

**1. StreetCare enquiries****To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor R. Benham**

From Councillor B. Mugglestone

Would the Cabinet Member confirm the number of StreetCare enquiries on the CRM system that have not been closed down and the date of the oldest outstanding service request?

**Answer:**

Having discussed this question with officers, it's clear that we need to cleanse the data on the system before I can give you an accurate answer. The data includes historic enquires that have been dealt with but not closed down on the system, duplicate enquiries and other data issues.

This must be set in the context of the sheer volume of enquiries received by the Council about StreetCare issues. We regularly receive between 250 and 300 new enquiries every day, which need to be assessed and given an appropriate response – that's clearly a huge task.

Nevertheless, I would like to give Cllr Mugglestone an undertaking that the data cleansing will be done as soon as possible and I will respond to him in writing before the next Council meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> July.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed to investigate any specific examples reported of cases that had been closed down on the CRM system but were in fact still live.

**2. Sale of Council owned land (three questions, taken together)****To the Leader of the Council, Councillor R. Ramsey**

From Councillor L. Webb

1. In the last five years how many parcels of the council owned land have been sold, with and without planning permission?

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2. Of the parcels of land sold with planning approval, how many of them had a subsequent planning application made for more properties or indeed a property with a larger footprint?
  
3. Please provide a breakdown of the prices achieved for each of these parcels of land?

**Answer**

This is a very detailed question and we will need to provide a written answer after the council.

**5. Planning permission for gravel extraction and landfill****To the Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services & Community Safety,  
Councillor O. Dervish**

From Councillor K. Roberts

There are a number of live and pending gravel extraction/landfill applications in the south of the borough that are being individually recommended for approval, but which would be rejected if they were all submitted as one application!

Does the Cabinet Member agree the planning department should consider and report on the cumulative impact of individual gravel extraction/landfill applications before recommending approval?

**Answer**

The premise of this question is wrong. We have looked at the cumulative impact of each of these applications as part of the usual planning application process. The outcome would not be any different had the applications been submitted as one.

Cumulative impact depends on the nature of the proposal, its location, its proximity to other sites and the use/capacity of the road network.

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In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed to supply to Councillor Roberts, after the meeting, an update on the position with the planning application for a gravel pit adjacent to Wennington Village.

6. **Highways contract**

**To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor R. Benham**

From Councillor R. Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member advise how a Highways Maintenance Support Sub-Contractor (Miller Bros) has been able to operate for the Council without a contract since September 2009?

**Answer**

The contract with Miller Bros actually lapsed in 2011. It does appear that there was an administrative mistake at that time and, as a result, the contract was not renewed as it should have been.

It's worth noting that Miller Bros is one of four organisations the Council uses for highways maintenance works. It is a local company, based in Harold Wood and it has always delivered a high standard of service. Nevertheless, as soon as the lapse in the contract came to light, the Council took legal advice.

Officers believe that under the terms of contract, the firm is entitled to a notice period to end its contract and legal officers are currently advising on the correct course of action. Our preference is to coincide the termination of the Miller Bros contract with the end date of other highways contracts – allowing us greater flexibility to explore new and more efficient ways of commissioning highways works.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed he was investigating what had gone wrong in this instance as well as the status of other contracts in order to avoid any repeat of the situation.

**7. Council Tax on empty properties****To the Cabinet Member for Financial Management, Councillor C. Barrett****By Councillor L. Webb**

Given the Council's recent decision to charge a higher Council Tax for those properties that have been empty for two years and are 'substantially unfurnished' can the Cabinet Member give a legal definition for the term 'substantially unfurnished'?

**Answer**

There is no legal definition for “substantially unfurnished” within the council tax regulations. However, the Department for Communities and Local Government have recently given the following guidance in respect of empty and second homes, this is as follows:

“A property which is substantially unfurnished is unlikely to be occupied or be capable of occupation. A property which is capable of occupation can reasonably be expected to contain some, if not all, items from both of the following categories: furniture such as bed, chairs, table, wardrobe or sofa, and white goods such as fridge, freezer or cooker.”

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that interpretation of the legislation was a matter for the Local Authority and that non-payers of the higher Council Tax level would be subject to the usual recovery procedures.

**8. Legal action against the Government****To the Leader of the Council, Councillor R. Ramsey****From Councillor D. Durant**

A Recorder (15/5/15) news item reports the Council Leader saying, “Havering will not join other boroughs in suing the Government over funding.”

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Can the Council Leader expand on this by naming the other boroughs, the action taken, costs involved and whether this 'group action' is a matter for the new North East London Strategic Alliance [includes Havering] to pursue?

**Answer**

The Romford Recorder article names Barking & Dagenham and Redbridge as councils that may launch legal action and as was also reported I stated that Havering would not be averse to join in if there was any chance of success.

However, the advice that we have had is that there is little prospect of success as the process has been followed properly and therefore it would be a waste of taxpayers money to employ expensive barristers at this time.

This action is being taken by these council's and is not an issue for NELSA as NELSA is a lobbying and influencing group rather than one that would take direct action like these proceedings. We always fight to get a fairer deal for Havering and have raised our case several times directly with the Minister.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council reiterated that he would follow the advice that any legal action was not sufficiently likely to be successful, given the very high legal costs involved. He added that other boroughs had not finally decided to take legal action and that the North East London Strategic Alliance was designed as a lobbying group, not to be a vehicle for launching legal action.

**9. Public Realm****To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor D. White**

From Councillor B. Matthews

Given the difficulties that members have in distinguishing between Housing and StreetCare land, would the Cabinet Member agree that it is time to review whether the Council could operate a "one Public Realm" operation.

**Answer**

The Council maintains all grassed and planted areas in the borough, including land attributable to the HRA. Tenants and Leaseholders pay their additional service

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charges for grounds maintenance which is why there may be different regimes in place to those in other areas. We know our residents take great pride in where they live which is why we want Havering to be as clean and safe as it can be.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed that, if it were possible under the Regulations governing the use of HRA funding, a 'one Public Realm' operation would be beneficial to the Council.

**10. Romford Leisure Development****To the Leader of the Council, Councillor R. Ramsey**

From Councillor J. Tucker

Just prior to the General Election the Council erected banners advertising the commencement of work on building the new Romford Leisure Centre. Please provide an update regarding this work and a date for when the Leisure Centre will be completed.

**Answer**

We are committed to providing a state-of-the-art new leisure centre in the heart of Romford and this is now a step closer as preliminary works have already been carried out ahead of the main development. We are now in very advanced discussions with Morrisons regarding the next stage of work that they will implement, including office demolition and the provision of a new electricity sub-station. Any project of this size and complexity can and will ebb and flow it is not therefore possible to give specific dates at this point although progress is being made.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council confirmed that he believed and hoped the development would happen. A binding contract was in place and the Leader would be meeting with Morrisons to review progress.

**11. CCTV for dog fouling****To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor R. Benham**

By Councillor J. Wilkes

Given the increasing number of reports of dog fouling, would the Cabinet Member agree to using covert CCTV to catch offenders in “hot spots” in the same way as they use CCTV to catch fly-tippers?

**Answer**

On the face of it, this sounds like a good idea, but there are significant differences between catching fly-tippers and catching irresponsible dog owners. CCTV can be used to identify the motor vehicles used by fly-tippers through DVLA records, but it's extremely difficult to identify a man or woman walking a dog and trace their address. For the most part we need to catch dog owners in the act of allowing their dogs to foul public land – so we do undertake patrols and we do ask the public to report hot spots. Most importantly, we try very hard to encourage dog owners to pick up after their animals.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that he was happy to look with offices at the possibility of using relocatable cameras at dog fouling hotspots. Extra dog bins had also been provided and a stall re this issue was taken at the Havering Show. The Cabinet Member also felt that dog licences should be reintroduced and would discuss this with the local MP.

**12. New Plymouth and Napier Houses****To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor D. White**

By Councillor M. Deon Burton

Please provide an update regarding the refurbishment of New Plymouth House and Napier House and whether the Council intends to proceed with the ‘Winter Gardens’ balconies?

**Answer**

I am delighted to be asked this question as it allows me to confirm that following a procurement exercise officers will shortly be making a recommendation to Cabinet to award a contract to undertake the external refurbishment and the provision of winter gardens at Napier and New Plymouth Houses.

Officers undertook several value for money exercises to ensure the investment made will bring the maximum benefit to residents and the housing stock portfolio. The exercises are now complete but they have meant there has been an understandable delay in bringing the recommendation forward.

A public meeting with residents to update them on progress took place [on 4 June](#) and we can all now look forward to much improved facilities for the residents of Napier and New Plymouth Houses.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member stated he would provide a written response confirming if the work would be as originally proposed and an indication of the end date, if this was available.

**13. Fly-tipping****To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor R. Benham**

By Councillor J. Ganly

Would the Cabinet Member agree to bring forward a report to Cabinet by the Autumn to formalise the Council's policy on the removal of fly-tips from private land?

**Answer**

In general, the Council has always maintained that waste dumped on private land is the responsibility of the landowner. However, we do recognise that there are instances where enforcement action against the landowner is not practical or fair – so we are looking at refining the Council's policy in the coming months to ensure that we deliver a cleaner Borough, this will have to form part of the Council's budget strategy as this may require additional capacity.



**14. Recycling****To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor R. Benham**

By Councillor S. Nunn

Would the Cabinet Member confirm how StreetCare will reach its recycling target set by Government by 2020?

**Answer**

The recycling targets are set nationally and are a challenge for all London Boroughs. Our performance is very respectable and we will continue to encourage recycling, both through the orange bag collections and through recycling sites across Havering.

Our other, perhaps even more important challenge, is how we reduce the overall level of waste that the Borough produces. That tonnage is a major financial challenge for the future, with likely increases to the levy we pay for waste disposal running at around a million pounds a year. So alongside our campaign to increase recycling, we will continue to encourage local people to do what they can to reduce overall waste.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed he would look into why recycling was not separated from ordinary rubbish at the recent Langtons concert.

**15. Parking meters****To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor R. Benham**

By Councillor R. Whitney

Would the Cabinet Member confirm why new parking meters have been installed so soon after previous parking meters have been put in place, what has happened to the old meters and when the new meters will accept new coinage?

**Answer**

Pay & Display machines have been upgraded as part of the new tariff arrangement. The last time we installed new pay & display machines was in 2012 and these were in the following locations:

Hilldene Shopping Centre  
Collier Row Shopping Centre  
Hornchurch; Appleton Way, Mavis Grove, Cumberland Avenue, Kenilworth Gardens and Butts Green Road  
Cranham; Front Lane & Moor Lane  
Upminster; Upminster Bridge and Corbetts Tey Road  
Hornchurch; Hornchurch Road  
Gidea Park; Heath Park Drive, Balgores Crescent; Crossways  
Hornchurch Station area  
Wennington Road

All of these pay & display accept new coins.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed to investigate why old parking machines could only accept old coinage.