

Madam Mayor,

There are a number of areas that I would like to update members on this evening.

Heathrow logistics hub

Firstly, I would like to start with some encouraging news. Just recently, Heathrow Airport announced an area in the Rainham business sector as one of the 65 longlisted sites in the running to be selected as an expansion Logistics Hub for building Britain's new runway. The airport plan would be the first UK infrastructure scheme to create four Logistic Hubs across the country that would provide offsite manufacturing and construction for the third runway.

This would be a huge opportunity for Havering people to play a major role in the development of a new UK expansion model, and we have been selected as one of only two London locations out of the 65 potential sites; this has been reduced from the initial 121 applications.

It would be a significant economic development advancement for the site to be chosen as one of the final four, and if successful, this would create local jobs for local people, with the opportunity for a legacy of construction excellence.

Cocoon opening

Last month, Children's services held an event to officially open The Cocoon, one of east London's only dedicated support hubs for children in care and care leavers.

The Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield and I attended the ribbon cutting with local young people in care, as did The Deputy Mayor, Cabinet Members, council staff and foster carers.

The centre will provide a safe drop-in space for children and young people living in care or leaving care, where they can meet with key workers and progress with personal development. The Cocoon will enable young people to develop key life skills, get access to training, receive additional education support, learn how to cook and receive help with housing and health. It will also provide new opportunities for children and young people as they move towards independent living.

Care leaver's council tax

To support further these young people as they take their first steps towards independence, the council is proposing to cover the cost of council tax for care leavers who live in their own accommodation Havering until they reach the age of 25. We have 128 care leavers, 51 of whom live within Havering in independent accommodation.

As corporate parents, we take our responsibilities seriously, with the aim of providing these young people with access to life chances that others enjoy. Officers across the

council are working together to support Care Leavers, helping them to secure sustainable tenancies and reducing the risk of evictions and homelessness.

These two initiatives highlight the improved local offer to our most vulnerable residents and show our aim to work in partnership with our communities to develop practical solutions to real problems.

Bryant Avenue opening

There is also some good news at last for residents and businesses in Harold Wood who have been suffering because of the closure of Bryant Avenue in connection with the Ardleigh Green A127 Bridge works. Following the constant pressure that we have applied about delays in this project, I can announce today that TfL will be opening the road ahead of schedule in the second week of December. This will hopefully be welcome news for residents and businesses in the area.

We will of course continue to press TfL to complete the remaining Ardleigh Green Bridge works as early as possible.

Remembrance Day

It was very humbling to see the impressive number of people who turned out to mark Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday events. More than 2,000 people attended these commemorations, services and parades across Havering to remember those who lost their lives and to honour their sacrifices. It was particularly good to see so many young people and organisations involved.

No one plays a greater role in keeping us safe than our Armed Forces and these services gave us a chance to remember the servicemen and women past and present.

Thanks are also due to our local police for their support.

Christmas events

Also, last week we officially kick-started Christmas activities with thousands filling the Market Place in Romford to enjoy the big light switch-on event along with lots of family entertainment. This was followed by the Christmas Cracker event in Hornchurch, and we can look forward to many more switch-ons across the borough in the coming weeks – as Havering lights up for Christmas.

As always the fun doesn't stop there. Residents can also enjoy various enchanted Christmas events in Romford Market, including the Kingdom of Elves and a Winter Wonderland Experience.

Noak Hill Sports Centre opening

I'm also pleased to announce that there will be an official open day on Saturday 25 November Noak Hill Sports Complex. There will be free football and tennis coaching sessions, a bouncy castle and face painting. Since opening earlier this year, the 3G football pitch and tennis courts have proved extremely popular, and are regularly fully booked, showing that the community really values the additional facilities now provided here.

Central Park Gym opening

The newly-refurbished Central Park Leisure centre in Harold Hill, officially reopened by Mayor of Havering last month attracted over 500 people to mark the successful completion of works improve facilities at the site.

Residents and visitors attended the centre to make use of its refurbished fitness suite for free and took part in other activities. The centre fully reopened for the first time on Saturday 7 October. Councillor Melvin Wallace was also in attendance and we all tried out the new equipment which was very impressive.

Romford Leisure Development

Continuing with the leisure theme, last month, I placed the last tile in the 25m eight-lane main pool at the new Sapphire Ice and Leisure centre in Romford, where I was joined by other Cabinet members, Willmott Dixon Construction and partners. There is also be a 15 x 8m learner pool and sauna and steam rooms, which completes the facilities on the ground floor. Councillor Melvin Wallace was also lucky enough to help install the very first seat near the ice-rink. This will be the borough's biggest leisure facility and it is due to be complete ahead of schedule for residents and visitors to enjoy very soon.

myplace cafe opening

myplace is celebrating its fifth year in operation since opening on 6 June 2012. myplace has had over 225,000 people visit the building over the years. Last month, I attended the opening of the new 1950s style dinner, which was opened by the Mayor, and includes a soft play area. This new facility has really enhanced the service at myplace, especially for our early years' visitors and parents. Very soon, the centre will also host new arts initiatives working in partnership with the London College.

Miles the Mole

The Miles the Mole Air Quality campaign continues to go from strength to strength. On 15 November I joined the Miles Mascot at Queen's Hospital, Romford. Miles and the team were down there to mark World COPD Day - handing out educational

merchandise and met both patients and staff on the children's COPD ward – to promote cleaner air.

The Miles campaign has also been shortlisted for Local Authority Initiative of the Year at the National Air Quality Awards (run by Air Quality UK Magazine). I'm sure you'll want to join me in wishing the team the best of luck at tomorrow evening's award ceremony, and we'll keep our fingers and paws crossed for Miles.

DCLG consultation

Moving on to more less encouraging matters, we recently responded to the DCLG consultation on their most recent housing target ideas.

In their proposals, DCLG would set Havering a target of delivering 1,821 new homes each year between 2021-2026, which is a third more than what has been determined as part of our draft Local Plan. It not only fails to take account of our need and land availability assessments completed only last year it also fails to recognise the challenges we face in meeting current housing targets and providing the essential infrastructure.

More than half of Havering is Green Belt, and for anyone to suggest such significant increases in our housing targets shows in my view that the methodology used is flawed and unrealistic. We fear also from what we have been told that Sadiq Khan could propose even higher targets in his draft London Plan due shortly. If he is serious this could put swathes of the borough's Green Belt in danger despite his having assured us at the time of his election that he would protect the Green Belt.

There needs to be a more holistic approach to address the housing crisis across London. We want to provide high-quality places where people will want to live in sustainable communities that have the right infrastructure, such as for travel, health and education. Such a large increase in the annual housing target allotted to us in the current London Plan would make this very difficult to deliver.

We have submitted our formal feedback on the proposals and have asked DCLG to think again and make the targets more practical and realistic. We shall be responding also to the London Mayor's plans when announced.

MOPAC consultation

I would also like to update you on our efforts to save police public access point in the borough, and say that I'm extremely disappointed with the outcome of MOPAC's consultation. MOPAC has announced the closure of both Hornchurch and Rainham police stations, as well as Safer Neighbourhood bases across the borough, with the exception of Elm Park. This is absolutely unacceptable and fails to consider the needs of our residents and of our population growth. This is why are looking at the prospect of a legal challenge.

We have even offered to provide space for police to use in outlying areas and will still honour that.

I will of course keep you updated on this matter.

Lower Thames Crossing

Members should be aware that Highways England are currently developing their proposals for a new crossing to relieve pressures on the existing bridge and tunnel at Dartford. The plans propose a new tunnel beneath the river Thames between Tilbury and Gravesend.

The Planning Inspectorate has just published the Scoping Report for the Environmental Impact Assessment and is now inviting technical comments on this from a wide range of statutory bodies such as local authorities. Council officers will be reviewing the document and responding on behalf of the Council in due course.

The London Mayor's Transport Plan

The Council's response to this Plan emphasising the continuing need for road transport and car use was submitted recently. I am grateful to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for examining key aspects of this and for their support for the position which we have taken. I hope that the assurances received from the GLA officers as to some specific issues will be followed up by positive action as strategy is progressed.

Bridge Close Romford

Members will be aware that Cabinet Members agreed to enter into a Joint Venture with Savills Investment Management and First Base, to facilitate the redevelopment of the Bridge Close site. The funding for the scheme will now be subject to approval at a meeting of the full council on Wednesday 21 February 2018.

The development includes new homes – of which at least 30 per cent of homes would be affordable – and would also provide local workspace, a primary school and community and health facilities, which are absolutely critical.

Communities, opportunities and connections are central to the place we want to create, and key to our vision and ambition for Romford and the rest of the borough. Being part of a Joint Venture as an equal partner will give us control over the development, and allow us to ensure it is of the highest quality and fits with the expectations of our people and our heritage.

Next month we will consider a report that will recommend a similar joint venture partnership arrangement for Beam Park Rainham Housing Zone, and there will be a full member briefing ahead of this.

Mercury Land Holdings – Cathedral Court

While of the topic of housing, I would like to update you on Cathedral Court in Romford. The first development by the Council's private lettings company, Mercury Land holdings is now fully let.

The site consists of 65 private rented properties and provides residents with modern accommodation in the heart of Romford, close to the station which will soon benefit from new Crossrail services.

As I'm sure members are aware, Cabinet recently approved further funding for Mercury Land Holdings which will enable us to generate additional income. This type of revenue generating venture is essential at a time when we're receiving reduced grants from government.

London Borough of Culture

Finally, Members will have seen various communications about our bid to become the London Borough of Culture in 2020.

This is a very good opportunity for us to showcase the importance of Havering's culture, heritage and arts offer.

We have strong heritage buildings such as Langtons and Rainham Hall – a National Trust property, which hosts exhibitions for local residents and visitors.

We also have a range of exciting projects taking place, including a partnership with English National Ballet exploring dance programmes with children and seniors. With two theatres' – Queen's Theatre in Hornchurch and Brookside in Romford, and over 100 green spaces and parks, Havering has a lot to offer.

I encourage everyone here to support the bid and share our community's rich culture. Winners will be announced in February 2018.