



FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 14 September 2016

## MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

### 1) FLIGHTS FROM LONDON CITY AIRPORT

To the Leader of the Council, Councillor Roger Ramsey

From Councillor Jody Ganly

Would the Leader of the Council confirm the current position in respect of permission to increase flights over Havering from London City Airport and what steps the council will be taking to persuade London City Airport to review the concentrated flight paths over Havering to ensure that the burden of increased flights and the noise that accompanies it is shared equally amongst Havering residents.

#### **Response**

As far as the Council is aware, London City Airport continues to operate flight numbers within its previously agreed planning permissions.

London City Airport consulted stakeholders in 2014 on proposals to modernise flight paths linked to the airport as a result of new technology and needing to meet European legal requirements. Havering objected to the proposals principally because of the (limited) way that the consultation had been progressed. The Council's response also gave recognition to the views of residents who were concerned about potential adverse impact on Havering arising from flights being 'concentrated' on certain flight alignments. I have also written separately to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) expressing concern as to how the consultation was carried out by London City Airport.

In 2015 the Civil Aviation Authority approved the proposals. The new technology used allows aircraft to fly over the same corridors they have previously done but more accurately, resulting in some areas receiving a higher concentration of aircraft and others fewer aircraft.

Unfortunately, Havering has no control over the noise generated by aircraft. Aircraft noise is not a statutory nuisance in the UK, and it is not covered by the Environmental Protection Act. This prevents local authorities from being able to act on aircraft noise issues.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), as the UK's independent aviation regulator, does not currently have the legal power to prevent aircraft flying over a particular location or at a particular time for environmental reasons. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) may consider environmental factors when assessing proposals to establish new, or amend existing Controlled Airspaces, however only the Secretary of State for Transport has the power to prohibit or restrict aviation arrangements.

Having said that, the Council will continue to put pressure on the various organisations involved including London City Airport, National Air Traffic Services (NATS), and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and will take every opportunity to express our residents' concerns.

**Council, 14 September 2016**

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council indicated that he would give consideration to views expressed on this matter by any local groups. The Leader had met with a pan-London group opposing the proposals and hoped that more flights could be routed over the Thames and countryside in order to reduce impact on parts of Havering.

**2) HOUSING REGISTER**

**To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Damian White**

**From Councillor Patricia Rumble**

What are the reasons that people are removed from the housing register?

**Response**

The main reasons are:

- Do not meet Havering residency period
- Adequately Housed
- Has sufficient earning/ Savings
- Failure to provide documentary evidence to support application for housing

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that people who failed to bid on at least one property fulfilling their requirements every six months would be suspended from the bidding system for a period of six months. The Cabinet Member felt that this policy was fair and was one of the changes that had been introduced by the new Allocations Scheme.

**3) VILLAGE GREEN STATUS FOR LAND OFF NEW ZEALAND WAY**

**To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Damian White**

**From Councillor Michael Deon Burton**

Please provide an update on the status of the Village Green application for land off New Zealand Way and whether a meeting can be arranged between Members, residents and officers to discuss the application.

**Response**

The London Borough of Havering in its capacity as Commons Registration Authority ("CRA") received an application made pursuant to section 15(1) of the Commons Act 2006 to register the land known as land bounded by New Zealand Way, Queenstown Gardens and Gisborne Gardens, Rainham ("Land") as a town or village green.

Before the CRA can accept the application and proceed to consider its validity there are a number of preliminary steps that must be undertaken as set out in the legislation on

**Council, 14 September 2016**

greens registration under the Commons Act 2006 as amended by the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013.

The legislation states that the right to apply for the registration of a green is excluded if one of a number of prescribed planning-related events has occurred in respect of the Land ("Trigger Events"). Where a Trigger Event has occurred the right to apply for registration of land as a green becomes exercisable again only if a corresponding terminating event has occurred.

Accordingly, the CRA contacted the Planning Inspectorate ("PIN's"), the Local Planning Authority and the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority to establish whether there are any Trigger Events in existence.

The CRA has now received a response from all relevant authorities with regard to the existence of Trigger Events. The CRA has received confirmation that there are no such events in existence. The CRA can now proceed to give the application preliminary consideration.

Should the CRA identify any defects in the application the applicant will be provided with an opportunity to correct the application by providing further information / documentation.

Once the application is considered 'duly made' it will be publicly advertised with all interested parties (landowners, lessees) informed directly. From the date of advertisement there follows a period of 6 weeks in which any member of the public can make representations for consideration by the CRA.

While the process is on-going, it would not be appropriate to hold the meeting that has been suggested. Once the decision on the application has been received, I would be happy to consider that.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member stated that he could not comment fully on the specific application until the CRA application had been decided. The Cabinet Member added however that the Council wished to maximise resources in order to deliver as much affordable accommodation as possible.

**4) RESIDENTS HOUSED OUTSIDE HAVERING**

**To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Damian White**

**From Councillor June Alexander**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm over the past 3 years, how many residents have been placed outside Havering for housing needs, including seaside accommodation and on average how long have they been outside Havering.

**Council, 14 September 2016**

## **Response**

- Seaside & Country scheme – 16 residents placed into permanent social housing outside Havering. Average period is 2 years
- Reciprocal agreement with other Councils - 6 residents placed into permanent social housing outside Havering. Average period is 2 years
- Temporary accommodation – 170 residents placed into temporary accommodation outside Havering. Average period is 1 year.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed that he would ask officers to supply a breakdown by age of residents housed outside Havering.

## **5) ORANGE BAG RECYCLING**

**To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety, Councillor Osman Dervish**

**From Councillor Lawrence Webb**

Of our recycled (orange bag) waste what percentage is rejected when it is sorted?

## **Response**

Approximately 10% of all materials put forward for recycling at the kerbside collection from residents is rejected when it is sorted. This compares to 35% for Barking & Dagenham and Newham who have comparable collection arrangements, while Redbridge has a 5% contamination rate.

Officers continue to encourage residents to recycle the correct materials in order to bring down the contamination rate, with details available on the Havering website as well as various social media pages. As part of National Recycling Week which commences on the 12th September, recycling road shows will be located in the larger supermarkets across the borough to embed the recycling message and to increase the percentage of waste recycled.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that plastic cartons and bottles (other than the cap) could be recycled via the orange recycling bags. Plastic food containers could be recycled but not currently in orange bags.

Council, 14 September 2016

## **6) GRANT FUNDING FROM VEOLIA**

**To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety, Councillor Osman Dervish**

**From Councillor Graham Williamson**

Please provide an update regarding grant funding from Veolia.

### **Response**

To the dismay of the Council, Veolia ES (UK) PLC has taken a decision to distribute landfill tax payments through a national trust, the “Veolia Environmental Trust” (VET), rather than through the locally based “Veolia North Thames Trust” (VNTT); despite previous commitments given to the Council that this would not happen without the consent of the stakeholders (which has not been given by this Council despite being one of those stakeholders).

The locally based VNTT is due to be wound up in the next few months as it has no new funds to distribute. The Council and organisations based in Havering will, in future, have to submit bids to the VET. Although it is too early to say, the Council fears that local organisations will be less likely to receive funding in the future because of the new funding arrangements.

The Leader of the Council has written to Veolia ES (UK) PLC to express the Council's concern and to seek a review of the decision that has been made. The Leader and officers have also met with an official from the Treasury to seek their help in reversing the decision. The Council is also working with local MPs to get their support in writing to Veolia asking for the local funding to be kept and have also offered accommodation to VNTT to help keep their administration costs below the threshold.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed that all Members shared frustration and concern over this situation.

## **7) CLOSURE OF HORNBURCH FIRE STATION**

**To the Leader of the Council, Councillor Roger Ramsey**

**From Councillor John Mylod**

Hornchurch Fire Station was closed between the hours of 20.00 pm on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June through to 09.30am on Saturday 4th June due to a lack of manpower throughout London. Would the Leader of the Council confirm what representations he will be making to ensure that this does not re-occur.

**Council, 14 September 2016**

## **Response**

It has been confirmed by the Borough Fire Commander for Havering, that a stand by fire appliance from Ilford was in fact based in Hornchurch Fire Station during the time in question, thereby providing the required emergency cover for Hornchurch's ground.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council stated that he would seek to arrange a meeting with Havering's London Assembly member in order that concerns over fire cover for the Hornchurch area could be discussed in more detail.

## **8) HOMELESSNESS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Damian White**

**From Councillor John Glanville**

Given the recent report by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee which has said that help given by local authorities to homeless people is often ineffectual and meaningless and which states that "The scale of homelessness is now such that a revised government strategy is a must" what if any is the council's response?

## **Response**

Homelessness is driven in part by a lack of supply of accommodation - whichever the tenure. The structural changes that have been occurring within the housing market over the last three years has seen huge appreciation in house prices, which have led to a corresponding increase in rental prices.

Nationally, the government has brought in changes to the planning system, which have increased the ability of developers and house builders to bring new units of accommodation - such as increasing permitted development rights, mixed-use including up to two flats (in certain circumstances), changing of use of amusement arcade or centre or casino to dwelling houses; office conversions, retail or betting office/ pay day loan shops. Some (not all) will be subject to prior approval.

A historic backlog exists and based on addressing it over 10 years, a total of 1,288 affordable units each year is required to meet demand across the Borough after taking account of supply from existing stock turnover and new planned delivery - which, until this is met, pressure will continue to be placed upon our homelessness service.

Locally, I am pleased to have brought forward proposals for an ambitious new build programme - utilising existing resources of the Housing Department, to deliver

**Council, 14 September 2016**

approximately 500 new homes over the next three years - the biggest Council house building programme in a generation. Furthermore, proposals have also been agreed for the regeneration of our twelve key housing estates - providing 2,000 homes and new quality units over the next 10 years.

That, with both of our housing zones, will see 9,500 new homes delivered across Havering – 6,000 of which have been identified as affordable and 3,500 as private - over the next 10 years. This will be achieved without the need for Green Belt land - an achievement that should not be underestimated.

If viewed together, all the development and regeneration proposals, will see over £1 billion of investment within Havering.

That said, part of the report deals with the quality of support offered by the Council's homelessness service. I am very proud, Madam Mayor, to have personally overseen a transformation programme of our hostel and homelessness team, which will see become a quality provider of support for vulnerable Havering residents.

Part of the transformation was a restructure of staff, with 5 new members of staff joining our service - with a range of skills and support backgrounds.

Once a month, I hold a surgery for hostel tenants and residents in B&B accommodation, and the anecdotal comments are very encouraging. Although we offer emergency accommodation, our service is geared towards prevention and tenancy sustainment. We now actively support tenants in maintaining their tenancy and avoid the need for emergency accommodation. For those individuals that do require it, training programmes and support now ensure that tenants are supported in maintaining their tenancies once they leave the hostel service - avoiding the merry-go-round of homelessness.

An investment programme is currently being established to support our aim of becoming a Gold Star rated Council for our homelessness service - becoming one of only a handful in the Country.

Mystery shopping, regular inspections by outside agencies, a monthly meeting of Officers to drive forward the improvement programme, are all contributing towards a service improvement programme that will see Havering offering some of the highest quality support for a very vulnerable group within our society.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member felt that the Council was currently coping with the numbers of homeless people. As at 16 September, 89 families were housed in bed and breakfast accommodation and 94 families in hostels. It was planned to provide additional hostel accommodation but also to seek to house homeless families in more long-term emergency accommodation which better met their needs.

Council, 14 September 2016

## **9) RIVER INGREBOURNE**

**To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety, Councillor Osman Dervish**

**From Councillor Jeffrey Tucker**

Please provide an update regarding improvements to the southern end of the River Ingrebourne, including the removal of debris/foilage, clearing culverts and improving the public space behind the Angel Pub.

### **Response**

The River Ingrebourne and Ingrebourne Branch Drain are both maintained by the Environment Agency who would carry out dredging and clearance work in line with ecology restrictions and within the water framework directive. The Environment Agency carry out inspections of the river and subsequently order works upon finding defects. Council officials will carry out an inspection in the coming months to assess the condition accordingly and advise the Agency accordingly.

Regarding the land to the rear of the New Angel Inn, this is private land and there has been no notification to Planning of any impending works. Officers will monitor the area shortly.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet member confirmed that he would ask offices to monitor the river area when the tide was out as this would be more effective.

## **10) HORNCHURCH LIBRARY OPENING HOURS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Culture and Community Engagement, Councillor Melvin Wallace**

**From Councillor Julie Wilkes**

Given the large number of volunteers that the council boasts it has recruited, would the Cabinet Member confirm why it has still not been possible to increase the hours of opening (10am to 1pm) at Hornchurch Library (often the busiest library in Havering) beyond just Saturday.



**Council, 14 September 2016**

**Response**

The 363 volunteers deployed by the Library Service (as at August 2016) work alongside staff during the core Library opening hours. They have specific roles that complement the roles and responsibilities of the staff; such as helping to put stock back on the shelves, helping people to use computers and helping children and young people to develop reading skills.

The volunteers, as individuals, have not been deployed to open the Library buildings beyond the core opening hours, as the Council does not believe that a group of individuals would be willing or should take on an individual or joint responsibility to manage risks associated with health and safety, security and safeguarding. Given the above the Council's position has always been that the core opening hours can only be extended if a voluntary organization (either established or newly created for this purpose) was willing to take on all of the responsibilities associated with managing a building, with no staff support.

The Council has been in discussion with an established voluntary organization for a number of months and if agreement can be reached then the Hornchurch Library could be opened a couple of additional mornings each week.

Should any other voluntary organization, or group of individuals interested in forming a new voluntary organization, wish to work with the Council to extend the Core opening hours they should contact the Library Services Manager with their proposals. The Council has produced a document that sets out how a voluntary organization should manage a Library building without staff and the Council can also provide advice and support if a voluntary organization comes forward.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that Hornchurch would be the first library to benefit if support from the voluntary organisation could be agreed. It was also hoped to accommodate other libraries within the scheme if possible.

**11)CYCLE TRACK, MAIN ROAD**

**To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety, Councillor Osman Dervish**

**From Councillor Lawrence Webb**

What was the cost per metre of the new designated cycle path at the top on Main Road?

**Response**

The cycle path at the top of Main Road is part of the Main Road/Upper Brentwood Road junction improvement scheme, aimed at ensuring the safe navigation of the junction for pedestrians and cyclists. The scheme is fully funded by Transport for London (TfL)

**Council, 14 September 2016**

through the Local Implementation Plan (LIP). The cost of the new cycle path along Main Road between the junction with Upper Brentwood Road and Hockley Drive is approximately £175 per linear metre (per square metre this equates to £97.20).

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member explained that the need for improvements at the junction had been originally identified by consultants in 2011. The scheme was designed to greatly improve safety, accessibility and comfort for people using the junction, whilst maintaining the current motor traffic capacity.

**12) GREEN BELT**

**To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety, Councillor Osman Dervish**

**From Councillor Keith Roberts**

There appears to be land clearance work taking place on land north of the A1306 between Rainham Road and Upminster Road North off Farm Road. Please provide any information about what is happening as this or nearby land has been put forward to be removed from Green Belt.

**Response**

Staff from Planning Enforcement have been in contact with the owner of the site who has confirmed that he has been clearing overgrown scrub and creating a fire break to nearby properties. The situation on the site is being monitored but there does not appear to be any breaches of planning control at this time.

**13) OPERATIONAL AND ACCESS ISSUES**

**To the Leader of the Council, Councillor Roger Ramsey**

**From Councillor Ray Morgon**

Would the Leader of the Council confirm who within the Administration authorised the following:

- a) The Call Centre being closed to the public for 4 hours once a month for staff training.
- b) Refusal to allow prior approval planning applications to be "called in" before Regulatory Services.
- c) Stopping members from entering the members/CMT car park before 5pm.
- d) Refusing residents access to council services unless done online

**Council, 14 September 2016**

**Response**

a) A number of years ago it was agreed by Senior Management that the Call Centre would close on the morning of the last Wednesday of each month for three hours, to undertake Team Briefings and any required training. As a multi service Contact Centre it was felt important to set aside time to ensure that staff were kept fully informed about the Council's services and to ensure that time was set aside for training.

The Team Briefings / training sessions have been taking place from 9:00am to 12:00pm. However, the Contact Centre had remained closed for a further hour (when staff all took their lunch break at the same time), to ensure staffing resources were maximised immediately after the closure period had ended, by having all available staff ready to handle calls and enquiries from 1pm.

It is recognised that there is a balance to be struck between briefing and training staff in a consistent manner and the need to reduce the amount of time that the Call Centre is closed as far as possible. It is now recognised that the right balance had not been achieved and the period of closure needed to reduce.

There has been a recent review of the 4 hour closure period and from September 2016 the Contact Centre will now be shut for two hours on a Wednesday morning and will open from 11am, rather than 1pm.

Although the Contact Centre will be closed for two hours, the Council's switchboard will remain open with relevant switch board staff having immediate access to a Team Manager if customers' enquiries are urgent. Following the recent review there will be one extra member of customer services staff working on the switchboard during the staff briefing / training session.

Messages on the emergency telephone line have also been changed to provide more clarity on how issues can be dealt with when the switchboard is closed. It is recognised that previous messages did not provide accurate information to residents making contact with the Council.

b) I am not aware of any decision by an Administration member. Prior approval essentially means the ability of a person or business to seek planning consent and if they don't receive a formal decision from a Council by a set date then they automatically can proceed with what they are seeking to do. The arrangement was introduced by Government initially for telecommunications proposals as a means of fast tracking proposals which would otherwise become delayed within conventional processing and decision making on planning applications. So, unlike the vast majority of planning applications, unless a decision on a prior approval is issued and received by the applicant within the timescale set by Government, then the decision will automatically default to an approval, regardless of what the Council's intended decision was. The introduction of the prior approval process for telecommunications development represented a significant risk given the sensitivities of that type of proposal, such that it was generally accepted practice that those types of application would not be capable of call in to committee. That was so that a decision could be properly issued and received in time. This process was followed for a number of years ensuring robust decision

## Council, 14 September 2016

making in time and was carried across to more recent Government led changes which expanded the prior approval process to cover larger home extensions and office to residential conversions, again because of the default consequences. This is not a helpful arrangement for Councils to make decisions within and because the local decision making arrangement about prior approval and call-ins was pragmatically introduced for good reason rather than formally written into the Constitution this was reviewed at Governance Committee on 31 August and is of course the subject of a report to Council this evening.

c) The arrangement results from the introduction of the new staff parking policy in 2011, introducing parking charges in staff car parks. The Leader and Deputy Leader at that time were keen to demonstrate that councillors were willing to adopt the same measures for use of parking facilities at the Town Hall. Those councillors wishing to park at the Town Hall at any time of day are able to purchase a permit at the same price offered to staff, the cost of which is deducted from their Member allowances – several Cabinet Members currently pay for a parking permits. Free daytime parking for councillors is otherwise restricted to those attending specific meetings – hence whilst councillors are not prevented from entering the Member/CMT car park before 5.00pm, they are asked to confirm the meeting that they are attending.

This practice was the subject of a Motion presented to the last meeting of full Council and the current arrangements were subsequently fully considered by the Governance Committee on 31st August.

d) A blanket decision has not been taken to refuse access to Council services unless done on-line. However, the Council is encouraging as many residents as possible to access Council services in order to make services more accessible to those people who wish to interact with the Council on-line and to achieve efficiency savings.

Although a blanket decision to go “on-line only” has not been taken, Senior Management Team did agree to use an “on-line only” approach to the renewal of Green Waste bins earlier in the year. This approach proved very effective for most residents, but there were nevertheless a significant number of residents who were not able to access the service, either because they were not able to access a computer or did not know how to use digital technology.

The Council is currently reviewing how services are accessed by residents and will be producing a new Customer Access Strategy later in the year. This strategy will consider how the Council can encourage residents to interact with the Council on-line, as well as how the Council can most cost effectively retain face to face and telephone contact for those residents who need that approach to continue. All of these issues will need to be considered in the context of diminishing resources.

In the meantime the Council will continue to encourage residents to interact with the Council on-line, but it also remains committed to helping / supporting customers through face to face and telephone contact where that is required.

**Council, 14 September 2016**

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council stated that he was not aware of any closures of the Call Centre being notified to the relevant Cabinet member and added that there was a distinction between Executive policy decisions and the day to day implementation of these policies by staff.

The Leader of the Council added that 'call-in' of planning applications had been thoroughly reviewed by the Governance Committee and that he was not aware of any aspects of the car parking policy not being implemented.

**14) ICT STRATEGY**

**To the Cabinet Member for Financial Management, Transformation and IT Client Side, Councillor Clarence Barrett**

**From Councillor Ray Morgon**

- a) When will there be a clear ICT strategy for Havering.
- b) What IT projects have been prioritised for this financial year and next and why were these chosen.
- c) Why are corporate priorities in Newham Council being put before those in Havering.
- d) ICT is regarded as the worst service within One Source. Why has this been allowed to happen and what clear plans are in place to rectify the situation?

**Response**

- a) The IT Strategy will consist of a number of parts, a core ICT Strategy that establishes a foundation and technology platform, looks to customise ICT services which in turn supports a Havering specific strategy that is centred around the Council's core objectives, direction of travel and digital agenda. The first draft for both strategies is estimated to be available at the end of October 2016.
- b) Havering have a number of large projects and programmes of work that will have significant input from ICT, these being:
  - A new Adults Social Care and Children Services system;
  - Mobile/Agile working;
  - Digital Transformation;
  - Website;
  - Customer Portal;
  - CRM.
  - Continued support with the development and deployment of the new Housing system;
  - ICT server & network infrastructure refresh.

**Council, 14 September 2016**

- c) I cannot comment on the perceived historical position around corporate priorities, however my expectations are that each is accessed in turn and discussed to ensure the right approach and timelines for delivery are agreed and meet the needs of each oneSource partner.

Going forward the intention is to establish an ICT programmes board that will access the needs and priorities of each organisation. The make up of said board will be Director level from each organisation.

- d) Unfortunately I cannot comment on the state of the ICT service historically, what I can say is that the service will be more transparent, delivery and customer driven in the future.

The aim is to support services through regular contact and assist with the development of requirements and needs, demonstrating the art of the possible through partnership rather than a peripheral and fringe approach towards services.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member indicated he would be happy to look at a statement indicating that Havering was not receiving IT priorities but felt that this was a subjective view.

## **15) WASTE COLLECTIONS**

### **To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety, Councillor Osman Dervish**

#### **From Councillor Barbara Matthews**

Would the Cabinet Member explain the apparent increase in the number of missed waste collections since Serco took over the waste contract two years ago?

#### **Response**

The number of missed collections of black and orange sacks per hundred thousand collections made is the indicator used to measure Serco's performance.

During the 2015/16 financial year only 97 collections were missed for every 100,000 collections made, so less than 0.01%.

Whilst the numbers of missed collections have increased slightly when compared with the previous waste collection contractor, performance is still very good.

We have however been working with Serco to improve the service still further and the measures taken have included Serco introducing an additional collection vehicle and

**Council, 14 September 2016**

team and increasing the level of supervision. This has been done at no additional cost to the Council.

Reasons for missed collection include restricted access for vehicles due to parking, vehicle breakdowns and the rescheduling to accommodate the additional round which resulted in a change to some residents' collection times.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that he would ask contract managers to ensure that refuse collection was carried out effectively during the Christmas period.