



FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 21 November 2018

## MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

### Vision for Havering

1) **To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)**

**From Councillor Ray Morgan**

Would the Leader of the Council set out his vision for Havering and what are the key priorities that he will be focussing on over the next 12 -24 months.

**Answer**

Mr Mayor, I must request a little leeway in responding to this question, as what is in effect being asked is for me to provide another annual statement to Full Council, setting out how this administration will prioritise a 320 million spend over 24 months.

Whilst I appreciate the need to set out the strategic objectives of this authority, I have already provided a statement to full council after my election and I intend to bring forward a fully updated corporate plan to cabinet in due course. This will be based upon the feedback from our residents throughout our public consultation and be based upon the Ipsos Mori survey that was undertaken and it will incorporate the savings programme within it – so that our authority has an achievable and deliverable corporate plan.

However, to provide some assurance to the Council, may I outline the broad areas that my administration will be focusing upon over the rest of the life of this Council.

Mr Mayor, yesterday saw the publication of the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy for Havering Council, which I will be taking to Cabinet. This provides the financial narrative of where we as an authority and as an administration wish to go. It sets out how we are intending to address the shortfall in funding that we face as a Council, whilst protecting and enhancing the areas that matter to our residents.

Mr Mayor, the delivery of a balanced budget over the rest of this Council must surely be a shared priority for our Council and I am sure that all Members will be supportive of this approach. By getting this right, all other Council priorities flow from having the resources to provide the quality services that are needed.

**Reform of public services**

I am passionate about reforming our Council, so that we can enhance our service provision whilst cutting out waste and raising our game to best in show. And this, Mr Mayor, will be one of the key areas of the administration's focus over the rest of life of this Council. We will seek to do this through launching service reviews of every area of this Council – benchmarking our costs with industry standards and

seeing if the current structure is able to provide the quality of service that is expected.

By shamelessly borrowing the best ideas for service delivery from throughout the public and private sector, we will be able to release a wave of resources tied up within outdated structures. This will free staff to provide a better quality offering to our residents whilst delivering the savings needed.

### **Regeneration**

The steady evolution of our towns and communities in a sustainable way is a key priority for this administration. And to support this, we have put in place the measure to promote Havering as a destination of investment, whilst at the same time we will be championing the required investment within our social infrastructure.

Through master planning all of the main areas of Borough, we will be in a stronger position to influence the type of development within our authority. And by taking an active approach within the redevelopment of the key sites, will have a greater say in the need to provide that enhanced social support.

One of the most exciting projects that we are engaged within is the estate regeneration proposals, which will see worn out council estates re-born into mixed tenure, economically active communities, providing a doubling of affordable council housing as well as a new and modern range of older people's accommodation.

This is something that is special. Unlike some other London Boroughs that have sought to reduce council housing on estate regeneration plans, we intend to increase council housing – and we are doing it in a way that it taking our residents and tenants along with us.

### **Protecting the what matters**

Mr Mayor, it is important that our authority listen to our residents, before we decide upon the corporate objectives of this Council, which is why we have spent the past three months listening to what they have had to say.

The broad brush is that we want to protect and enhance our communities. Now that we have made significant progress in bring forward an updated MTFs, we are now in a position to work on the updated Corporate objectives.

Of course I am not denying that we face difficult decisions this year and in the coming years because of the need to save a third of our budget... but we will protect the services that matter to our residents most while involving our community in the decisions that are taken.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council explained that the latest 'Double Diamond' approach to management techniques would be introduced to the Council which incorporated best practice from other sectors. An all-Member briefing could be arranged on this.

## **Chafford Sports Complex**

**2) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)  
From Councillor Jeffrey Tucker**

The Council contract with Sports and Leisure Management Ltd to manage Chafford Sports Complex ends in December. The statutory consultation on the future of Chafford ends on December 10th with a Cabinet decision on the outcome expected in early 2019. Will the Council Leader provide assurances that the Complex will remain open until a Cabinet decision about its future is made?

**Answer**

I can confirm that Chafford Sports Complex will remain open for community use until a decision is taken by Cabinet on the future of the Complex.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council added that consultation was currently in progress with residents on the future of sports facilities in the south of the borough and that he was happy to discuss these issues with residents further.

## **Strategic Development**

**3) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)  
From Councillor Linda Hawthorn**

Where new developments are being built, for example in the 'Rainham and Beam Park' and 'Romford' Strategic Development Areas, what measures are being applied to ensure that the expansion of each area is cohesive, avoiding uncoordinated piece-meal development, and takes special regard to green and natural features, such as the planting of trees and opening up the Rivers Beam and Rom?

**Answer**

The Council's emerging Local Plan contains specific policies for both Strategic Development Areas.

Policy 1 for the Romford Strategic Development Area contains a range of criteria that will be assessed when considering all new development proposals, including the need to green the ring road and open up the River Rom. Work is under way to produce a Romford Masterplan which would seek to ensure that development of areas are coordinated in terms of implementing the requirements of the policy.

Policy 2 for Rainham and Beam Park seeks to create a green street along New Road. The planning permission for Beam Park includes a new park with an improved River Beam running through the centre. The Rainham and Beam Park Planning Framework specifically requires comprehensive development of street blocks to avoid undesirable piecemeal development that does not maximise the potential of sites and this principle is applied when assessing individual

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proposals. The planning framework will shortly be reviewed to create a new Rainham Masterplan.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council explained that consultation had not started yet on either plan and that staff were currently being recruited for this. Further details could be provided in the form of an all-Member briefing or a written response.

**Fly Tipping**

**4) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)  
From Councillor Tele Lawal**

What is the criteria for deciding when to use Council resources to clean up fly tipped material on Council Land, Green Spaces, and Commercial/Business Premises?

**Answer**

The general policy, as stated on the Council website, is that the private landowner is responsible for arranging clearance and bearing the cost of removal and disposal.

Where waste is harmful or the residents are vulnerable the Council may intervene by providing skips to facilitate a community clean up or by clearing the waste.

Each case is dealt with on its merits and careful consideration is given whenever the Council undertakes works in default as pursuing recovery of the costs of collection and disposal entails significant costs which may not be recoverable until the property is sold.

Furthermore, the Council may be held liable for any damage is caused to land or property during clearance.

Special provisions exist in cases of fly tipping in private service roads or alleyways. The Enforcement Team will investigate to identify those responsible. If no evidence found, the waste will be removed by the Council and residents of all properties adjacent to the alleyway sent letters reminding them of their responsibilities and that they will be held liable for the costs of any future clearance.

In respect of fly tips on Council land or green spaces owned by the Council responsibility for clearance rests with the local authority.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that the service was fair across the borough and that each case was dealt with on its own merits. He was however happy to investigate any cases of apparent lack of

consistency of approach to clearance of flytips, if these could be forwarded to him.

## **Community Hubs and Library Centres**

### **5) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White) From Councillor Martin Goode**

What is the Council's vision of the operating module for the proposed Community Hubs and what extra facilities will they generally provide for the public. In particular, where existing Library buildings and their services may be impacted.

#### **Answer**

Officers are in the process of exploring the potential to develop Community Hubs in Havering. At present, no decisions have been made as to the location, delivery model, service offering or facilities to be provided until we have engaged with key stakeholders, most importantly the community, to explore how best to meet local needs.

There is no doubt that we need to look at ways we can improve the customer experience across the public estate in Havering, while getting better value out of the buildings that we own.

The concept behind community hubs is to look at opportunities to bring neighbourhood services under one roof with better facilities, accepting that there may be fewer buildings overall.

In Romford alone there are 63 public buildings within a few miles. Is there a way of bringing some of these services together with better facilities in a way that improves customer access and the customer experience?

Officers are also looking at buildings and land the Council owns or manages, as part of our new Strategic Asset Management Plan, to make best use of them now and in the future. This includes a separate review of our front doors, i.e. buildings that have significant public access.

The review includes libraries along with other public services, but it is important to stress that our aim is to maintain and improve library services, including looking at things like longer opening hours in busier libraries. We are not looking to close any library service. Through our approach we want to strengthen the way we work with the voluntary sector and wider community to deliver the best possible service within our financial constraints.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that there would be no loss of overall provision of library services under the Community Hubs model and that a paper on this would be brought to Cabinet in due course.

## **Housing Targets and the London Plan**

**6) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)  
From Councillor Ray Morgon**

In the new draft London Plan from the Mayor of London he intends to raise his housing target to 60,000 homes per year and no doubt Havering will have to take its share of this increased target. Would the Leader of the Council agree that this much higher housing target threatens “Keeping Havering Special?”

### **Answer**

The Council commented very robustly in Spring 2018 to the public consultation on the draft London Plan. It said that the Mayor’s target was ‘totally unacceptable, unachievable and unsustainable to the point of changing the unique and open character of Havering for the worse’.

The Council’s response said that there are fundamental flaws underlying the housing targets in the draft London Plan meaning that they are unrealistic and unachievable for Havering (and many other Outer London Boroughs). Havering specifically identified how the Mayor had identified housing need and the contribution expected to come from ‘small sites’ as being flawed.

The Council’s response said that the Mayor’s housing targets will be wholly incompatible with Havering being able to continue to safeguard the borough’s open and suburban character and appearance and will be to the detriment of Havering as a place where people want to live and businesses wish to invest.

Havering’s response concluded that the provision of homes in Havering in line with the London Plan targets will herald very damaging and irreversible change to the character of Havering.

The Council will continue to strongly oppose the targets in the new London Plan and is seeking to do this at the Examination in Public into the London Plan in 2019.

It is essential that the Council’s political leadership maintains its commitment to ‘Keeping Havering Special’ but it has to do this in a manner which recognises that Havering is part of the wider community and not an island. We will not be in a position to decide every planning application itself and in some instances it has to accept that there are planning applications it will only influence rather than determine.

It is how we use this influence, to protect and enhance our community rather than trying to stop the development from coming altogether, as can only lead to the designation of our planning functions and the loss of that influence and potentially millions of pounds in new homes bonus.

Mr Mayor, this is why I am so excited about championing the master planning of our communities, which will strengthen our position in determining planning applications, as well as supporting the evolution of our Towns and Communities.

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In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council stated that the National Audit Office had stated that the Government had overestimated the amount of housing that would be required. He felt that the Government should consider a wider range of measures to deal with the housing crisis. The Council would oppose unrealistic housing targets and would fight tooth and nail to protect the special nature of the borough.

**Affordable Homes in the Borough**

**7) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman)  
From Councillor Graham Williamson**

Given the growing number of properties in Havering, what is, and will, the Council be doing to ensure that developers and Housing Associations will market homes for sale, and ensure affordable homes go to Havering residents to at least ensure our housing waiting lists are cleared.

**Answer**

The Council's own ambitious regeneration programme will see a significant increase in much needed new homes and affordable housing.

In regards to our own housing for sale, each development scheme will have its own bespoke marketing strategy which will reflect the unique characteristics of the scheme, for example: locality, property types and amenities.

In respect of affordable housing, it is governed by the Council's Allocation Policy which requires, amongst other things, at least 6 years continuous residency within Havering. This means that it is local people that will be able to access our new rented homes, which will have a positive effect on the council's waiting list.

In addition, the Council also engages with housing associations and developers to ensure that the Council has 100% nomination rights for the affordable units on new developments and to push for these nomination rights to be available in perpetuity.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that he wanted developers to deliver as much affordable housing as possible and that the Council sought to positively influence developments.

**Cost of Romford market**

**8) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)  
From Councillor Clarence Barrett**

How much Council funding (excluding TfL) has been spent on the Romford Market over each of the last three years in each of the following two categories?

	<b>Capital/Investment/One-off</b>	<b>Revenue (day to day)</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
<b>2017/18</b>	<b>£30,341</b>	<b>£111,231</b>
<b>2016/17</b>	<b>£221,000</b>	<b>£95,260</b>
<b>2015/16</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>£44,679</b>

**Answer**

The 2016 / 2017 capital investment reflects the feasibility work carried out, in conjunction with the GLA, looking at options to revitalise the market.

2017 / 2018 and continuing into the current year – is a fact-finding process with investment going towards a transformation plan, which looks to produce strong evidence to deliver a robust transformation strategy over the coming months

This work is important, because just like trends seen across London and the UK, high streets and local markets continue to struggle. For Romford Market this trend has resulted in a decline of licensed and casual traders of 38 percent – down from 136 traders in 2010 to 84 traders at the end of 2017-18.

Romford Market is an important part of Havering's rich heritage and unique history. This administration is determined to follow through on our election manifesto pledge, to do all we can to return the market to its former glory and to make Romford a special destination for the whole community in Havering.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council that he would check any differences between the figures and those in the Council's statement of accounts and provide an update to Members.

**Council Powers over Unauthorised Vehicle Trading**

**9) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)  
From Councillor Keith Darvill**

What powers of investigation does the Council have, if any, to obtain evidence from the DVLA and HMRC to enable prompt enforcement where residential dwellings are being used unlawfully by occupiers for vehicle trading?



**Answer**

The Council works in collaboration with the DVLA and HMRC and has no formal powers to instruct these agencies to supply data.

The Council's Enforcement team do investigate reports of vehicles being advertised for sale on the highway and have powers under Section 38 London Local Authorities Act 1990 and Anti-Social Behaviour Police and Crime Act 2014 to seize vehicles as evidence and prosecute rogue traders. In these circumstances, to confirm or disprove evidence of suspected offences the Council will verify vehicle ownership details with the DVLA.

The Planning enforcement leads on investigating allegations that a car sales business is operating from a residential property without the requisite planning permission. The Council does liaise with the other agencies including the DVLA and HMRC to support with any enforcement. If there are any criminal allegations such as sale of unroadworthy or 'clocked' vehicles, and/or if consumers are being misled into believing they are purchasing from a private individual then Trading Standards would be take the appropriate action.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that he was happy to investigate reports of unlawful vehicle trading if these could be forwarded on.

**Preparations for Road Safety for the Forthcoming Winter Months**

**10) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)  
From Councillor Brian Eagling**

Is the Council organised and prepared for the winter weather conditions regarding roads and shopping areas in our Borough for 2018/19?

**Answer**

I thank Councillor Eagling for the question.

I can assure you that Havering's winter gritting service is prepared and ready for action again this winter. The Council has two thousand tonnes of gritting salt in storage with access to more if necessary.

Our winter service officially commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November with an on-call system in place should frost or snow be forecast. Gritting routes are well established, with priority given to main traffic routes, keeping schools accessible, and enabling the waste collections to take place on time. It's not always an easy job so the teams need to remain vigilant and focused.

When the Beast from the East hit us earlier this year, I think we can all agree that the service did a great job in keeping Havering moving at what was a very challenging time. At a time when other parts of London ground to a halt, I was proud of the numerous compliments received from members of the public about the service.

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The winter service plan is published annually and members of the public can view it on the Council's website.

(No supplementary question asked).

**Councillor Surgeries**

**11) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White )  
From Councillor Stephanie Nunn**

The Leader of the Council recently held a "Councillor Surgery" in Elm Park Library. Would the Leader of the Council confirm who paid for the hire of the room and will a member of Democratic Services be available to any Councillor wishing to hold a "Councillor Surgery"?

**Answer**

The 'Meet the Leader' surgeries, held recently in libraries across the borough, are an extension of the 'Meet the Leader' borough-wide events which have been in operation for a number of years. Following lower take up of attendance at previous 'Meet the Leader events' which were held in a number of venues including supermarkets, it was decided to move the surgeries to the Council's libraries where residents could sit with me face to face to discuss issues they wished to raise.

I must stress that these are not 'councillor' surgeries as stated in the question. The 'Meet the Leader' surgeries are an opportunity for residents to raise issues of concern and suggest ways the council can further improve its services directly with the Leader of the Council. The operation of the surgeries is overseen by staff using council resources, supporting me in my role as Leader of the Council.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council stated that the surgeries were an extension of his well-established service which enabled him to meet residents. The surgeries were also promoted via Council publications and the Leader wished to go out to all communities across Havering. He was happy to also provide details of forthcoming surgeries etc in other publications.

**Leisure Contracts in the Borough**

**12) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White )  
From Councillor David Durant**

The composite Council contribution to the very expensive £28.8m Romford Leisure Centre was £26.726m. This involved £21.950m from the "asset swap" and a further council contribution of £4.776m, with an additional £2.074m from Sports England. The old ice rink site now has planning permission for 620 flats which increases the value of the council asset swapped from £21.950m to 620 x the gross average value of a central Romford flat. Even a modest £200,000 delivers £124m.

In other words, rather than develop the old ice rink site ourselves to make a profit and funding stream to offset cuts in government funding, the Council sold an asset cheap to pay upfront for an overpriced leisure centre. In view of this does the Council Leader believe council taxpayers got a good deal from the “asset swap”?

**Answer**

Morrisons provided the Council with a new town centre site for the Sapphire Ice & Leisure Centre and in addition contributed a further £22m. The new Leisure Centre is now open and is proving to be a wonderful facility for the residents of Havering, with an average of over 53,000 visits per month since opening.

Morrisons decided not to proceed with its own scheme on the old ice rink site and instead openly marketed the site for sale. It is known that that this was sold by the Company at a very substantial loss, not a profit. Indeed, the Council received substantially more from Morrisons than the value of the site and received a replacement site as well so this was a good deal for the Council.

A Viability Assessment for Rom Valley Way (the former Romford Ice Rink site) has been undertaken recently by the Council as part of the planning process and the value of the scheme which recently received planning permission is £24m.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader refuted suggestions that Elm Park and South Hornchurch should be grouped together with Rainham. He had spoken to local people who were not happy to be classified as Rainham. He also felt that the questioner’s approach was not based on reality.

**Service Delivery in Neighbourhoods Directorate**

**13) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)  
From Councillor Chris Wilkins**

Following our Group raising serious concerns with the Chief Executive and other officers over issues including Gerpins Lane, Hoppy Hall car park and the ladies public toilets in Upminster, can the Cabinet Member for Environment please give us assurances over what steps will be taken to improve the service delivery of the Neighbourhoods Directorate?

**Answer**

The recent Ipsos Mori survey showed many services in the Neighbourhoods Directorate, including waste collection and street cleansing are highly regarded by our residents.

While it’s always important to seek to continuously improve our services, the insinuation that the service is poor is insulting to the many hardworking managers and staff across the Directorate delivering excellent work.

Regarding your specific points the Gerpins Lane Re-use and Recycling Centre is operated by Renewi under contract to the East London Waste Authority. The

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Council therefore does not have direct control over the site or the contractor. Council officers have however raised concerns with ELWA about the way the initiative, aimed at preventing commercial waste being disposed of at the facility, was communicated and this has been addressed. Havering officers, along with officers from the other ELWA Boroughs and ELWA itself continue to review the process to see if it can be improved.

Regrettably, the ladies' toilet in Upminster has been closed regularly over recent months due to continual blockages due to vandalism and incorrect items being disposed of within the toilets. New arrangements have been put in place to enable the correct disposal of sanitary waste to resolve the matter and the cleaners are encouraged to report any problems immediately.

The Hoppy Hall Car Park had a rare incident in Summer when an illegal and dangerous driver crashed through a fence into a resident's garden. The fence was repaired to the resident's satisfaction,. Regarding fly-tipping, the site is normally checked daily by officers. Officers recently reported a couple of littering issues to the car park manager, who had them resolved, and no further problems have been reported.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that the Directorate was currently undergoing a comprehensive service by service review using external management methods.

## **Council Budget**

### **14) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White) From Councillor Paul McGeary**

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (RH Liz Truss MP) stated on BBC TV's Newsnight Programme on 3rd October 2018 "we are not making cuts to local authorities" and the Prime Minister stated at the recent Conservative Party Conference that "austerity has ended". If these statements are accurate and not intended to be misleading why is the Council planning to save £38 million in its MTFS over the next 4 years?

### **Answer**

The Council is not proposing to save £38million but proposing to close a budget gap of £38million. Raising Council Tax would not be enough on its own to do this and so the Council is seeking to address the gap through a savings programme. As well as identifying potential departmental savings, a Transformation Programme has been developed that aims to not just make efficiency savings but also to improve outcomes for residents.

After eight long years of austerity in order to "fix the roof sold under the Labour Government", the Chancellor has now announced additional funding to support local government, mainly for 2018/19 and 2019/20:-

- £45m of additional funding for Disabilities Facilities Grant in 2018/19;

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- £420m in 2018/19 to tackle pot holes and other road highways works; Havering has been allocated £895k
- £400m of in-year capital funding allocations to schools in 2018/19;
- £650m of extra Social Care funding for English Local Authorities in 2019/20;
- An additional £84m of Children's Services funding over 5 years, but across only 20 councils.

In addition he has announced the following further support to local areas:-

- For two years up until the next Revaluation in 2021 all retail premises with an rateable value below £51,000 will have their bills reduced by one third; on past precedent it would be expected that Local Authorities will be to be compensated for this measure through s31 grant;
- £675m of co-funding will be provided through a new "High Streets Fund" to assist with rejuvenation of High Streets and, in particular, changing unused business and commercial property into residential accommodation;
- Additional funding for the Housing Infrastructure Fund of £500m will be provided;

The July 2018 Medium Term Financial Strategy report identified a budget gap of £37.8 million based on the information available at that time. Unfortunately, the reality is that there continues to be huge uncertainty regarding future funding for local government.

The formal 2019 Spending Review will be announced during the course of 2019 and will set departmental budgets from 2020/21. The eventual impact on local government, as compared to Health, Education, Defence, the Home Office and other central government departments, will not be known until then.

Recent analysis from the Office for Budget Responsibility, post the October 2019 Budget Statement from the Chancellor, anticipates very little increased funding for any public service except the National Health Service (NHS).

In addition, the Council is still awaiting the results of the 2020/21 Local Government Fair Funding Review which is a review of the formula for distributing funding across local government. This will have an impact on how the total expenditure envelope for local government will be split between individual councils. At this stage it is impossible to predict whether Havering will be a winner or a loser from the review but the concern is that urban areas in the south will lose and rural areas in the north will gain.

Finally, Havering is still experiencing pressures in demand in areas such as adult social care, children's services and homelessness. It is far from clear that the

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government plans to recognise either the national pressures faced by local government or the local pressures affecting individual councils.

Taking into account this uncertainty, it is crucial that the Council is prudent in its budget assumptions and plans for all eventualities.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council stated that the Council would do everything possible to avoid cuts in services to the most vulnerable residents. The transformation programme would help achieve this via the recently published Medium Term Financial Strategy.

**Hornchurch Police Station**

**15) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)  
From Councillor Sally Miller**

In a recent Conservative leaflet in Elm Park Ward, it is stated that Hornchurch Police Station has been purchased by Havering Council. Would the Leader of the Council confirm the full details of the purchase

**Answer**

This proposed acquisition arises from the outcome of a Judicial Review legal challenge to the London Mayor's Police Access Strategy. The legal action was settled by the parties on the basis of an agreement proposing an option to purchase the freehold of Hornchurch Police Station and to leaseback to provide continuing police services.

An Executive Decision of the Chief Executive of 19th July 2018 authorised the Council to formally enter into an Option Agreement. This will occur as soon as detailed legal documentation is finally agreed between MOPAC and the Council. This is currently at a very advanced stage.

The reason for the initial legal action arose out of proposals in the Mayor's Police Access Strategy, in respect of which the London Borough of Havering was significantly concerned about proposals to close local Safer Neighbourhood Bases and Contact Points.

The Mayor's proposals were of particular concern to the Council, as it would leave some residents in the south of the borough having to travel over an hour each way by public transport to access the borough's only front counter.

Whilst the Council fully understood the need for the MPS to realise cost savings, the Council took the view that the unique geographical size and demographic challenges of Havering should have been taken into account by MOPAC and the MPS in its decision making.

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As highlighted in the Council's response to the consultation, Havering is the third largest London Borough and to be left with just one publicly accessible police base to serve a borough of this size is unsustainable

An agreement has been reached with MOPAC that seeks to align the Council's desire on the retention of police services whilst allowing MOPAC to achieve its objectives on rationalising its property estate by disposing of the site of the Hornchurch Police Station to the Council at market value, with space in the building then being leased back from the Council in order to provide a police presence at the site, alongside possible Council services and a wider multi-agency service offering.

This would be offered on the basis of the MPS continuing to provide a minimum of the three hours per week public contact time that is currently provided through the CCS model. In addition, Beat Officers would be based at the Station - starting and finishing local patrols from this base to cover the 3 wards.

The Option Agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding is now pending final agreement and legal exchange. When in place the Council may exercise the option to purchase the site either by agreement with MOPAC or in the event the parties, having used their reasonable endeavours, have not agreed the purchase price the price has been determined by an independent expert. The Option remains open until this process has concluded.

When the Council exercises the Option, it is then for the MOPAC to set the completion date for the Council to acquire the property. This is defined in the Contract as no less than 2 months and no more than 12 months after the Council had exercised the option to buy. This is to provide the Police Service sufficient time to mobilise and decommission the property, accepting that under the proposed arrangements the agreed level of Police Services will be retained for 10 years

The Council is not bound to exercise the option but may choose to do so in the period of the option agreement. By contrast, MOPAC is contractually obliged to sell to the Council at the agreed or determined price in the event the Council exercises the option.

In exercising the option, the Council will want to be satisfied that the purchase price represents good value for money and that the site can be utilised for purposes that will be of benefit to the Borough and that justify the purchase. This is expected to be the position.

In terms of the future use of the property, a review is being undertaken of the future use potential. This includes possible use of the property as a community hub with possible Council and multi-agency users, which would be alongside the police use that is assured as part of the agreement to acquire the property. It is also agreed that the Council can relocate the police use – at the same level of provision – into an alternative property in

the area. This would allow the police service still to be part of a community hub in the event that the current review work concludes on a different location for a community hub to serve this area.

The property is of course a bespoke Police Station on a large site with associated specialised structures, a number of which are functionally obsolete for an alternative use. Consequently, it is appropriate that development options are identified to ensure that the value of the Council's acquisition can be fully maximised for the future in a scheme that could preserve or relocate police occupation whilst delivering other benefits such as community, public service of housing use.

For this reason, it is proposed that the purchase of the site be novated or sub-sold to Mercury Land Holdings on the same option terms, which is permitted under the option agreement. Mercury is a wholly owned Council company that will work to the Council's direction on ensuring the future potential use of the site meets the overall aims and aspirations of the Council, whilst protecting police services. As mentioned previously, it is open to the Council to provide alternative accommodation for the Police in this part of the borough if this is considered to be the best way forward in the future, but essentially protecting the provision of police services in this part of the borough for the next 10 years.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council refuted suggestion that a recent Conservative Party leaflet had stated that the Council had purchased the Police station.