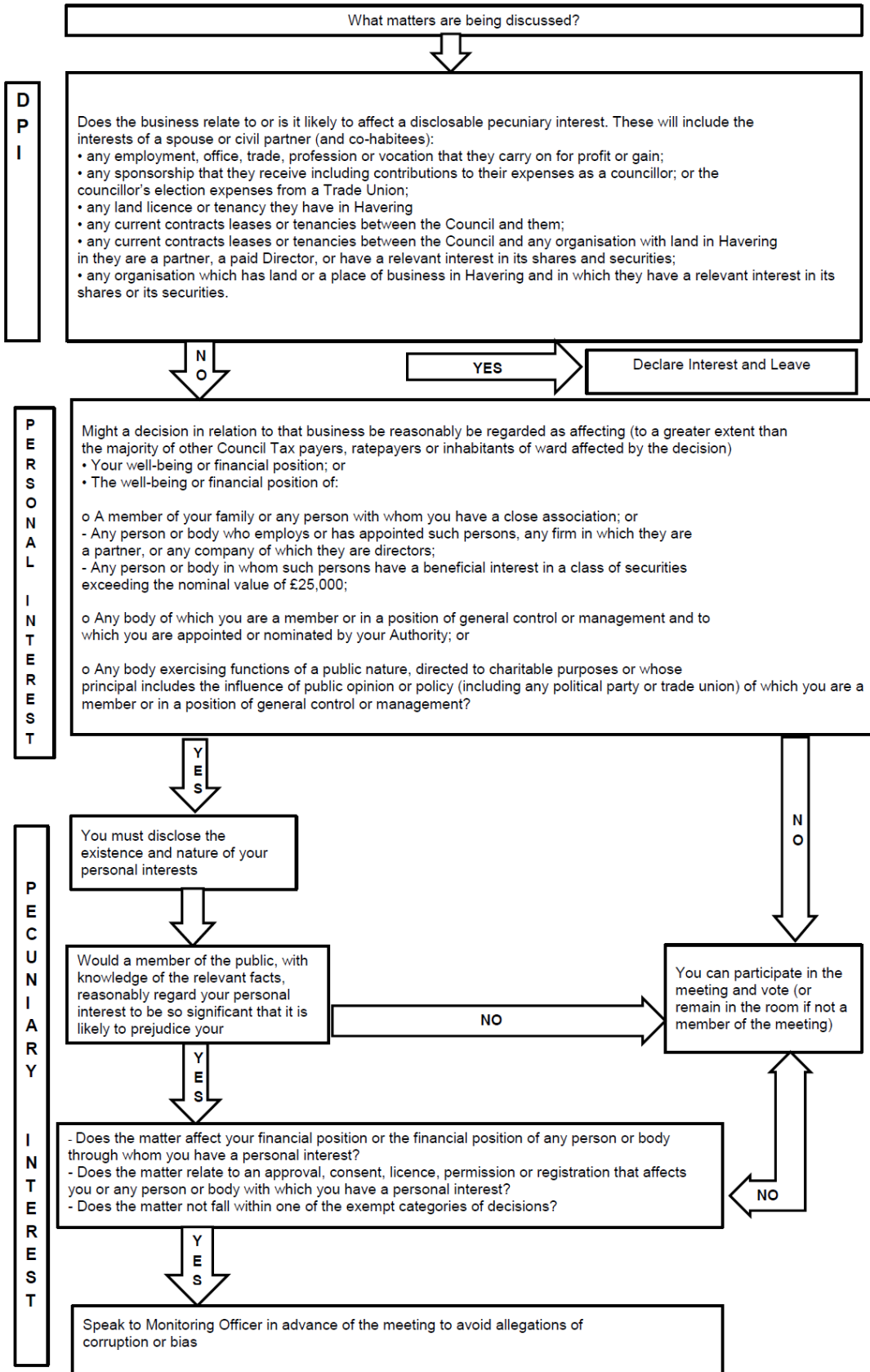
- Housing & Accommodation Services
- Land & Property Services
- Planning
- Building Control
- Business Services
- Inward Investment
- Asset Management
- Property Services
- Facilities Management
- Sports

Places Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee, 14 September 2023

- Leisure
- Arts
- Music
- Libraries
- Heritage
- Parks & Open Space
- Highways
- Parking & Traffic
- Waste & Recycling
- Climate Change
- Transport & Infrastructure
- Public Protection & Licensing
- Emergency Planning
- Technical Services

Places Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee, 14 September 2023

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF



AGENDA ITEMS

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Receive (if any)

2 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Members are invited to disclose any interests in any of the items on the agenda at this point of the meeting. Members may still declare an interest in an item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.

3 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman will announce details of the arrangements in case of fire or other events that might require the meeting room or building's evacuation.

4 **MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 18 July 2023 and authorise the Chairman to sign them

5 **HOUSING REPAIRS AND VOIDS UPDATE** (Pages 7 - 16)

Report attached.

6 **GREEN FLAG AWARD - HAVERING'S PARKS** (Pages 17 - 22)

Report attached.

7 **STATE OF CHILDREN'S AREA - HAVERING PARKS** (Pages 23 - 28)

Report attached.

Zena Smith
Head of Committee and
Election Services

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLACES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE
Council Chamber - Town Hall
18 July 2023 (7.20 - 9.30 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	David Taylor (Chairman), Osman Dervish, Ray Best and Jason Frost
Havering Residents' Group	David Godwin, Gerry O'Sullivan and Bryan Vincent
Labour Group	Katharine Tumilty (Vice-Chair) and Matthew Stanton
East Havering Residents Group	Brian Eagling

Apologies was received for the absence of Councillor Natasha Summers.

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

An apology for absence from the meeting was received from Councillor Natasha Summers. Councillor Sue Ospreay was absent.

25 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

26 MINUTES

The minutes of the sub-committee meeting held on 7 March 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27 UPDATE OF TREE SERVICES IN HAVERING

At the request of Members, a report that outlined the key activities, statistics, challenges and aspirations of the Havering Council's Tree Services was presented to the sub-committee.

Members noted that there were an estimated 20,000 street trees, 250,000 trees in parks and open spaces and 4,000 trees on Council housing sites. These trees play an integral part in both managing the ecological footprint of Havering as well as the Borough's aesthetics.

Members commended the service on the number of new trees planted but were of the opinion that the current maintenance and pruning of trees needed a review. It was also noted that at present there was no contractor working for the council to undertake this exercise.

The Sub-Committee noted that Havering has never formally adopted a specific tree policy. It was stated that a new policy and accompanying strategy has been drafted, and was currently under review by business partners. The Strategy's vision is:

To preserve, improve and secure a nett gain of the Council's tree stock for current and future generations, adhering to the "right tree, right place" principal.

The aims, objectives and outcomes of the draft Tree Policy are subject to change and the team was considering looking to include reference to climate change mitigation. The draft policy currently contains the following:

- To manage the Council's tree stock in accordance with good arboriculture and streetscape practice to BS standard 3998.
- To maintain the Council's tree stock on a regular cyclical basis.
- To increase the stock of trees in an appropriate manner by seeking both grant funding and private sponsorship.
- To inform and educate residents and businesses about the value of trees, and explore ways for greater involvement, consultation and protection from residents and businesses.
- To promote and secure high quality tree planting and landscaping within new developments in order to maintain and enhance the Borough's local landscapes.

Members suggested that the service should proactively liaise with Planning Officers during the drafting stage of the policy in order to influence the choice of trees planning and planting in future developments.

Members asked for the draft policy to be presented to the sub-committee once it was ready for adoption.

Members requested that the sub-committee receive a breakdown of previous complaints relating to tree issues.

It was also suggested that information relating to the current regime of tree maintenance in cemeteries be presented to members at a later date.

The sub-committee noted that assuming funding is granted the service would commence purchase new tree stock in August 2023.

It was stated that between November 2023 – Feb 2024, the next round of tree planting will take place along with the commencement of the new tree maintenance contract

The Sub-Committee was informed of the following future plans:

1. School programme: The team would like to become more involved in community engagement and education of youngsters in the borough to fuel their enthusiasm for the natural environment.
2. Sponsorship scheme: Officers hope to relaunch this scheme in the next 12-18 months, as a way to encourage more tree planting on the public highway and enable residents to take more ownership of their surroundings.
3. The Team will continue to explore further opportunities across the service.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and presentation.

28 **ULEZ ASSET REPORT**

At the request of Members, a report that detailed the financial impact of the ULEZ enforcement that comes into force on the 29 August 2023, impacting across a wide range of council vehicles and departments.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the council operates a fleet of c. 200 vehicles across its various functions and the ULEZ compliance status summarised as follows by service:

Highways – operate vehicles 7500kg > 18,000kg and all are compliant for the up and coming ULEZ changes. The Highways vehicles are manufactured from 2014 > 2018 and the Highways contract is due for reprocurement in April 2024 at which point it is likely that the remaining in-house activities will be outsourced. It was stated that there is a freeze on replacing these operational vehicles which all have an operating life of 7 years. As these vehicles are all Euro 6 and are not subject to daily ULEZ charges.

Passenger Transport Services (PTS) – operate 62 vehicles ranging from 3500kg > 12000kg (15 seats to 73 seats). PTS had intended to replace 27 'out of life', non-compliant buses last year and were at the award stage in November 2022 when they were asked to defer most of the replacements pending a review of Home to School Transport policy. It was agreed that PTS would apply to TfL for Community Grace Period Certificates, which

allow a temporary exemption period up to October 2025. This has now been completed. The current PTS fleet which is a mixture of Euro 5 and Euro 6 Vehicles are currently ALL exempt from ULEZ daily charges.

Grounds Maintenance and Environment/Neighbourhoods – both of these services have been the subject of deferred fleet replacement due to potential inclusion within procurement of larger contracts.

The Environment/Neighbourhoods function (mechanised sweepers) is now within scope of the new waste contract commencing with Urbaser in Autumn 2023.

It was stated that a decision was recently taken, when scoping the forthcoming Highways contract, to retain the grounds maintenance function in-house. A Non-Key ED is being prepared seeking permission to replace these vehicles and a procurement Gateway meeting is taking place this month to establish the agreed route to tender. However, pending delivery of the new grounds maintenance fleet assets, up to 32 vehicles will be subject to the ULEZ charge of £12.50 per day.

Housing – Most of the housing fleet is hired and ULEZ-compliant (Euro 6). There are 8 x 3.5 tonne vehicles that are due for replacement and they will be subject to the daily ULEZ charge of £12.50 up to the point where replacement vehicles are available. Specifications are being agreed with the Housing service and a business case is being prepared to replace them.

Bereavement Services – The fleet are currently linked to the procurement of the grounds maintenance vehicles and all 4 vehicles are ULEZ non-compliant and are subject to the daily fine of £12.50. All are due to be replaced this year.

Pool Cars – The fleet usage is monitored over time relative to demand and as a result the number of pool cars has been reduced since its introduction from 20 to 10 remaining vehicles. It is proposed replace the remaining 'owned' fleet with electric vehicles once the charging infrastructure is in place. In the meantime, the current diesel vehicles are being sold and temporary (Euro 6) hired vehicles are replacing them.

Car Parks and Parking Enforcement – Both sections have been under review including their facilities operational base at Angel Way car park. Ongoing discussions are taking place regarding their fleet requirements including the possible provision of e-bikes. It was noted that Parking Services have 6 vehicles subject to the ULEZ daily charge of £12.50.

The report detailed a projected cost of replacing non-compliant vehicles. An appendix to the report identified the fleet and the following costs:

- The daily, monthly and yearly costs of ULEZ fines per vehicle.
- The ULEZ cost for this current year from 1st September 2023
- The estimated cost of replacing non-compliant fleet assets

- The estimated cost of replacing all vehicles including the buses with TFL community grace period application certificates.
- Identifies 201 vehicles with 68 ULEZ non-compliant.

The Sub-Committee noted that the projected schedule identified a worst-case scenario, that the unlikely event of no further fleet replacements being achieved during the current financial year and all non-compliant vehicles being used daily, the Council's potential exposure to ULEZ fines would be approximately £103k in 2023/4.

Members asked that the service produce a year on year breakdown of reduction of the ULEZ fine in order to determine cost to the council.

The Sub-Committee noted the current position of the council vehicles.

29 **SCOPING DOCUMENT FOR SCHOOL STREETS SCHEME TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

The scope for the school Streets Scheme task and finish group was agreed by the sub-committee.

Chairman

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PLACES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:	Housing Repairs and Voids update
SLT Lead:	Neil Stubbings Strategic Director of Place
Report Author and contact details:	Garry Knights Assistant Director of Housing, Property and Assets garry.knights@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	For information only The report provides an update of the performance of the Repairs and Voids contract for Housing with Mears

SUMMARY

- 1. The report is for information only, no decision is required.
- 1.1. The report provides an update to Places OSSC on the performance of the Repairs and Voids contract with Mears.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2. Members note the report

REPORT DETAIL

Background

- 3. The Council owns and manages circa 9,200 homes and circa 2,500 leasehold properties including 10 tower blocks and 1,000 medium and low rise blocks.

- 3.1. The Council undertakes circa 30,000 responsive repairs annually (excluding heating repairs which are under a separate contract) and works to circa 1,000 void properties (stock and PSL properties)
- 3.2. The Council's previous contract for delivering the responsive repairs works ended in March 2022 and following an extensive procurement Mears were appointed to a new 10 year contract to deliver the new service.
- 3.3. The procurement exercise gave us the opportunity to re-assess the requirements from the service, including improved use of technology, better end to end journey for our customers, better system interfaces, more stringent KPIs and an improved Social value offer.
- 3.4. The new approach was based on a significantly different and more robust contract and control mechanisms, a fully resourced Housing Repairs team and a significant improvement in relationships with Mears including full co-location, currently in a fully serviced office space at the CEME centre in Rainham.
- 3.5. The contract also included the option to allow Mears to undertake the call handling function for housing property related activity and this option was exercised with the call handling going live in May.

Performance

- 3.6. The contract mobilised in 2022 which was an extremely challenging period for a number of reasons;
 - 3.6.1. Post covid the sector has seen significant increases in repairs volumes, and this impacted on additional resource required
 - 3.6.2. Less staff than expected TUPEd onto the contract and we had difficulties in initially recruiting staff
 - 3.6.3. Extreme challenges around rising prices of materials and subcontractors
 - 3.6.4. Higher volumes of jobs handed over from the previous contract than forecast
- 3.7. However despite the challenges the contract is performing well performing at or around its key KPIs as per the below table
- 3.8. The current Works in Progress (WIP) is below 1000 which represent circa 2 weeks of routine repairs jobs.

Measure	Performance	Target
Emergency jobs completed on time (attended 2 hours and made safe 4 hours)	99.79%	100%
Urgent jobs completed on time (3 days)	96.28%	97%

Routine jobs completed on time (28 days)	97.53%	95%
Customer Satisfaction	83%	95%

3.9. Our voids performance continues to make significant improvements in turnaround times and the number of properties in WIP

Measure	Performance	Target
Average void days with repairs V1	14.5 days	11 days
Average void days with repairs V2	24.57 days	19 days

3.10. As stated we exercised the option for Mears to directly take calls from customers to continue to improve the service.

3.11. Customers continue to call the same Havering number but choose options for repairs and property enquiries or for heating repairs and enquiries. This provides a seamless solution but allows residents to speak directly with experience repairs officers, located in the CEME centre and working directly with Mears planners, our repairs surveyors and back office staff.

3.12. This approach has provided significant improvement in both the call waiting times and all the diagnosis of repairs, improving the right first time approach and customer satisfaction.

3.13. We have also been able to improve the functionality of the customer portal with automatic responses, and are continuing to develop IT interfaces and functionality.

Measure	Performance	Target
Mears – average call waiting time	28 seconds	30 seconds
K&T – average call waiting time	16 seconds	30 seconds
Mears - % of abandoned calls	6.50%	5%
K&T - % of abandoned calls	2.53%	5%

Social Value

4. The Council is working with Mears to develop the social value offering, we included a significant suite of requirements which will be delivered over the term. We have delivered a number of social value projects including;

- 4.1. Extensive Works to improve Hitchin Green
- 4.2. 400 Easter eggs donated to hostels within Havering
- 4.3. Hampers provided for quiz nights in sheltered scheme's
- 4.4. Heras fencing provided for St Francis hospice
- 4.5. £1500 made in donations
- 4.6. Project scheduled for October to regenerate area at Brunswick court
- 4.7. 4 local apprentices currently in employment.

Other Improvements

5. In order to reduce the demand on the repairs service, which is the most disruptive and costly approach to maintenance, we need to move to a more proactive service, which gets ahead of likely problems
6. The Council is currently re-introducing cyclical decorating programme and gutter and drain clearance programmes and we have successfully introduced property MOTs, initially on properties at Hilldene and Farnham, with a wider rollout to follow, starting with the properties on the current regeneration programme.
7. This is a proactive approach in which operatives visit a property and undertake checks and minor repairs across the whole property, largely in low cost high use items such as window and door handles, kitchen door and drawer adjustments, taps and traps checks with the aim of eliminating the need for future responsive repairs.
8. We will initially look at high and low users of the repairs service and this approach will also allow us to capture some stock condition data to inform future planned programmes of work.
9. The Council are also working with Mears on developing some other areas of planned preventative works, especially around fencing and hardstanding's which cause significant concerns to residents when left on a reactive basis.
10. Prior to the terrible death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale from mould related illness we had already changed our approach to supporting residents with mould issue. We improved our guidance documents (appendix 1) and our surveyors visit every report of damp. We also introduced a Mould MOT which provides initial property checks including ventilation followed by a programme of mould washes to support resident manage issues.
11. We classify mould as one of three types;
 - 11.1. Defect - mould which stems from a defect in the property such as a leaking pipe, insufficient ventilation or broken gutters. This can be tackled quickly through repairs.
 - 11.2. Structural - mould which can develop because of the structural design of the building (often related to our non-traditional builds). This will

be tackled in the medium term through our fabric first zero carbon approaches and through regeneration

- 11.3. Environmental – mould which is caused predominantly by difficulties in managing the moisture which flows from everyday living activities such as cooking, bathing and drying washing. This is often associated with overcrowded properties but also where residents are struggling with cost of living issues, especially related to heating their homes properly. These are often more difficult to resolve and we work with residents to help manage the issues and ensure they are maximising available benefits. We are also looking at how we can address overcrowding through proactive approaches such as extensions.
12. The Council is also continuing to further improve the IT integrations, including direct access to our asset management system (Keystone) and our finance systems to streamline efficiencies of service
13. We are also procuring a full suite of contracts under a strategic alliance, across all of the property service functions, designed around our 2040 zero carbon targets. This will create a fully integrated, collaborative suite of contracts which can deliver consistent service to residents, alongside the repairs contracts, and will provide a deliverable approach to transitioning into new technology whilst maintain residents safety, meeting decent homes standards and complying with the Regulator of Social Housing new consumer standards.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Mould leaflet

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A guide to treating mould growth

It's always unsettling when you find mould growth in your home, and it's understandable to think there is something wrong.

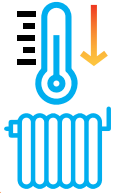
However, a majority of mould issues come from a build-up of moisture, which is often caused just by living in your home. Millions of homes across the country experience mould issues, but there are easy steps we can all take to help tackle the problem.

What causes mould growth?

As we go about our daily activities, such as cooking, cleaning and washing, we release moisture into the air. This moisture builds up against cold surfaces and forms water droplets – also known as condensation. This can lead to mould growth if left untreated.

Condensation can form on windows, doors and exterior walls, especially in older homes that were built using different methods to modern homes.

In order to help reduce condensation and lower the likelihood of mould growth there are a number of simple measures we can take, including:



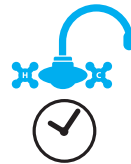
Ensuring you heat your property at a low level through the day, as this helps stop the water condensing



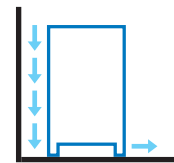
Put lids on your pans when cooking to trap escaping steam



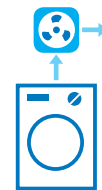
Ensuring any vents are open and correctly fitted, and use extractor fans when cooking and washing



Try to reduce the length of time spent in baths and showers and make sure the bathroom door is closed



Try to leave space around furniture to create airflow



Make sure tumble dryers vent outside, either through an open window or fitted extractor vent



Properly ventilate your property (including cupboards), by opening windows and doors throughout the day



When possible, dry clothes outside rather than on radiators



Wipe down around your windows regularly with a dry towel to remove moisture



Don't put wet items into closed cupboards, let them dry before putting them away

Treating mould build up

It's important to act fast if you start to notice mould growth, as it's easier to remove the earlier it's treated. Here is a simple guide to treating mould build up.



1. Mix a solution of standard household bleach and water, or you can pick up a cheap bleach spray from most supermarkets



2. Wipe down the affected area with your bleach solution as soon as mould starts to form. This will remove the mould easily and protect the surface from repeat growth for a while



3. Keep an eye on the area and repeat clean down if you notice spores starting to grow back



4. Use a specialised mould-killing product on more stubborn build-ups. You can pick these up in most supermarkets. Be sure to follow the instructions on the label



5. When decorating (especially in kitchen and bathrooms) use the correct paint (usually labelled as 'kitchen and bathroom paint'. These have additional mould resistance properties



6. As with all cleaning products, please use them carefully and follow safety instructions on the label



DID YOU KNOW:
The average adult breathes out 2.5kg of water vapour per day - equivalent to roughly 10 cups of tea

Persistent mould problems

Condensation forms on the coldest part of our homes, which is why we see it most often on and around windows.

Due to the way some of our older homes were first built, some have cold spots which is where mould will most likely form. These cold spots are often around windows, balconies, and in the corners where outside walls and ceilings meet.

In some cases it may be possible for us to carry out improvement works to help tackle the issue, such as installing new loft insulation. However, this isn't possible in many of our homes, and it may be necessary to wash down the walls regularly during the coldest months.

Other causes of mould build up

In some instances, a leaking pipe, gutter, downpipe, or a crack opening in the building can also cause mould to build up. In these instances, finding and fixing the leak will solve the problem.

When you report a mould issue, our surveyors will carry out a thorough check of your home to see if there are any leaks that are causing issues. If we find anything, we will act quickly to ensure these are resolved.

Occasionally, leaks can cause damage to multiple properties, so it is important to report suspected leaks to us as soon as possible. Please also note that expected repair times can vary when multiple properties are affected.

Contact

Repair helpline – **01708 434000**

Mould web page – **www.havering.gov.uk/mould**

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PLACES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

Green Flag Award

SLT Lead:

Imran Kazalbash

Report Author and contact details:

James Rose

Policy context:

The Havering Vision

Place Outcome – Havering is a Green Borough

- *Investing in our parks*
- *Number of parks with Green Flags*

SUMMARY

This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with information on the Green Flag award which the Parks team apply for annually.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

REPORT DETAIL

Parks – Green Flag Award

1. Background

The Green Flag Award scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world.

Purpose & aims

- To ensure that everybody has access to quality green and other open spaces, irrespective of where they live.
- To ensure that these spaces are appropriately managed and meet the needs of the communities that they serve.
- To establish standards of good management.
- To promote and share good practice amongst the green space sector.
- To recognise and reward the hard work of staff and volunteers.

2. Havering's Award Winning Sites

Havering achieved the first two awards in 2007 (Upminster and Bedfords) and by 2020 the number of flags reached 16 with Hornchurch Country Park and Spring Farm the latest awards. There is a good coverage across the borough with most areas having at least one Green Flag park (see attached plan).

The most recent awards were made in July this year when all 16 sites were successful.

Sites have been submitted for the award based on its existing and potential standards, as well as the facilities and type of space it is. Some have needed more investment than others to bring the standards up to meet the criteria and this has depended on the Council's priorities.

It is also a condition of the Heritage Lottery Fund to ensure that any park they provide funding for achieves the award. Hence the applications for Raphael Park and Langtons Gardens after their restorations.

Havering has 100 parks and green spaces and not all of them can realistically achieve the required standards. Many sites are intrinsically unsuitable as they may be good quality local spaces but would not meet the required criteria to achieve the award.

It is unlikely that there are more sites that would be suitable for a new application and they would require both additional capital and revenue investment.

3. Judging Process

Applications are required annually and this comprises of a desktop assessment using the park's Management Plan and then a site inspection. The total fee for the Green Flag Award process for 2023/24 was £6,069.

For all of our sites given they are existing award winners, a formal site inspection is only required every other year. A mystery shop takes place in-between which does not affect the result but depending on the condition of the park it can influence the formal inspection the following year.

In Havering the following parks are formally judged/mystery shopped in alternative years.

Hornchurch Country Park
Spring Farm Park
Langtons Gardens
Raphael Park
Central Park
Rise Park
Harold Wood Park
Cottons Park
Upminster Park
Bedfords Park

Harrow Lodge Park
Haynes Park
St Andrews Park
Lawns Park
Hylands Park
Lodge Farm Park

4. Feedback

As part of the award each park receives a feedback report. There are two types depending on whether the park has been formally judged or mystery shopped. The former is more detailed with more criteria and the latter uses a traffic light system to check the condition of the park with reduced criteria and some comments.

Flag judges are selected based on their skills and experience and are usually existing or ex-green space professionals. Therefore, the comments and recommendations are valued and mostly practical.

This is a useful process each year which helps us update the Management Plans and then in turn some improvements in the parks.

It may not be feasible for all the judge's recommendations to be considered or indeed feasible for our parks. However it is very worthwhile getting a different perspective and the views of other professionals from not just within the UK but sometimes around the world (Green Flag is global) on what they think we can do to improve the management of our parks.

In previous years, we have implemented new planting schemes and installed different items of play equipment based on previous feedback. Several years ago a Dutch judge recommended new callisthenics equipment that we later used in some parks. This year one of the recommendations from a judge was that we look at alternative ways of surfacing around signage and other infrastructure to reduce maintenance and improve the finish.

Feedback is received from the formally judged sites after the awards are announced in July/August and then after the mystery shops in November. Officers review the comments and recommendations that will then be used as part of the Management Plan revisions during the winter months.

Appendix

Green Flag Judging criteria

Desk assessment

1. Presentation
2. Health, safety and security
3. Maintenance of equipment, buildings and landscapes
4. Litter, cleanliness and vandalism
5. Environmental management
6. Biodiversity, landscape and heritage
7. Community involvement
8. Marketing and communication
9. Overall management

Field assessment

1. **A welcoming place**- welcome, good and safe access, signage, equal access for all
2. **Health, safety and security**- appropriate level of quality facilities and activities, safe equipment and facilities, personal security, control of dogs/dog fouling
3. **Well maintained and clean**- Litter and waste management, horticultural maintenance, Arboricultural maintenance, building and infrastructure maintenance, equipment maintenance
4. **Environmental Management** – managing environmental impact, waste minimisation, chemical use, peat use, climate change adaptation strategies
5. **Biodiversity, landscape and heritage**- Management of natural features, wild fauna and flora, conservation of landscape features, conservation of buildings and structures
6. **Community involvement**- Community involvement in management and development, appropriate provision for the community
7. **Marketing and communication**- Marketing and promotion, appropriate information channels, appropriate educational and interpretational information
8. **Management**- implementation of management plan

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

There are no implications from this report.

Legal implications and risks:

There are no implications from this report.

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are no implications from this report.

Equalities implications and risks:

There are no implications from this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There are no implications from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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PLACES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

State of Children's Areas

SLT Lead:

Imran Kazalbash

Report Author and contact details:

James Rose

Policy context:

The Havering Vision

Place Outcome – Havering is a Green Borough

- *Investing in our parks*
- *Number of parks with Green Flags*

SUMMARY

This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with information on the management of parks and play areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Background

Havering's Parks team are responsible for 100 parks and open spaces, 27 allotments, 6 war memorials and a network of Public Rights of Way.

There are 44 play areas, 19 ball courts, 21 outdoor gyms, 3 callisthenics areas, 2 parkour areas, 7 skate/bmx areas, and 38 tennis courts in our parks and open spaces. They vary from small locally equipped areas of play to large destination sites spread across the borough such as Hornchurch Country Park, Raphael Park and Central Park.

Play is an important part of children's physical and social development as well as and good play areas are an effective way of ensuring parks are well used by families. Therefore, resources have consistently been prioritised to maintaining and improving the areas in Havering. Careful consideration is given to the type of equipment in each site and the design based on the type of usage and landscape. All play areas have some inclusive play equipment, depending on the size of the area, so children of all abilities can play together.

Havering's parks have also got a varied range of recreation equipment for people of all ages. It is important not to just provide equipment for children but for teenagers, young adults and older people. This ensures that play areas are not misused and our parks provide facilities for the whole community. Having a varied range of areas and equipment that allows park users to participate in informal exercise assists in helping reduce obesity in young people and also GP referral schemes.

Havering has always been keen to introduce new types of equipment in our parks and some of first outdoor gym areas in London were installed in our parks before becoming so popular. Officers keep up to date with the latest developments in the industry and ensure when possible innovative and existing equipment is installed. In recent years this has seen Parkour (free running) and callisthenics (body weight exercise) equipment starting to be installed in our parks. There are also multi-use games areas, trim trails and outdoor gyms in several parks. The former are very popular with young people and the latter two with people of all ages who prefer not to attend traditional gyms.

2. Inspection and Maintenance

There is a parks monitoring system that is carried out by Parks Development Officers and covers both the grounds maintenance standards and condition of infrastructure. This includes regularly checking paths, furniture, fencing and gates.

Standards are assessed using a manual which has photos and descriptions for each area. This was produced using examples from within the borough and the London Parks Benchmarking Group's 'Quality Manual'.

Any required actions are recorded and either dealt with by the Parks Officer or reported to the relevant officer or contractor.

Play areas and exercise areas are subject to three types of inspection.

Basic visual inspection

This is carried out by RoSPA trained Grounds Maintenance operatives at specific frequencies throughout the week. Each inspection is logged on a visual inspection sheet, an example of which is in Appendix 10. These sheets are then fed back to the Parks Development Officers to be actioned as appropriate, e.g. repair, take out of action or monitor. The frequency of these checks varies as it is decided on a usage and fault finding basis. The large majority of repairs are carried out by the Parks Maintenance operative assisted by the Park Rangers. If necessary, a specialist play area manufacturer will be used.

Operational Inspection

This is a more in depth inspection and is carried out by the RoSPA trained Parks Maintenance Supervisor. They will check bearings, chains. Links nuts and bolts etc and have the equipment to carry out many repairs. These checks are recorded, example in Appendix 11, and any faults that cannot be rectified reported to the Parks team and if necessary the item taken out of use until repaired. The fitter carried out these inspections on a quarterly basis.

Independent annual check

This is carried out by a reputable organisation such as RoSPA on an annual basis. The outcomes of their report are used to set a work program in for the Parks Maintenance team and feeds into budget planning of the Parks Development Team. It is very rare that high risk items are found in our parks, unless they are related to inherently hazardous equipment such as skate parks. Therefore, mainly the medium risk items are prioritised for the year.

As well as the above there is also ad hoc inspections by the Parks Development Officers that back up the formal inspections and also ensure a quality check on the visual inspections.

3. Damage and Vandalism

The constant issues we face are around the following:

- Damage to safer surfacing (mainly wet-pour) being cut and dug out / pulled up.
- Cutting and removing the rope wrapped around basket swings.
- Damage swing seats (mainly by allowing dogs to bite them and then hang)
- Cutting of ropes on climbing frames

Where possible repairs are carried out in-house, e.g. replacing swing seats and ropes. However, some jobs require specialist contractors, e.g. wet-pour repairs, which can be expensive and take several weeks to schedule. To improve this process, we have recently provided the Parks Maintenance operative with the necessary materials for relatively small jobs. We are looking at how feasible it will be to extend this work to larger jobs to negate the need to use contractors.

Although we keep a good stock of spares for the standard jobs, it is necessary to order in spare and replacement parts for specific or specialist repairs. Depending on the supplier and part it can take several weeks for delivery.

When there is significant damage to equipment that is beyond repair, for safety reasons it is necessary to remove these items. We then have to replacement, either as part of a full or part site refurbishment or as a one-off.

As part of the Parks Capital Improvement Programme, there has been a regular allocation for both refurbishments and ad-hoc improvements, i.e. individual equipment replacement. However, all equipment is expensive and depending on the item this is not always possible that financial year.

4. Graffiti

Graffiti has always happened in parks but over recent years it has been increasing and also taking place in sites where it has never been a problem.

The majority is non-offensive however, there are some instances of offensive material that we prioritise the removal of.

Removal is undertaken by the Parks team or the Community Payback team when possible. It is also necessary to ask the Street Cleansing team to assist in some cases when specialist equipment is required,

5. Improvements

There has been a regular programme of capital improvements in parks in recent years that has included high profile projects such as the Harrow Lodge Park lake to various infrastructure works, e.g. fencing, bins, benches and signage.

The programme is informed by officer inspections and feedback from members and stakeholders, e.g. friends groups, sports clubs.

Within the programmes, we have included full and partial play area restorations as well as individual items being replaced.

We have used the Council capital as match funding to secure grants from the Veolia Environmental Trust for play area refurbishments and will continue to apply for external funding when possible.

6. Accessibility

Equal access in our parks is generally good with step free access at most entrances. Where practicable, accessibility is good within parks as there are networks of hard surfaced pathways that link facilities. We have a regular programme of pathway improvements subject to available capital funding.

In play areas, we ensure that there is an element of inclusive equipment, e.g. wide slides, basket swings, ground level roundabouts and springies with backs). These types of equipment are specified in all play area improvement projects.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

There are no implications from this report.

Legal implications and risks:

There are no implications from this report.

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are no implications from this report.

Equalities implications and risks:

There are no implications from this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There are no implications from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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