

Appendix 7

**FULL COUNCIL,
MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

1 Streetcare Contractors

To the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Robert Benham

By Councillor Reg Whitney

In the Romford Recorder (6th February) there was a picture on page 7 which showed a parking bay that had a street light in the middle of it. The Cabinet Member for StreetCare is quoted as saying "This is a very silly mistake and I will be taking this up personally with contractor. This isn't the first time that common sense has been called in question, there has been a catalogue of errors".

Would the Cabinet Member confirm the outcome of the personal discussions with the contractor and confirm why he has allowed, in his words, "a catalogue of errors" to go on unchecked

Answer:

Firstly, to clarify, a number of the errors I referred to occurred before I took on this portfolio. I have brought this important issue up with the Streetcare service. The contractor has admitted that they've had some operational issues recently, and while they have assured us that these have been addressed, their work will continue to be monitored very closely.

As soon as these issues are brought to our attention by staff, residents or the media they are dealt with and investigated.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that Streetcare and highways matters were investigated as soon as they were brought to the attention of staff.

2 A1306

To the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Robert Benham

By Councillor Keith Roberts

The condition of the A1306 from Chandlers Corner towards the A13 and in particular the condition of the Wennington bridge roundabout is a disgrace. Please provide an up-date of what action the Council is taking in co-operation with local inert landfill operators and other developers/businesses/agencies to improve matters?

Answer:

I agree that the conditions have been unacceptable and officers have met with the Operations Manager for Ingrebourne Valley Ltd to discuss the issue of mud being brought on to the A1306. Ingrebourne Valley Ltd have agreed to arrange for three mechanical sweepers to operate throughout the day and into the evening between the roundabout, over the A13 down to Launders Lane. The road signs and bollards are washed down every Sunday.

On a weekly basis we carry out litter picking of the area and sweeping of the A1306. Our weekly inspections show that these new arrangements are helping. We ensure that all new developments have wheel wash facilities, and we know that existing sites in the area are complying with the conditions. We have recently recommended that developers wash their whole vehicle rather than just the wheels.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed to investigate further reports of the untidy condition of the Wennington Bridge and of illegal parking at this location and to report back to the Member concerned.

3 Free Schools

To the Cabinet Member for Children, Councillor M Davis

By Councillor K Darvill

How many organisations have expressed interest in opening Free Schools in Havering within the next two years and how many primary and secondary free schools are their likely to be?

Answer:

We have not had any new expressions of interest in setting up a free school for September 2016 or 2017. However, the Drapers Maylands primary school is set to open this September and the Oasis Academy Romford is set to open in September 2016.

The Department of Education will announce whether anyone has come forward to set up a free school beyond 2017 after the General Election. No further applications for Free Schools in Havering have been received in wave 8 of applications announced in March 2015. Submissions under wave 9 will be invited from May 2015. Applicants to establish Free Schools are not required to liaise with the Local Authority.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed that proposals for Free Schools made planning for school places in Havering more difficult and added that the Council may have to look at expanding current schools and being more flexible in its approach to meet demand.

4. **Green Bins**

To the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Cllr R Benham
By Councillor Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member confirm what procedure would be followed (including timescales) if a resident overlooks to renew their green bin service in April 2015.

Answer:

The rate of renewal of the green bin service has been exceptionally high so far thanks to the new online renewal option, which has been actively promoted through the email update newsletters which are issued fortnightly and now reach more than 38,000 subscribers.

As of yesterday (24 March) 62 per cent of the 23,000 residents who use the green bin service have renewed.

By the time 31 March arrives those that have not renewed will have had a personal letter through the post, as well as banner reminders on the council's website, several reminders via the email update service (for those signed up for this service) and postings on social media to remind them to renew.

If they have not renewed by 1 April they will be written to again in early April, following the Easter break, to give them a further opportunity to renew their subscription.

Those who do not renew, or do not inform officers that they no longer wish to subscribe, will be informed in early May that the bin or bins will be reclaimed, which will take place during May and early-June.

Therefore, residents will be reminded a total of three times that their subscription has expired after the deadline date before their bin is removed.

5 **Parsonage Farm Primary School**

To the Cabinet Member for Children & Learning, Councillor Meg Davis
By Councillor David Durant

Following the decision of the planning committee to refuse a further expansion of Parsonage Farm to 4FE (that would have involved creating a super-size primary school of 840 children) can you confirm whether plans and enrolment for 4FE at Parsonage Farm have been dropped in favour of more suitable alternatives?

Answer:

No, we are still looking at options for Rainham since by law every local child must have school place and we especially need places in this area of the borough. However, we will not be making a final decision until much closer to National Offer day, which is April 16 this year. I would also question the description of a 4FE school as a super-size primary school as there are many larger primary schools than this that operate successfully.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member emphasised that it was still open to question as to the number of school places that would be needed. All options would be considered once the demand level was determined and the Council had a statutory responsibility to provide education for all children in the borough.

6 **Parking Bays**

To the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Robert Benham

By Councillor Barry Mugglestone

Would the Cabinet Member confirm what discussions took place between the Executive and Officers before Streetcare decided to remove parking bays to comply with parking bay regulations.

Answer

The decision was made on 16 May 2007 when the Cabinet approved the Parking Management Strategy. Parking bays have been taken out where they don't conform to the Department for Transport's Inclusive Mobility Guidance, which was included in the strategy.

The guidance recommends that spaces should be taken out where they are too close to street furniture, too close to other people's driveways and therefore restricting their view getting out and where the footpath is too narrow for a parking space.

However, because there are a lot of smaller cars on the roads, we have changed the minimum length of a parking space that could be provided, which means that we can now consider putting bays in smaller areas, provided that it is safe to do so and welcomed by local residents.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that the Council was required to use current guidelines and that it was not possible to wait for the introduction of any new regulations re parking bays.

7 **Devolution**

To the Leader of the Council, Councillor Roger Ramsey

By Councillor Jeffrey Tucker

Can the Council Leader provide an up-date regarding the 'combined authority' discussions, disclose all relevant correspondence and outline whether his own position has moved from observer to active participant?

Answer:

First let me be quite clear – we're categorically not involved in any discussion about forming a 'combined authority' or merging, which in any event, would not be possible for London borough's under legislation.

There is a discussion about devolution going on across local government. Devolution is the process of handing down extra powers and extra money to be administered at a local level – it's not about sharing existing resources. For example, colleagues will have read about proposals to hand NHS budgets in Manchester to the local councils there.

So devolution could potentially allow councils more freedom to act in the best interests of their residents. However, the devil is in the detail.

We are in discussions with eight other London Boroughs about whether a geographic grouping could add weight to a claim for more money and powers.

If we believe we can eventually get extra money and extra powers to improve the quality of life for Havering residents, then we might be interested in moving the discussions on a stage - but if it's not in our interests, we'll step away. In the meantime, it would be foolish of us not to be at the table, participating in those conversations on behalf of our Borough.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council explained that legislation did not permit a combined authority. Any devolution was likely to be via the Mayor of London to groups of boroughs. It was hoped that more powers and money could be devolved to Havering in the future but it was premature to discuss thus at this stage.

By Councillor Jody Ganly

Would the Cabinet Member confirm Havering Council's contribution to the Lee Valley Park Authority in each of the last five years.

Answer:

In 1966 the Lee Valley Regional Park Act was passed by Parliament which established a levy to be paid by all London Boroughs, Essex, Hertfordshire and Thurrock. In terms of this Council's contribution, the information is on our website and available in our statement of accounts. However, for ease of reference the figures are as follows:

2015/16 £249,437.64
 2014/15 £252,415.08
 2013/14 £260,569.56
 2012/13 £258,782.52
 2011/12 £265,183.56
 2010/11 £272,109.00

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed that it would be beneficial to Havering if these contributions could be reduced and the money saved spent on local parks but added that an Act of Parliament would be required in order to allow this.

9 Scrap Metal

To the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor R Benham

By Councillor J Wilkes

Would the Cabinet Member confirm how many licences Havering Council have issued to scrap metal dealers since the introduction of the "Scrap Metal Dealers Act" which came into force in October 2013.

Answer:

The new Scrap Metal Dealers Act allows us to licence sites and collectors. We have issued 27 Site licences and 19 Collectors licences since October 2013.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed to check how many prosecutions for non-compliance had been made and to confirm this to the Member concerned.

10 Contractors

To the Cabinet Member for Financial Management, Councillor Clarence Barrett

By Councillor June Alexander

Would the Cabinet Member confirm how contractors are monitored, and how this is evidenced, in any work that they are contracted to do by Havering Council.

Answer:

Each head of service monitors the contracts that they hold. So for example, the Breyer group contract is monitored by the head of housing. When the contract is set there are clauses regarding non-performance and these are enforced if the contractor does not deliver the quality of work we expect. Each service has different types of contracts, which are monitored in a number of ways appropriate to each contract. This could include spot checks on the work they are carrying out, monitoring complaints, budget checking and regular meetings.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed to investigate what type of information could be provided as regards the results of monitoring of contractors.

11 **Streetlights**

To the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Cllr Robert Benham

By Councillor John Mylod

Given the increasing number of complaints regarding street light maintenance and installations, would the Cabinet Member confirm what steps he has taken to improve the speed and efficiency in this service.

Answer:

First of all, I would like to clarify that we already have a service that consistently meets their targets. The team has five working days to fix a broken street light and consistently meets this target.

99% of all street lights are in working order, and statistics show that performance has not fallen to below 98% over the duration of the contract to date.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed to establish how the maintenance and installation of street lights were monitored and to advise the Member accordingly.