

Leader's Announcements to Council
Wednesday 12 July 2017

Madam Mayor,

I would like to take this opportunity to update you and members on a number of areas of important council business.

Grenfell contribution and update on our buildings

After the tragic events at Grenfell Tower, Council staff have been working as part of the London-wide team to help those affected. We have also provided advice and reassurance to our own tenants and leaseholders about fire safety.

We have no tower blocks over sixteen stories. Only one of our blocks has cladding, which is different to the type of cladding used at Grenfell Tower. All our blocks of flats have up-to-date fire risk assessments and have regular fire safety inspections. Every two years we have an independent fire safety inspection on all of our high rise blocks. The routine 2017 inspections took place between 20 June and 6 July. We have also asked all Registered Social Landlords in the borough for details of their fire risk assessments on the blocks they own or manage.

All schools have also been contacted. The Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), in conjunction with Local Authorities, are reviewing their School estates. Academy schools and Diocesan schools are being contacted separately, and a response for community schools is being coordinated by the Council. Schools have also been advised to carry out a number of activities as part of their asset management plans in relation to fire safety.

In addition, our staff have been providing support to those directly affected by the tragedy. This has included social workers from both our Children's and Adults services being made available to work in Kensington and Chelsea as part of the Pan-London support team to help residents who have either lost loved ones or their home, as well as families who have been evacuated from buildings nearby. The Council's Emergency Planning team worked with service areas to offer mutual aid via London Resilience. This includes volunteers of social workers, housing officers, Registrars and commissioning volunteers, and oneSource Exchequer. In addition, Neil

Stubbings has been seconded to support the rehousing programme of those affected in that vicinity.

We're very proud that a number of our staff have been able in this way to support and lead some of these key activities at this very difficult and challenging time.

Market House

I would now like to update members on the position with regards to regeneration in the Market Place in Romford. You will have heard by now that officers have recommended that the Market House project should be discontinued.

Underground investigations commissioned by officers highlighted the extent of works needed, which included rerouting major sewage pipes and gas mains. This increased the project's cost by nearly £1 million and therefore it is no longer financially viable.

It was because of this that council officers recommended that the project should not go ahead. Despite this the Council's efforts to strengthen and regenerate the Market will continue. We are committed to ensuring that the Market is rejuvenated, however, financial prudence dictates the decision not to proceed with the original proposals, which in the current climate is most important.

The Market Management Team has already seen more applications from new traders, and we continue to work to improve quality and quantity of the offer of the Market. We are investing in Town Centre Wifi, we are working to improve the look of stalls and pitches, provide better parking, and offer an exciting Christmas events programme. In addition, now that the Market House will not be built, we are reviewing the layout of the Market and the stalls.

Local plan timeline and dates

Members will be aware that the Council is preparing a new Local Plan for the Borough. This will set out a strategy for future growth and sustainable development over the next 15 years. The Local Plan will update our planning policies and, once adopted, give us more control and influence over development at a local level.

It will indicate the broad locations for different types of development, including housing, employment, retail, and community services. It will also deal with infrastructure needs.

The policies in the Local Plan will help to ensure new development in the Borough is met sustainably.

Initial consultation on the key priorities for the Local Plan took place in early 2015, and it is scheduled to come to Cabinet on 19 July and Full Council on 26 July. The Cabinet report and draft Plan were published yesterday. Consultation on the Local Plan will take place over the summer, subject to approval by Cabinet and Full Council.

Progress on school improvement plan

Now moving to our schools' improvement plan. The Council, schools and the Regional Schools Commissioner have agreed a school-led improvement strategy, and an independently-chaired Improvement Board has been established to oversee this. The key indicator of the success being that all schools will be judged to be good or better by Ofsted by July 2018, subject to each school's place in Ofsted's calendar of inspections.

A high-calibre external improvement lead has been commissioned to work with schools, advising on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and promoting the effectiveness of leadership at all levels.

Further funding of £1.2m has been sought from the Department for Education Strategic School Improvement fund, and the bids have been focussed to address specific areas aligned to the strategy for improvement such as leadership, peer review, transition from primary to secondary phase and supporting 'more able' pupils along with disadvantaged groups.

We continue to monitor the performance of all schools on a regular basis. This includes forensic evaluation of progress through monthly performance review meetings in those schools identified as being under-performing, and greater use of the powers available to the authority where schools are a cause for concern.

KS2 National Curriculum Assessments 2017

Another piece of good news is that Havering schools Key Stage 2 results have gone up 10 per cent over the year and are now significantly higher than the national average.

The Department for Education (DfE) announced the interim Key Stage 2 (KS2) National Curriculum Assessments 2017 data on the 4 July 2017, and show the continuing improvement in achievement for primary schools in Havering. The average score for reading, writing and maths (combined) across the local authority has increased by 10 per cent from 62 percent in 2016 to 72 per cent. The 2017 national average is 61 per cent.

The results reinforce our commitment to improving education in the borough.

I had the pleasure last week of meeting some our budding young mathematicians at the Havering Primary School Mathematics Competition held at Hall Mead School (itself one of our top performing secondary schools). This was the 21st year of the competition in which schools from all parts of the Borough entered. This year the winning team was from Gidea Park Primary School.

School expansion consultation

The Council continues to deliver Phase 4 of its expansion programme, investing significantly in its school estate. The programme includes expansion of a number of Early Years providers offering 2, 3 and 4-year-old early education and childcare places, whilst also ensuring we have sufficient places to meet the new requirements of an extended offer of 30 hours' free childcare for working parents.

A number of primary schools are also being expanded across the Borough to meet the continuing growing demand for school places, particularly in Harold Hill, Romford and South Hornchurch. We are currently consulting on permanently expanding a number of our secondary schools to meet the demand for extra places from 2018.

Finally, to meet the growing demand for Special Educational Needs places, we are expanding the number of Additionally Resourced Provisions across the borough, whilst also working with the Department for Education on a potential new SEN Free school in Romford as reported to last week's Cabinet meeting.

Havering Learning Partnership Teaching Awards

All secondary schools and the colleges in Havering are members of the Havering Learning Partnership and have been working together on the implementation of the secondary plan to improve outcomes for all our children and young people. There is much good practice across the schools and in recognition of this, the Partnership instigated an Awards process, which culminated in an Awards Ceremony in June. The three categories of award were:

- Progress and attainment
- Individual excellence in supporting student progress, and
- Enrichment activities.

The evening was very well attended, and Havering Council was pleased to support the event. It is hoped that this will become an annual event.

Broadford Primary School

I am also very proud to refer to Broadford Primary School in Harold Hillion receiving very well-deserved accolades at the recent Times Educational Supplement (TES) national School Awards ceremony. Broadford was named both Primary School of the Year and Overall School of the Year.

On behalf of the Council, I offer our congratulations to everyone, both adults and children, associated with the school for their continuing dedication and hard work.

Armed Forces Day

Last month, Madam Mayor, you raised the Armed Forces flag outside the Town Hall to show support of the armed forces ahead of National Armed Forces Day. The Mayor's Cadet, our Armed Forces Champion, veterans and Councillors were also in attendance.

The annual Armed Forces Day parade from South Street to Tollgate House in Market Place saw hundreds of Havering residents turn out to show their support. Everyone in attendance was able to enjoy the morning while showing their respect for our armed forces personnel.

Havering Show

Havering's most popular and free annual event will return in August with two music stages and one community performance stage that will showcase local acts. Time 107.5 FM has sponsored the main stage again this year and will introduce the acts and entertain the crowds.

Another long-time supporter of the show, West & Coe Funeral Directors, has sponsored the show again this year, helping us to deliver an even bigger, free event. Last year the show attracted more than 55,000 people over two days. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible there on Sunday 27 and Monday 28 August.

Street Pastors

Last month, we celebrated our Street Pastor's 10th Year Anniversary. Street Pastors are trained volunteers from local churches who patrol the streets of Romford between 10pm and 4am, offering care and support to residents and visitors. To mark their selfless and sterling work over the years, I attended, as did you Madam Mayor, their birthday celebrations on 10 June.

I would like to offer my grateful thanks to all our Street Pastors and say that we truly appreciate all their hard work, commitment and dedication towards keeping Havering people safe.

National clean air – Miles performances

Also last month, I marked National Clean Air Day at Mawney Primary School with Miles the Mole, our clean air champion. It was a pleasure to see Miles helping children to learn about air pollution. Last month, Miles and a theatre workshop visited 30 schools in Havering to teach children about air quality.

The air quality film, produced in association with TfL and supported by the Mayor's Air Quality Fund, has been distributed to all primary schools in the borough along with air quality lesson plans. The campaign has been a real success and has proved a good way to get the clear air message into schools and educate our children, and has also recently been endorsed by the Mayor of London.

Cathedral Court

I'd also like to provide an update on our work to deliver high-quality housing for residents through Mercury Land Holdings, which has so far been very successful. We have 62 of the 65 properties let at Cathedral Court and have exceeded the initial rental projections. We have also rented the properties faster than initially anticipated by around three months.

Socitm score

Now moving to some further good news about our new website. Socitm – the society of IT practitioners in the public sector, have rated the website at 3 Stars – up from 2 stars last year. 4 is the highest rating, so the Customer Services team will be pushing forward with the ongoing improvements to try and achieve this next year.

Customer Services will be driving this work forward, and we hope to bring you continuing good news about progress made.

Ardleigh Green bridge

Members will be aware of TfL's recent announcement about a further two-year delay on the Ardleigh Green Bridge works. The works, which were due to be complete by the end of this year, have been put back, with all four lanes of traffic due to re-open in spring 2019.

I'm extremely disappointed with the announcement - this is unacceptable and will continue to have a detrimental effect on residents and local businesses. I am contacting the Minister for Transport and the Mayor of London to emphasise our frustration. I will continue to work on this and will keep members, residents and businesses updated.

Highways England consultation on new M25 junction

The Secretary of State for Transport announced his preferred option for a new Lower Thames crossing earlier this year which involves a new junction between junctions 29 and 30 of the M25. Highways England is now developing a detailed design and assessment of the preferred route which will include undertaking a series of surveys and further traffic modelling.

The Council is awaiting an announcement, which is expected over the summer, from the Secretary of State for Transport on his preferred option for delivering capacity improvements to junction 28 of the M25 (Brook Street roundabout).

After this announcement, there will be further public consultation on the preferred route later in the year.

Business rate retention & fair funding review update

Now turning to matters of finance. You will have noted that Her Majesty the Queen's Speech did not include a revived Local Government Finance Bill. However, it is likely that the Fair Funding review will go ahead. It does not require primary legislation – and Ministers' views are being sought on the priority and direction of travel for broader funding reforms, and on business rate retention in particular.

It remains a concern, however, that there has been no signal with regards to the broader reforms to the future funding of local government, including those paving the way to 100 per cent business rates retention. We therefore await government guidance on the intentions around the policy and introduction of these reforms.

T&Cs

I am pleased to say the Council's Terms & Conditions Review is nearing completion with the final proposals to be considered by the Governance Committee on 20 July. As you know our management team have worked closely with trade unions to achieve a fair and measured set of proposals which represent the best possible outcome that could be achieved. We understand the unions are balloting their members on whether to accept these in Collective Agreement. I would like to thank all staff for their patience during this quite lengthy process.

Children's Services awarded £835k to develop a new care model

I'd like to say well done to our Children's Services who will lead on developing a new residential care model for children aged 11-17 in North East London boroughs.

Last week the Department for Education awarded the North East London Commissioning Partnership £835k funding. The funding will allow us to work with young people and care providers to develop a high-quality service in residential settings, and help us to support young people through residential care and back into a home environment.

Olive Foxwell – foster carer

Finally, I would like to offer my heartfelt condolences to the family of Olive Foxwell.

Olive was a supportive lodgings carer for Havering from 2000 – 2015 and became a foster carer in 2015. She has supported Havering's vulnerable young people for over 17 years, and sadly, passed away last week after being diagnosed with lung cancer. She was 70 years old.

She was a wonderful and inspirational person, and will be missed dearly.