

**Madam Mayor**

Since the last meeting of Full Council, there have been a number of matters of interest on which I would like to update members briefly.

**A £2m grant for children's services innovation bid**

Firstly, I am very pleased to be able to tell you that it was announced on Monday of this week that this Council has been awarded £2.4m by the Department for Education for innovation in Children's Services. This is after successfully bidding for this funding, which is aimed at improving the services we provide for young people who need our support the most. It shows confidence from the Government in the Council's ability to deliver improvement and transformation.

Through innovation, enhanced resources and working with the young people themselves, our officers will design a service that truly meets their needs. A large focus will be on keeping young people out of care, enabling them to stay with their families wherever possible, ensuring that those who do need care get it in a stable way, and those leaving care are given the very best life chances in education and employment.

Congratulations on this are due to Tim Aldridge and his team.

**£2b in social care funding for Councils announced in the budget and London devolution**

As part of the Spring Budget, delivered earlier this month, the Chancellor has pledged an extra £2bn to local authorities to help alleviate the social care crisis. Councils will benefit from this extra funding over the next three years. The money will help free up NHS beds by ensuring we are more able to provide sufficient support for those who are well enough to leave hospital. It was announced last week that our grant will be £3.8m for 2017/2018, £2.8 for 2018/2019 and £1.4 for 2019/2020.

The Budget also provides an extra £100m to help more hospitals have GPs in A&E units by next winter.

Also as part of the budget, a Memorandum of Understanding on further devolution to London was announced. As part of the agreement, local authorities in London and the Mayor of London will receive additional responsibilities over transport, health, criminal justice, skills and employment support.

Whilst I welcome any opportunity emerging for improving services in Havering, I would ask the Mayor of London to ensure that any additional powers are held where appropriate by individual borough councils, including Havering, rather than City Hall.

**Business rates**

The business rates revaluation takes effect in England from next month. In addition to the £3.6 billion transitional relief that was announced in November 2016, the

Government will provide additional support for businesses facing significant increases in bills. London will get a total of £124.3m over four years up to 2021 but that translates to an average of just £2.1m a year for London's ten hardest hit boroughs.

We don't yet know how easy this support will be to administer, but we do know that there will be support for small businesses losing Small Business Rate Relief to limit increases in their bills to £600, and a £1,000 business rate discount for pubs with a rateable value of up to £100,000 for one year from April.

The Government has assured us that we will be fully compensated for the loss of income as a result of these measures.

**MIPIM** – (promo video played on a loop as members enter)

Some of you might be aware, that for the first time, Havering was represented at MIPIM, an event that gathers the most influential national and international property developers over four days in Cannes. Last week, two of our directors attended the event with eight other partner East London local authorities (B&D, Bexley, Enfield, Greenwich, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest). We and our partners came together under the banner 'Local London'. The cost was covered by sponsorship. The primary aim for us was to launch our £1bn contract procurement to deliver our major housing estate regeneration programme.

In line with our new vision, the Council is taking a more proactive approach to showcasing Havering's opportunities. Our housing regeneration programme, new business developments and our excellent connections are already attracting significant interest.

The video that you saw when you entered the chamber today was produced to support the Council's presence at MIPIM, but our aim is to use this medium more widely to portray the borough's growth potential and attract businesses, investment and new residents. This video currently appears on our website homepage, on the Invest in Havering website and on our social media channels.

## **BHRUT**

Earlier this month, I was delighted to hear that BHRUT – our local hospitals' trust which runs Queens and King George Hospitals has been taken out of special measures.

I'd like to acknowledge the commitment of all staff at BHRUT who have worked tirelessly to increase standards over the past three years.

An improved local hospitals' trust will enable staff across our health and social care services to continue to work together successfully to improve patient care and experience.

## **Highfield Community Centre**

Also this month, work started on the construction of a new community centre behind Highfield Towers in Collier Row.

The new centre which will be carbon neutral, with solar panels, will boast a large hall, which I hope will become a hub for the whole community. In addition, a new play area will be created next to the new building. This will be partly funded through a partnership with the Tesco Bags of Help fund.

## **Sapphire jubilee**

I am pleased to tell members, that to mark Her Majesty the Queen's Sapphire jubilee year, the 65<sup>th</sup> year of her reign, we will be organising a special Service of Thanksgiving later on this year at St Helen & St Giles Church in Rainham.

In addition, there will be a photographic exhibition at Fairkytes, which is planned for next month, and we will also be planting a flower bed at the front of the Town Hall in her Majesty's honour. Final details of all the events and activities planned will be made available on our website in due course.

## **Terms and Conditions Review update**

I wanted also to give members an update on the Terms and Conditions Review for staff.

The job evaluation appeals process is now nearing completion. A final detailed moderation is currently being carried out jointly by the Council and Trade Unions in line with the job evaluation scheme and best practice. Once that review has been completed all impacted staff will be notified of the outcomes and the final job evaluation results. The external independent Equality Impact Analysis will then be carried out and once all of the information has been reviewed, a report will then be submitted to the Governance Committee. Implementation of the proposals is still expected to take place in the summer.

## **Commonwealth flag-raising**

On Monday 13 March, Madam Mayor, you raised the Commonwealth Flag outside the Town Hall, to Mark Commonwealth Day.

This was a significant and enjoyable event, which allowed the Borough to recognise the importance of the Commonwealth at a time of increasing instability and uncertainty in the world. You can see a photograph of the event on the screen.



### **Award nomination**

I would like to share some good news. Havering Council has been shortlisted for the main award at London Councils' 2017 Small Business Friendly Borough Awards.

Havering is shortlisted for the "Best All Round Small Business Friendly Borough" at the awards ceremony that will be held at the Kingsway Hall Hotel in London on Thursday 30 March.

We are delighted to have been shortlisted, as it demonstrates our vision and ongoing to supporting our local businesses. Havering has a strong entrepreneurial spirit and I know that officers are doing all they can to nurture and develop it.

A particularly exciting development over the last year has been the establishment of affordable workspace for new businesses at The Retailery in Romford's Market Place, The Workary at Rainham Library, and the CEME Launchpad. I'm confident that these workspaces will help maintain our borough's position as the UK's start-up capital.

## **Big Backing for BID3**

Following on from this, I was very pleased to hear earlier this month that businesses have overwhelmingly backed continuing the London Riverside's Business Improvement District or BID.

The BID was first set-up in 2006 and is designed to provide benefits for around 400 businesses in the London Riverside areas in Rainham funded by a levy on businesses within the BID area.

Around 87% of the businesses who voted were in favour of BID3, the third iteration of the scheme that will run until 2022. This was the highest vote in favour of the three polls held over the last 10 years.

Since it was formed, the BID has invested in mobile security patrols, CCTV, removal of rubbish, planting and environmental improvements, improved recycling facilities and lobbying for improved transport links to the area. In total over £2.4 million has been invested over the years in security and improving the appearance of the area and this good work will now continue for another five years.

## **Solar Park Proposals**

Following a review of the Solar Park schemes with officers I am now able to update members on the future of the proposals. At the Council meeting in January I reported that the Administration would not be proceeding with the scheme at Dagnam Park in its current form. Consideration has been given to revised smaller schemes, and I have reached the conclusion that there would be insufficient viability or feasibility to warrant such alternative scheme and that the right course is to discontinue any such plans for the Dagnam Park area. I will now be informing the Friends of the Park of this.

Work will however be continuing on the possible scheme for the Gerpins Lane site. That work will draw on the experience of other councils in schemes underway or planned for their areas. If any other alternative energy opportunities are identified members will of course be briefed.

The change in plans will give rise to a review of our Medium Term Financial Strategy from 2019/2020 and other savings or income may need to be identified.

Madam Mayor that concludes my report.