



FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 22 March 2017

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Community Infrastructure Levy

**1) To the Leader of the Council
From Councillor Reg Whitney**

Since the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy, would the Cabinet Member confirm how much money has been generated from it and how has it been specifically spent?

RESPONSE

Havering Council does not have an adopted Community Infrastructure Levy scheme in place, however, it is in the process of preparing one. Public consultation was carried out on this in 2015.

Social Care Appointments

**2) To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services and Health
From Councillor Ian De Wulverton**

With the current concerns in the media over the links between 15 minute Social Care appointments and neglect in the quality of the care given, what action is the council taking to evaluate the quality of care delivered to Havering residents and to ensure that care is safe and needs driven?

RESPONSE

Prior to working with the Council, homecare providers must meet a range of quality requirements including a minimum CQC rating, policies on medication, safeguarding and safer recruitment is reviewed to ensure they meet the required standard, and demonstration of experience of delivering care. For homecare providers that meet the required standards and are approved to contract with the Council, the borough's Quality Outcomes team will undertake regular branch visits, and review the quality of the service.

The Council also use Electronic Homecare Monitoring systems, so we know when, where and for how long care staff have visited residents. Where visits do not meet requirements, providers are directly engaged with to understand issues and address deficiencies.

The Council has also developed a set of questions in partnership with users and providers of homecare to measure the outcomes of the service received by customers. This feedback process will gradually be rolled out and reviewed to ensure we are getting an accurate picture of the quality of service being

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delivered. The long-term intention is that this feedback will be shared with homecare providers to improve quality.

Policy on Dog Fouling

**3) To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety
From Councillor Keith Roberts**

Councils have a statutory duty to keep pavements clear of dog waste but enforcement is an issue. Please can the Cabinet Member for Environment review the scheme promoted by Boston Borough Council to approve new powers under Public Safety Protection Order legislation requiring owners to carry a “waste bag” to clear up after their pet or face a £100 fine, to see if a similar scheme can be introduced in Havering.

RESPONSE

I have asked officers to review the scheme introduced by Boston and report back to me on this new approach, potential implementation or enforcement issues, likely outcomes and estimated financial implications.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that he was unaware of any legal definition of what constituted a ‘waste bag’.

Persons Presenting Themselves to the Council as Homeless

**4) To the Cabinet Member for Housing
From Councillor Keith Darvill**

How many people have presented themselves to the Council as homeless during 2014, 2015 and 2016?

RESPONSE

The number of homeless applications received:

2013/14	750
2014/15	615
2015/16	1058

However, the number where the Council accepted a duty to rehouse was:-

2013/14	163
2014/15	191

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2015/16 398

This information would be provided to all Councillors for information.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member stated that, due to effective prevention work, the Council no longer placed people in bed and breakfast accommodation. It was accepted that temporary accommodation was not ideal for families with young children. The quality of Havering hostels had improved over the last two years. Structural changes in the housing market meant that more individuals were presenting as homeless and further private rented properties would therefore need to be located.

Planning Permission for New Dwellings

**5) To the Cabinet Member for Housing
From Councillor Stephanie Nunn**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm over each of the last 5 years how many new dwellings have received planning permission and how many dwellings have actually been built?

RESPONSE

Havering's new 'Vision' highlights the importance of high quality homes in the borough and Havering's planning policies are aimed at delivering these.

The numbers of dwellings granted planning permission and those that have been built over the past 5 years are as follows:

Year	Planning permission granted	Net completions
2011/12	440 units	448 units
2012/13	707 units	234 units
2013/14	983 units	792 units
2014/15	484 units	887 units
2015/16	699 units	948 units

This information would be provided to all Councillors for information.

Housing for Young People with Disabilities

6) To the Cabinet Member for Housing From Councillor Patricia Rumble

What provision is the council making to ensure that young people with disabilities are suitably accommodated in housing that fits their needs?

RESPONSE

The Joint Commissioning Unit is working with colleagues in Children's and Adults services to articulate future demand so that this can be reflected in local housing development plans.

The Unit is also working with housing providers in the market to develop a range of local housing options that would meet the needs of young people where they are assessed as being in need of accommodation with or without support.

Where current accommodation is unsuitable for a family with a disabled child, the CAD (Children and Adults with Disability) social workers refer to the local authority occupational therapy service who will assess for adaptations and rehousing if no adaptations are possible.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed the Council wished to work with any individual with housing needs. The Cabinet Member was happy to discuss a specific case with Cllr Rumble in more detail.

Havering Vision

7) To the Cabinet Member for Housing From Councillor Graham Williamson

In a Romford & Havering Post (Wed 1/3) article headlined "Borough's vision for greater and more active role in the capital" it was reported that the Council's proposed and as yet particularised Vision 'Havering - making a Greater London' includes the building of some 30,000 homes on behalf of London. Can the Council Leader confirm if there is any truth in that figure?

RESPONSE

The 30,000 homes referred to is an aspirational and indicative figure based on an anticipated increase in the borough's Housing target over the next 20 years as well as the latest projections on housing need.

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The borough's current housing target as set out in the London Plan is a minimum of 1,170 homes per annum. Havering's emerging Local Plan covers a 15 year period and seeks to meet a minimum target of 17,550.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member explained that the properties would be for Havering residents who could not afford their own homes. It was wished to deliver more affordable and sustainable development. The Cabinet Member did not wish to lose Havering's special identity but it was also necessary to comply with national and regional policies. It was also wished to deliver greater value in homes that were built.

Standards of Parks in Havering

8) To the Cabinet Member for Culture & Community Engagement From Councillor Barbara Matthews

Does the Cabinet Member agree that ALL parks in Havering boast the highest possible standards, are beautifully maintained and have excellent facilities?

RESPONSE

The Council is very proud that since 2007 our parks have regularly won prestigious Green Flag Awards. This is the national standard of excellence for parks and open spaces and shows that we have some of the best outdoor spaces in the country. We currently have 11 awards and are hoping to achieve a further 2 for Haynes Park and Harrow Lodge Park this year, and 1 more in 2018 for Langtons. We also have 43 London in Bloom Awards including 3 category winners and 10 golds. This was one of the highest achievements in London and again an indicator of the excellent standards of our parks.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member explained that the Council had instituted 10 years ago a hierarchy of parks in the borough based on an Open Spaces Assessment. The hierarchy was used to establish frequency of formal monitoring but all sites were treated equally in terms of grounds maintenance standards.

Creation of New Parking Places

9) To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety From Councillor Lawrence Webb

In the last five years how many new public parking places have been created by removing verges? Please provide the breakdown by year.

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RESPONSE

The only instances where the Council has replaced highway grass verge with parking space was in 2015 in Harlesden Close and Rush Green Road where 16 spaces in total were installed.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that an overall parking policy for Havering would be part of the Local Plan. There was not currently any budget for conversion of verges to parking spaces but this would be considered as part of the parking review.

IT and Data Security

10)To the Cabinet Member for Financial Management, ICT (Client) and Transformation **From Councillor Michael Deon Burton**

Minded of the attack upon Tiverton Town Council in Devon who found themselves victim of a 'ransom email', which has rendered all files dating back to 2015 inaccessible. (A clerk opened an email, which instantly infected all the council's computers, and now the cyber criminals responsible are demanding a payment to return the information.) Is Havering's I.T, data secure from such attack and are our systems and procedures robust enough to prevent such an occurrence?

RESPONSE

Prevention is better than cure, and security is no exception. Wherever possible, we want to prevent security incidents from happening in the first place. However, it is impossible to prevent all security incidents.

In order to protect our environment, we routinely carry out various activities to ensure the council's data and infrastructure is secure. Some of the activities are of technical nature which use tools and systems such as; routine assessment of vulnerabilities in the systems, monitoring of emails and isolating suspect emails. We regularly check our infrastructure and network for any abnormal entries. We also ensure that all our systems have the latest software updates installed on them which makes them more secure.

The other measures include training programs for all officers, regular reminders to all our staff of security policies which remind them of their responsibilities and enforcing strong passwords. We provide regular updates and reminders on our Intranet to all our staff advising them of potential threats and cyber security threats. We will further improve the process by ensuring this information can reach those who may not have access to the council's Intranet including members. It is always advised that users must not open an email or click a link if they are unsure about the validity.

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However, we can't give any guarantees that security breaches similar to what we have seen in other public sector organisations such as Tiverton Town Council will not happen as often the criminals are one step ahead.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed the potential paying of any ransom was a business issue. System were in place to deal with IT and data security as a whole.

Traffic Congestion in Hornchurch Town Centre

11) To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety

From Councillor John Wood

Would the Cabinet Member confirm what actions are being taken to reduce traffic congestion in Havering, and Hornchurch Town Centre in particular, given the increasing number of complaints that ward councillors are receiving on this issue?

RESPONSE

The Council invests the funding it receives through the Transport for London Local Implementation Plan, or LIP, in a variety of important transport schemes to manage traffic flow across the borough. This includes physical works to the highway network to add traffic capacity, improving journey time reliability and improving road safety.

LIP funding is also spent on schemes that provide alternative options to travel, such as through provision of secure cycle parking at key community facilities. The Council also engages with schools through the School Travel Plan process, which has seen a reduction in the number of pupils travelling to school by car from 39% in 2009 to 20% in 2016.

With regards Hornchurch Town Centre, the councillor will be aware that the limiting factor to motor traffic capacity generally will be junctions. In terms of adding capacity, aside from the financial constraints, there is the need for land within which larger junctions and additional or longer lanes can be built, which does not appear to be a practical solution.

I believe that officers were due to meet with yourself and your fellow Ward Members at Hornchurch on the 17th of March to discuss your concerns and I would encourage the councillor to continue those discussions.

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Vacant Retail Properties

12) To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety

From Councillor Lawrence Webb

How many vacant retail properties are there within the Romford Ring Road?

RESPONSE

There are currently 31 vacant retail outlets within the Romford Ring Road, out of a total number of 409 outlets, equating to 7.5%.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member reiterated the importance of ensuring the development of Romford Market. Initiatives such as the building of the Market House would lead to an uptake of shop premises within the town.

Administration of Direct Payments

13) To the Cabinet Member for Financial Management, ICT (Client) and Transformation **From Councillor Ray Morgon**

Would the Cabinet Member explain why, with an annual budget of over £10 million, Internal Audit found a worrying lack of documented procedures and monitoring/control systems in place in the administration of Direct Payments, so much so it has made 5 high and 9 medium priority recommendations for action to mitigate unacceptable financial risks to the council.

RESPONSE

The audit report in question contained a number of recommendations which are actively being implemented, or that have already been addressed. The majority of recommendations in the report relate to the Financial Assessments and Benefits Team, which now sits under the Head of Business Management. The audit was carried out prior to internal restructures, which have been implemented so that financial and other processes could be improved.

As the recommendations have been worked upon, more detail and updates pertaining to specific recommendations can be provided if required from both the Head of Business Management, for the recommendations pertaining to the FAB team aspects, and the Head of Joint Commissioning, for the aspects directly related to Direct Payments themselves.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that updates on progress with the recommendations would be brought to the Audit Committee. An update on current progress would also be provided to Councillor Morgon.

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Housing Bidding System

14) To the Cabinet Member for Housing

From Councillor Jody Ganly

If we are to actively encourage tenants in properties of 3 or more bedrooms to downsize to smaller properties, would the Cabinet Member confirm why we make it more difficult for tenants to do so by having to bid for properties, particularly when many elderly tenants do not have the means to bid online for them

RESPONSE

Those who wish to downsize are given a higher level of priority on the housing register. This ensures that they can secure offers for suitable properties earlier than other applicants on the housing register, and their property returns to Council stock in the process.

Our analysis shows that most who want to downsize are willing to give up their spare bedrooms, and have restrictive preferences in relation to the area and type of property they want to move into. To encourage them to do so, they are given the option to bid on a suitable property in their preferred area instead of making a direct offer that would result in a refusal.

In addition to online bidding, other methods include by calling the ELLC Choice Homes bidding hotline, which is fully automated in 15 languages, or a resident can bid using text messaging, and calls and messages are charged at the standard rate.

There is free Internet access available at every library, and at the Public Advice & Service Centre staff can also be able to offer assistance.

There is additional support available for residents who are unable to bid via an auto-bid facility - staff can set an 'auto-bid' so that the system automatically place bids on behalf of an elderly or vulnerable resident based on the bedroom requirements, area preference and type of property. The auto-bidding system can place bids on up to 2 properties matching their description every week, subject to availability.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed he would investigate a case raised by Councillor Ganly where a resident had been unable to downsize despite being told to remove furniture etc from their existing property.

Fields in Trust Scheme

15) To the Cabinet Member for Culture & Community Engagement

From Councillor Barry Mugglestone

Would the Cabinet Member explain why there are now restraints in relation to the Fields in Trust ideas for Hornchurch Country Park, when in the past the council has

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felt comfortable to have these restraints in place and working with Fields in Trust schemes?

RESPONSE

The aim of Fields in Trust scheme is to secure land so that it remains in public use perpetually, and it often has programmes or schemes that offer funding for use on the land if a dedication to protect the land in that use is agreed by a Council. Previously funding has been made available for Brittons Playing Field and Park Lane Recreation Ground which was used to install outdoor gym equipment.

Unfortunately the Field in Trust scheme cannot at this time offer funding.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed he was happy to discuss with Councillor Mugglestone reports that such funding might in fact be available.