

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Note: Questions 1 to 10 were answered at the meeting. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.6(a); the remainder were treated as if put for written answer

1 HAVERING MUSIC SCHOOL - SAVINGS

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

By Councillor Gillian Ford

In respect of the Havering Music School, would the Cabinet Member please explain:

- a) how will the significant budget cuts proposed from 2012/13 affect the quality and range of classes this service currently delivers?
- b) what is the impact on existing staffing levels?
- c) which services will no longer be provided?
- d) should the consultation be taking place before the viability of an Arts Trust has been determined?

Answer:**a) *how will the significant budget cuts proposed from 2012/13 affect the quality and range of classes this service currently delivers?***

The Music School, as one of a number of services that trade with schools, has been asked to move to a full cost recovery position by 2014. That is that the costs recovered by the service from schools and parents in Havering fully covers the cost of the service. Therefore the service has been reviewing its ways of working to increase efficiencies including a review of current expenditure including staffing costs. It is also considering how it may increase its income by sponsorship. No decisions have been made. At present there are some proposals on which staff are being consulted. The proposal is that the same staff will continue to deliver these services so there should be no reduction in the high standards currently achieved by Music School staff.

b) *what is the impact on existing staffing levels?*

There are no plans to reduce the number of staff who work at the Music School, although there are some small changes to the number of staff who undertake a management role.

c) *which services will no longer be provided?*

There are no proposals to reduce the range of classes or services offered by the service. In fact, the service is exploring how it could increase the range of services that it offers, for example, by offering music services within the school holidays.

d) *Should the consultation be taking place before the viability of an Arts Trust has been determined?*

The work on the viability of an Arts Trust is ongoing. The intention is that the changes being proposed by the Music School would make it more suitable to enter into an Arts Trust should that be a recommendation in the future.

2 OLYMPIC TICKETS FOR STUDENTS

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

By Councillor Denis Breading

What proportion of Havering Schools have signed up to take an allocation of free Olympic and Paralympic tickets for their students/pupils?

Answer:

School	Registered
Total number of schools and colleges	85
Total number of primary schools	61
Total number of secondary schools (including independent schools)	26
Total number of FE colleges	2
Total number of special schools	3

3 THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF QUEENS HOSPITAL

To the Cabinet Member for Individuals (Councillor Steven Kelly)

By Councillor Jeffery Tucker

The Cabinet Member, Councillor Steven Kelly, has said that the Queen's Hospital in Romford will cope with the extra workload if and when King George's Hospital transfers their A & E and Maternity Departments over to Queen's Hospital. The Cabinet Member also states that Queen's Hospital will in fact provide a better service than it is at the present time. Can the Cabinet Member please explain in detail how this will work and why he believes the service will in fact be better when the transfer is completed?

Answer:

The question falls into two areas and we need to look at them separately.

The volume control on A & E is that only genuine A & E cases should be seen. The vast majority of cases should be dealt with in the primary care sector not in the acute; this is something we need to be very innovative about because people have a habit of going to the acute trust just because it is there: actually, 40% to 50% of the people should not be there at all - worries, strains, sprains etc.

We have got to get polyclinics working more, we have got to get the GPs' at health centres (which are very good buildings but their rents are far too high rents and need to be dropped), so they start earning their keep; there are four of them. We have to get the GPs working on Saturday and Sunday, probably sharing their patients because one GP could probably cover four or five different surgeries. Someone not being able to see their doctor or waiting two or three weeks is unacceptable because it just puts people into the A & E, which does not want them and says, after a four or five hour wait, "go away we don't want you, go and see your doctor". What a waste of time, what a waste of capacity and energy!

There have been discussions about putting a polyclinic in Queen's, next to A & E, so that when people turn up with a non-emergency injury or condition, they can be referred there. We have to get primary care working. We have got to make the NHS Direct telephone system better: it is far too complicated, it wanders around and it leads you up blind alleys. It is very good for reassuring people and, to be quite honest, with the growth of iPads, it should be possible to get graphic displays of what certain illnesses look like so the patient can look on an iPad or a smart phone and be told that they have nothing to worry about. Again a little flippant; but the reality is modernising NHS Direct to use technology will make it good.

What is lost in so much of what has been talked about with the hospitals is the skills shortage. People say King George's will shut A & E or shut maternity: but it will actually be given all elective surgery; the doctors who do the elective surgery at Queen's will then be concentrated in one area. Operations for all children under 3 will be undertaken at one of two hospitals in London because there are only probably two doctors who can handle that quality of work; it is a question of focusing skills.

The trouble with complaints is they so often focus on a couple of bits and not the overall position. The IRP said that, overall, clinically, the solution is good so we have to make the system work. On the maternity side, it is being improved by the correct level of trained staff. The first thing Averil Dongworth did when she arrived, unfortunately after another death in there, was to go out and get 70 midwives. They had not had the midwives because of the financial stupidity of believing you can run a hospital based on a budget: you cannot.

Hospitals cost money to run, you have to find that money first and then you have to become efficient after, so it is only a portion of the debt, just over a third. Again skilled staff will be brought in from King George's, together with their specialist equipment. Two high temperature incubators cannot be afforded so there is only one, shuffling backwards and forwards!

There is not a shortage of staff at Queen's; the average ratio for midwife to patients is 1 to 34 - in Essex it is 1 to 34, in London it is 1 to 34; at Queens it is 1 to 26. Barking Midwives Unit will open early next year. This is a birthing unit with no doctors although they are there for emergency purposes. That promises to take at least two-thirds of the King George's excess that would otherwise go to Queen's.

Another one of the stupidities is that, if money is short, a ward is shut. Actually that is the worst thing that can happen. Foundation Trust status will not happen while Queen's is financially pressed so there is the possibility of a company coming in with the debts moved to one side and it will function as a proper hospital.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member re-affirmed that the Administration supported the principle of the eventual re-configuration of health services along the lines proposed by Health for North East London, but agreed that it should proceed only when the Queens Hospital and other health services in the sector had the capacity to cope with the additional workloads that would be generated.

4 **CONTRAVENTION OF PARKING REGULATIONS BY CCTV ENFORCEMENT VEHICLES**

To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebutt)

By Councillor Nic Dodin

Would the Cabinet Member please explain under what circumstances the CCTV Parking & Traffic Enforcement vehicles are permitted to contravene parking regulations while undertaking their duties?

Answer:

The legislation under which parking enforcement is carried out permits any vehicle being used by a civil enforcement officer to be parked in contravention of traffic regulations. However, guidance given to civil enforcement officers is that they should not stop in contravention if a suitable unregulated place to stop is available at the location, and that stopping at that alternative place allows for enforcement action to be carried out without hindrance, and without detriment to the need of carrying out swift enforcement against illegally parked vehicles and where otherwise those vehicles would be allowed to flagrantly flout parking regulations.

5 HOMES IN HAVERING CONTRACT WITH MORRISONS

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Protection (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Keith Darvill

When was the current Homes in Havering contract with Morrisons entered into and when is it due for renewal?

Answer:

The current contract was awarded on 1 April 2004 following a competitive tendering process conducted under the EU procurement rules. The contract was then subsequently novated to Homes in Havering on the formation of the ALMO in 2005. The contract comes to a natural conclusion in July 2013. The services being provided at present will be exposed to the market during the next year with a view to a new contract starting in August 2013.

6 RETURN OF FUNDS INVESTED IN ICELANDIC BANKS

To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)

By Councillor Michael Deon Burton

Given the welcome news in regards to the Court victory, which supports the return of funds held by a bank in Iceland to Havering Council, it is asked:

- a. What are this Authority's known costs/liabilities to date borne of the action to recover residents/Local Authority monies from the Icelandic banking system?
- b. What are our minimum costs/liabilities going to be in pursuit of the return of funds held in the Icelandic banking system?

or

Are the London Borough of Havering involved in a course of actions at the date of this Full Council meeting, whereby the Administration cannot provide an accurate amount in answer to parts a. or b. of this enquiry?

Answer:

The legal costs associated with the action to recover monies from the Icelandic banking system has so far been £18,252.09.

There is an estimated £14,500 still that has not been invoiced by the LGA that relates to the Supreme Court challenge made by the bond holders.

7 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION – NON-COMPLIANCE

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

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member confirm how many residents have been fined for the non-return of their electoral roll form over the past 5 years and what checks are carried out to ensure that the responses are accurate?

Answer:

We do not fine non-responders as it is expensive and time consuming with any fine imposed going to the Court and not the Council. For those reasons very few Councils actually prosecute.

As to accuracy of responses, we do not accept internet forms at face value and carry out further integrity checks.

8 REDUNDANCY OF MORRISONS STAFF SERVING THE HOMES IN HAVERING CONTRACT

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Paul McGeary

Have Homes in Havering and the Council received notification from Morrisons of its proposal to make 21 members of former Havering Council staff redundant?

Answer:

Morrison Facility Services ("MFS") notified Homes in Havering via the formal partnership board of 6 October 2011 of their intentions to stream line their operations following a review. The number of staff involved is potentially 16 and MFS are going through a formal consultation process. It is our understanding that not all staff on notice are former LBH DSO staff and that in fact the proposals include an element of redeployment to other contracts in London.

9 SUCCESS OF THE RIGHT TO BUY LEGISLATION

To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Councillor Roger Ramsey)

By Councillor David Durant

At the last Council meeting, Cllr Ramsey praised the Right-to-Buy policy and said, "In the 1980s the Conservative Administration used receipts from Right-to-Buy sales to build council houses"!

Strictly speaking this is true, but the figures tell another story and confirm the negative impact of the legislation. From 1981 to 1990 only 322 council properties were built in Havering, of which **140** were sheltered housing units. **No** properties were constructed after this time.

Also from 1981 onwards, 75% of Right-to-Buy receipts have been taken by Government or used to pay off housing debt. The Council only retains use of 25% of the receipt!

Does Cllr Ramsey still believe the Right-to-Buy policy was a resounding success?

Answer:

Council tenants who meet certain criteria have the Right-to-Buy the home they occupy. This is a national policy brought in by the Housing Act 1980 and has been supported by a succession of national governments since that time, as has the ability of local authorities to direct the use of 25% of the receipts raised.

The Right-to-Buy has been exercised by a number of tenants in Havering to enter the private housing market at an affordable level, something they probably would not otherwise have been able to do.

The Council new build figures quoted are correct, although they perhaps give only a partial view of the Council's efforts to deliver new affordable housing in the borough. Notably, over a number of years, the Council has levered in considerable amounts of national social housing grant and private investment by using its capital resources to support housing association development in return for nomination rights in perpetuity. Of note, in the three years to 2010/11, the Council enabled housing associations to develop 931 affordable homes in the borough. This figure is greater than the 800 target agreed with the Mayor of London and far in excess of the 39 council properties sold under the Right-to-Buy over the same period.

10 EFFECT OF DISCOUNT FOR EARLY PAYMENT OF COUNCIL TAX IN FULL

To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)

By Councillor Clarence Barrett

For each of the years 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12, would the Cabinet Member set out how much council tax revenue was forgone by offering a 1.5% discount to residents who pay the full amount at the start of the year?

Answer:

2009/10	count 1,837 accounts	value £36,229.02
2010/11	count 1,986 accounts	value £38,685.63
2011/12	count 1,858 accounts	value £37,556.29

11 CRB CHECKS FOR MORRISONS SUB-CONTRACTORS' STAFF

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Pat Murray

What obligations do Morrisons have to ensure that all sub contractors and their staff are CRB checked?

Answer:

This is a mature contract and there is no contractual obligation on Morrison Facility Services ("MFS") to CRB check all staff and sub contractors. Notwithstanding, MFS do CRB check all directly employed staff and actively promote this good practice.

The obligation for the management of staff conduct, including safeguarding responsibilities are a matter for the employer in every case.

12 CONSULTATION WITH TENANTS

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Mark Logan

At the last Council meeting Cllr Ramsey said that the £50,000 tenants' consultation about the future of Homes in Havering was a statutory consultation, but at the following Cabinet meeting Cllr Lesley Kelly said the consultation was **non**-statutory. Who is correct?

Answer:

Under the Housing Act 1985, local authorities have a statutory duty to consult their tenants on matters affecting the management of their home. Therefore, it is correct that there is a statutory duty falling to the Council to consult on the options for the future management of the Council's housing stock.

13 RESTORATION OF PARKLANDS BRIDGE

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

By Councillor Linda Hawthorn

The saga of the restoration of Parklands Bridge began in 2001 and is no further forward today. Would the Cabinet Member please set out just when, or if, this council owned listed building will ever be restored?

Answer:

Plans to restore Parklands Bridge were drawn up in 2008, following a technical review of the project. Unfortunately the restoration works have not been able to be progressed up to this point as there are not sufficient capital funds available. The restoration of Parklands Bridge remains an important project for the Council and when the funds become available it will be progressed as soon as possible.

14 ALLEYWAY/FOOTPATH BETWEEN DAVENTRY ROAD AND HILLDENE AVENUE

To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)

By Councillor Denis O'Flynn.

When will lighting be installed in the recently created narrow alley way between Daventry Road and Hilldene Avenue?

Answer:

Recently the construction company working in this area have erected a hoarding, temporarily narrowing the walkway between Daventry Road and Hilldene Avenue. The construction company agreed to erect lighting on the hoarding, and this was in place on Friday 18th November.

15 OCCPATION OF WILL PERRIN COURT HOSTEL

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Jeffery Tucker

If the Will Perrin Court Hostel is completed, can the Cabinet Member please inform me of the following:

- what is the maximum amount of residents that will be allowed to stay in each of the rooms at any one time and
- what is the maximum amount of residents, including staff, that will be allowed to stay in the Will Perrin Court Hostel at any one time?

Please be specific.

Answer:

Will Perrin Court has been designed to accommodate a maximum of 46 households at any one time. Experience shows us, however, that on occasion larger families need to be accommodated across more than one room, and so the actual number of households accommodated in Will Perrin Court at any one time will most probably be less than 46. There are no 'sleep in' staff that need to be accommodated in any of the rooms.

Although of course the size of the households we assist will vary from week-to-week, based on known occupancy rates in our existing hostels, we anticipate the likely maximum occupancy in Will Perrin Court at any one time will be 57 adults and 37 children, that is, 94 people in total.

16 OVERHANGING TREES: OBSTRUCTION

To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member explain why this Council deliberately allows highway trees to overhang and obstruct residents' properties causing damage to either their driveway or vehicle upon it?

Answer:

The Councils agreed criteria for maintaining the Highway tree stock allows for pruning to take place every three or five years, dependent on the size, location and species of each tree. The Council does not deliberately allow Highway trees to cause damage to private property.

17 "PUPILS UNITE AGAINST RACISM"

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

By Councillor David Durant

On October 13th, CEME hosted an event by the Kick it Out campaign which was attended by many children from Bower Park, Redden Court and Chafford schools.

Kick it Out originated as a campaign against 'racism' in football, but their organiser Danny Lynch said, "we're not just about football, we're about getting rid of racism in all sports, all walks of life"!

This is a political objective, but the terms 'racist and racism' have become powerful political swear words with no precise meaning. Indeed there is often a 'racial bias' in the misuse of these words which can be very offensive and a form of 'racial abuse', which undermines good community relations!

In view of this do the Administration consider it appropriate for Havering school children to take part in political events organised by the Kick it Out campaign, which is partly funded by the 'institutionally racist' Equality Commission?

Answer:

The 'Kick It Out' Campaign is a well-known and high profile national movement promoting anti-racism messages - mainly within football but also beyond. They run various community and educational events around the country. Schools are free to attend such events as they see fit - and it is at the discretion of the schools themselves about whether to attend. There is no requirement for schools or academies to register or seek approval from Havering Council.

18 ROMFORD MARKET: IMPROVING APPEAL AND COMPETITIVENESS

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

By Councillor Linda Hawthorn

Would the Cabinet Member please set out what is being done to stimulate the appeal and competitiveness of Romford Market?

Answer:

The Council is undertaking extensive activity to attract shoppers and traders to Romford Market, largely in the form of events or advertising.

In terms of Market events the Council has facilitated the use of the Market for The Apprentice TV programme, which will be shown next year and is working with the BBC on a Radio 4 documentary on the Market.

There is 'Count down to Christmas' in the Romford Magazine - For 4 weeks from Saturday 19th November 2011, a winning number will be chosen each week and displayed at The Brewery, The Liberty, The Mercury Mall and Romford Market. Each week Romford Market is offering a £25 Romford Market Voucher.

There is the 'Letters to Father Christmas Special Christmas Post Box' - From 27th November 2011 children can post their letters to Father Christmas into a special post box located in Romford Market. The letters must be posted by Sunday 18th December 2011 to ensure a reply.

There is a Romford Market Christmas Stocking Competition - 12 Christmas Stockings will be hanging on market stalls between Friday 9th December 2011 and there will be 30 chances to win a £10

voucher to spend at Romford Market. The prize draw will take place on 18th December 2011. The winners will be notified by telephone and announced on Time FM on Monday 19th December 2011.

Carol singers will be in the Market at various times in the Christmas period

There will be a Helter – Skelter placed in the Market at the Clock Tower end between 17th to 24th December 2011. As this is high it should hopefully attract shoppers through the actual market from the South Street end and increase foot fall through the Market.

Two Live Reindeers with two trained costumed handlers will be at the South Street end of the market around the same area as the Christmas Tree on Wednesday 21st December 2011 between 10am and 2.00pm. .

The Romford Recorder were in the market on 12th & 18th November 2011 with their mascot character. They were handing out goodie bags and on the 12th the bags included our Romford Market / Christmas Lights Switch on flier.

The Rotary Christmas Float will be in the market on the 10th & 17th December 2011.

Hornchurch Drum & Trumpet Corps will be in the market on 10th December 2011 in the morning & 17th December 2011 from 1.00pm onwards for them to play Christmas Carols.

The Christmas Lights Switch On took place on in the Market on 17th November 2011.

In terms of Advertising I can refer to the following actions;

There are Christmas Banners advertising the Market Christmas trading hours and the reindeers. 1 being erected on Tollgate House. 3 others being erected around the Market.

Laminated A3 Christmas Posters have been provided for display on Market stalls advertising the normal trading days, Sunday's and the Christmas period. They will also promote events taking place in the Market.

The Market has a half page advert in the next edition of Living.

The Council regularly advertises in Coach Magazines and Coach Drivers Yearly handbooks

The Market is advertised on one side of the Christmas Lights Switch on Fliers

The Market is part of the Shop Romford Campaign which includes a page in the 'Christmas in Romford' Magazine, JC Decaux/billboard sites, inside of trains and bus backs.

The Market has an half page advert in the Visitors Guide to Havering publication which is distributed in libraries and other locations.

In November/December the Market is advertised on the sides of 13 buses for various routes through East London,

An advert has been placed in the Essex Women's Institute magazine

Train station platform posters locations have advertised the Market at Stratford, Chadwell Heath, Ilford, Goodmayes, Basildon, Grays, Romford, Seven Kings, Billericay, Brentwood, Chafford Hundred leading to the Lakeside Shopping Centre

The Council's Market website has been re-designed and has events advertised. The website currently has a festive logo at the top of the webpage and this includes the Christmas trading days. It also has a direct link to the trader's website.

The Christmas Flier which sets out the trading times and events has also been added to the site as a PDF.

Various newspaper adverts have been placed to promote the market opening times and events. The Yellow Advertiser has been used to advertise in Barking & Dagenham, Wickford, Billericay, Havering, Grays, Thurrock, Tilbury, Ilford, Redbridge, Wanstead and Woodford areas.

Also the Essex, Thurrock & East London Enquirer has been used.

For 4 weeks from 14th November 2011 there have been posters located at 29 different sites around the Borough advertising Romford Market.

250 Romford Market promotional cotton bags have been released for Traders to distribute in the Christmas period, following an earlier phase of an additional 250 bags

In terms of attracting new traders:

Regular advertising to attract new traders is placed in the Market Trade News, Market Trader and the Market Times.

A promotional flier has been produced which sets out all details for new traders . The flier is sent to new trader enquiries via email. This also allows the Market Office to pursue follow-up approaches to potential new traders. From now until Christmas every new trader's enquiry not only obtains a New Trader Flier, they also receive a PDF A4 document which sets out the Christmas Opening & extra Sunday days, Christmas Events, etc.

The Market Office currently has a member of staff dedicated to promoting and generating business for the Market.

The webpage has been redesigned to promote and sell Romford Market to potential new traders. It includes new documents, photographs, logos, market documents & regulations, parking map and the new trader's flier.

In discussions with the National Market Tenants Federation, new traders start-up packs are being introduced. This information will be very useful to any new trader as it will contain valuable information on market trading and should help new traders to survive during the difficult initial period. It also helps to build the market for the future and thus continue its longevity.

There are also various other initiatives being planned for next year to continue to ensure that the Market remains vibrant and successful.

19 **PAYMENT OF INVOICES**

To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)

By Councillor Clarence Barrett

For the period 2010/11 and to date, would the Cabinet Member confirm the number (% and figures) of invoices paid within 10 days? And, if possible, the proportion attributable to small and medium sized local businesses?

Answer:

For 2010/11 37,066 out of 60,765 (61%) payments were made within 10 days. The proportion of these relating to local small and medium enterprises (SME's) is not available. The Council however, does make the payment of invoices from SME's a priority

20 **STAFFING STRUCTURE**

To the Cabinet Member for Transformation (Councillor Michael Armstrong)

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member confirm the number of FTE's at the end of March 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 and if a current 'family tree' of the entire LBH staffing structure is available?

Answer:

The number of FTE's (excluding schools) are as follows: -

March 08 = 2382.81 FTE

March 09 = 2221.67 FTE

March 10 = 2320.64 FTE

March 11 = 2321.86 FTE

An entire LBH staffing structure is available on the intranet.

21 **WHOLE PLACE COMMUNITY BUDGETS**

To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member confirm what his view is in relation to the "Whole Place" community budgets?

Answer:

"Whole place" community budgets are a new initiative by Central Government to improve the joining up of public sector funding streams at a local level, to tackle complex social problems. Our Top 100 families project is an example of this model, where we are trying to align public services' budgets around families with complex needs. A more joined up approach to tackling families with complex problems sooner rather than later can have hugely improved outcomes for the families and is substantially cheaper on the public purse than agencies working alone.

22 **BUSINESSES IN THE BOROUGH**

To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member confirm that the council holds a database of all businesses in the borough and that their trade waste agreement is up to date?

Answer:

StreetCare maintains a list of businesses in the Borough who choose to use the Council's commercial waste collection service. The accounts are administered by ISS and Streetcare are notified if they consider it necessary to cancel the contract due to non payment.

Information collated by StreetCare Enforcement Officers is used to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for the removal of waste from businesses that do not use the Council's collection service.

This is done by issuing these businesses with demands for Waste Transfer Notes and follows on from advice given in the form of a leaflet sent out with the annual business rates demand.

23 COUNCIL ACCOMMODATION: OWNERS OF A SECOND HOME

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Ron Ower

Following the change in regulations which gives Local Authorities the power to ask people requesting council accommodation if they have another home, would the Cabinet Member please confirm what steps are being taken to ensure this process is being undertaken and to confirm that applicants who possess another property will be denied council accommodation?

Answer:

Under the legislation in force prior to the Localism Act, local authorities could not apply a 'blanket exclusion' from joining the Housing Register to households with any particular circumstances, such as, ownership of another property. That said, for some time, local authorities have had the freedom to take income and ability to meet housing needs in the private housing market into account when assessing housing need and the Council has taken full benefit of this.

We have always asked applicants whether they have a property or properties and the tenure of these properties, with the presumption that home ownership indicates the household can meet its housing need, without the Council's assistance. Thus, at present, home owners are given minimal priority on the Housing Register which is insufficient for them to ever be successful through choice-based lettings.

A thorough review of the Council's Allocations Scheme has just commenced, with consultation with all stakeholders set to start shortly after Christmas. One of the key proposals will be that those without any housing need, including those who own another property, are not able to join the Council's Housing Register and bid for one of the Council's houses or flats.

24 CONSULTING TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Clarence Barrett

Would the Cabinet Member provide an update as to what steps are being taken to ensure that all tenants and leaseholders are fully informed in respect of the Housing Management consultation process?

Answer:

We decided at Cabinet on 28 September to consult residents about the future of Homes in Havering. Our residents will be asked for their views on this important decision.

A comprehensive consultation programme has been designed in partnership with resident representatives and HiH colleagues. The first stage of the programme will provide all tenants and leaseholders with full information about why they are being consulted, what the choices would mean and how they can find answers to their questions. Residents' suggestions on the design of the consultation process have been acted on.

The process will involve the use of a range of communication media:

- Articles will appear in the next editions of Living and At the Heart (the HiH newsletter)
- Information will be placed on the LBH and HiH websites
- A list of frequently asked questions and answers will appear on the websites
- Resident meetings across the borough will take place over the next two months giving every resident the opportunity to come to a meeting to hear about the options and ask questions
- A presentation will be made at each sheltered housing scheme and residents' questions answered

Independent advice will be available to residents, and the appointment of the external specialist agency has been made in consultation with residents.

The test of opinion will be carried out in January 2012 by way of a written questionnaire. Information about the options will be repeated in the letter to all the residents at this point.

25 **EMPTY PROPERTY, DURHAM AVENUE**

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Ron Ower

Would the Cabinet Member for Housing set out how much rental has been lost on the property at the Durham Avenue Estate which has remained empty for over two years and when will this property be let to a waiting tenant?

Answer:

The property in question has been void since August 2008. It is understood that if the property was let at the time it would have needed a new kitchen and heating system. It is to be anticipated that the property would not therefore have been let until late September 2008.

The property was advertised through the choice-based lettings scheme on Friday 18 November 2011; works are already under way. We anticipate it being let at the beginning of December.

The rent foregone between September 2008 and December 2011 totals £10,015.