

**MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

**Note:** Questions 1 to 4 and 9 were answered at the meeting. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.6(a); the remainder were treated as if put for written answer

**1 WRITING-OFF COUNCIL TAX****To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)**

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member confirm the amount of Council Tax that has been written off in each of the financial years commencing 2002/03?

**Answer:**

For write offs posted in a financial year regardless of the year it relates to, the figures were:

**Write offs actioned regardless of year relates to**

<b>2002/03</b>	£102,233.51
<b>2003/04</b>	£70,323.93
<b>2004/05</b>	£825,252.88
<b>2005/06</b>	£196,826.89
<b>2006/07</b>	£1,101,292.48
<b>2007/08</b>	£887,172.69
<b>2008/09</b>	£784,290.29
<b>2009/10</b>	£647,154.92
<b>2010/11</b>	£507,261.61
<b>2011/12</b>	£1,439,204.01
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	<b>£6,561,013.21</b>

For write offs actioned since 2002 relating to that year of debt, the figures were:

**Write offs actioned since 2002 relating to that year**

<b>2002/03</b>	£596,915.70
<b>2003/04</b>	£709,224.99
<b>2004/05</b>	£739,182.62
<b>2005/06</b>	£640,455.72
<b>2006/07</b>	£481,857.22
<b>2007/08</b>	£411,993.87

2008/09	£301,673.92
2009/10	£173,271.34
2010/11	£52,275.02
2011/12	£4,114.17
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	<b>£4,110,964.57</b>
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There is a £2.3m difference as some of the debts written off during this period relate to pre-2002 debt.

The 2006 figures were also high, mainly due to the work undertaken as part of a specific project.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member declined to accept the suggestion that all outstanding debt should be written off as there was a reasonable prospect that much would yet be recovered. Some 25,400 prosecutions had been undertaken in the past three years, resulting in both custodial sentences and bankruptcies. Debt that was patently not enforceable ought to be written off but those that were enforceable (for example by charging orders) should be recovered, with interest, however aged they were.

## 2 **ARNOLD'S FIELD: ILLEGAL DUMPING**

### **To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)**

By Councillor Jeffrey Tucker

Please provide an update on what action is being taken to prevent illegal dumping on Arnold's Field and to restore the land as a green space amenity for local residents?

#### **Answer:**

Arnold's Field is an area of Rainham adjacent to the A1306 New Road access from Launder's Lane. Planning permission was first granted for land raising and use as open space on this former mineral and land-fill site in 1995/96. Over-filling of the site took place, resulting in land heights and profile differences from those approved.

Planning enforcement notices were served on that operation in 2005, requiring that the levels be lowered to comply with the approved contours. The notices were upheld at appeal but the owners of the site went into administration and activity ceased. Reports of dumping of rubbish have been received since 2010, with long periods when the site has been secure, with no activity taking place. The most recent dumping activity resumed in June.

There is an ongoing investigation by the Environment Agency into recent reports of dumping of waste taking place at evenings and weekends. The Environment Agency has the necessary powers and is best placed to deal with this matter. Residents should report any activity on the site to the Environment Agency.

The site is subject to planning enforcement notices which have not been complied with. In such circumstances, it would be normal practice to prosecute the owners in order to seek

compliance. However, this has proved problematic as previous owners were in administration and the current owner is in prison. It seems unlikely that the land will be restored in the near future.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member reaffirmed that all possible steps had been taken to secure removal of the dumped rubbish but had been frustrated by the company going into liquidation and an individual being imprisoned. The Council would continue to co-operate with the Environment Agency to ensure the rubbish was cleared and pursue prosecution should the opportunity arise.

### **3 HORNCHURCH POLICE STATION: CLOSURE**

#### **To the Cabinet Member for Community Safety (Councillor Geoff Starns)**

By Councillor Denis Breading

What representations have the Council made to the MPS about the proposed closure of Hornchurch Police Station?

#### **Answer:**

The Council has made initial enquiries regarding the review of assets being undertaken by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the potential closure of Hornchurch Police Station as a result of this.

We are informed that the Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC) estate contains over 800 buildings many of which, including some police stations, are considered as providing poor working conditions for staff, and being as being inefficient for modern day policing and these are being replaced by more modern, efficient and geographically responsive facilities.

The MPS is currently reviewing the whole of its property estate to ensure that best use is being made of it and to identify efficiency savings that can be reinvested into operational policing.

As part of this the MPS are looking at Hornchurch police station and what facilities will be needed in the future to meet operational policing requirements in the borough.

To date, no proposals for this building have been put to the MOPAC, but this could provide an opportunity to improve the estate at the same time as delivering substantial savings that will allow the MPS to protect operational capability.

No decision is likely to be made by the MOPAC until later this year. In accordance with the sale of previous buildings on the borough, it is anticipated that the Metropolitan Police will provide the necessary communication with the community at the appropriate time.

We have requested further information on any firm proposal to close Hornchurch Police Station so that we can then give a considered response.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member affirmed that, once MOPAC had indicated its intentions, they would be studied carefully and a response prepared on behalf of the Council.

4 **WESTLAND'S PLAYING FIELDS: USE FOR OLYMPICS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns & Communities (Councillor Andrew Curtin)**

By Councillor Clarence Barrett

Given that the Westland's Playing Fields 'Olympic' campsite is no longer going ahead, would the Cabinet Member now explain how the projected income figure of £50,000 was arrived at and how will this significant shortfall be compensated for in the budget?

**Answer:**

The projected income figure of £50,000 was a net figure, taking account of the planned expenditure associated with running the temporary camp site at Westlands Playing Fields and projected income from bookings that reflected 25% occupancy of the site over the 28 day period that the camp site was due to be open.

The Council has taken a prudent decision to cancel the camp site given the low level of bookings that had been made up to June 2012. The low level of bookings have been attributed to the fact that many people who intended to come to London to watch the Olympics did not get tickets, the weather has been poor in recent months and London has not been proactively promoted as a place to stay during the Olympics, given concerns about the impact of large numbers of people using London's transport systems.

The Cabinet decision in July 2011 means that the shortfall in the budget does not arise until the 2013/14 financial year. The Parks and Open Spaces service are currently looking at options to achieve the required £50,000 saving, which I will consider before a final decision is made later this financial year.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member referred to, and answered, Question 9 following.

9 **WESTLAND'S PLAYING FIELDS: USE FOR OLYMPICS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns & Communities (Councillor Andrew Curtin)**

By Councillor Denis O'Flynn

Did the Administration take advice from marketing consultants/experts before they decided to promote Westland Playing Fields as a campsite for visitors attending the Olympic and Paralympic Games?

**Answer:**

The Council did take advice from marketing experts before deciding to provide the Westlands temporary camp site. In fact, the Council relied on national research undertaken by, and advice from, the Camping and Caravanning Club, the Council's partner and managing agent for the camp site.

The Camping and Caravanning Club produced a report on projected demand for camping and caravanning during the Olympics, which concluded there would be a "strong opportunity to fill the 400 pitches available at the site each night" given that 90% of their 12,000 members surveyed had said they would consider using a temporary camp site facility.

The Council therefore had every reason to believe that demand for the camp site would be high and proceeded on this basis.

**5 RIVER INGREBOURNE: FLOOD PREVENTION MEASURES**

**To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)**

By Councillor David Durant

In recent years there has been a growing risk that properties in Abbey Wood Lane, Rainham will be flooded by the River Ingrebourne. This risk can be reduced by de-silting the river and by ensuring the sluice gates are fully operational to release excess water into the Thames.

What measures are being taken by the Council and interested parties to manage the southern end of the River Ingrebourne to prevent flooding?

**Answer:**

Joint inspections with the EA (Environment Agency) are undertaken with the most recent inspection carried out on Tuesday 10th July 2012. I can confirm that the series of balancing ponds adjacent to the A1306 and upstream have worked well and are holding an unprecedented amount of rainwater following the high volumes of rainfall this year. Further downstream from this point on the A1306 to the Thames it was noted by council officers and the EA representative that the mean water level drops significantly between each therefore indicating that further investigations are required by the EA.

It would be beneficial to de-silt from Squadrons Approach to the new A13 to ensure maximum flow can be optimised which reflects what was noted during Tuesday's inspection with the EA. As some of this run is within SSSI (site of scientific special interest) land a sensitive approach needs to be undertaken to such works.

**6 SCHOOL GOVERNORS: SECRETARY OF STATE'S REMARKS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Children & Learning (Councillor Paul Rochford)**

By Councillor Keith Darvill

Does the Cabinet Member for Children Services agree with the Secretary of State for Education that school governors are "local worthies" who undertake school governorships as a "badge of status"?

**Answer:**

It is my belief and understanding that the overwhelming majority of all Havering governors join school governing bodies to improve the education service for young people in Havering and we do not therefore feel that Havering governors can be described in the terms used by the Secretary of State.

The Council recognises the significant contribution school governors make to the education service in Havering. When appointing LA governors, the criteria below are applied to ensure that school governing bodies comprise of individuals with the best interests of young people in Havering as their priority.

The criteria for being an LA appointed school governor is as follows:-

- A willingness to serve as a Governor
- A commitment to raising aspirations, expectations and standards of achievement in Havering schools
- A commitment to being available to attend relevant meetings and workings of the school governing body
- A commitment to promote and support equal opportunities for all members of the school community
- A willingness to contribute specific skills, knowledge and/or experience to help the school provide the best possible education for its pupils.

Candidates will also be expected to indicate a willingness to undertake appropriate training.

**7 SPRING CLEAN SURVEY: RESULTS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)**

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member confirm that service requests/complaints from the "Spring Clean Survey" have been recorded on the CRM system and an analysis of the survey will be issued to all members?

**Answer:**

The Spring Clean survey was a tremendous success. Around 8,000 residents took the time to respond, providing a really detailed picture of public opinion about our streets, town centres and parks - right across the Borough.

It was a survey - so it's being dealt with in a different way to individual complaints or requests. We've set aside a quarter of a million pounds to spend on the local priorities highlighted in the campaign. As part of that work, we will be looking to respond to as many individual issues as possible and we're determined to tell local people what we're doing in response to the survey results in their area.

We've already collated and published some high level, Borough wide statistics - which show that around three quarters of people think their local area is very or fairly clean.

We're currently working up plans to respond to cross-borough issues, like take-away litter and dog fouling and also localised requests for things like additional seating in parks, or tackling litter hotspots.

More information will be published soon, when the data has been fully analysed and we are able to tell people not only what we've learned, but what we're going to do about it.

## **8 BUILDING NEW COUNCIL HOUSES**

### **To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)**

By Councillor Mark Logan

What changes in legislation are required that would enable and encourage local councils to build new council houses for local people?

#### **Answer:**

The Government has never actually prevented Councils from building council homes. The changing housing subsidy arrangements have made it economically disadvantageous for councils to build homes themselves, for their own use in the past. However, I am pleased to say, that some of these financial barriers have been removed, and in particular there are significant changes to funding arrangements for council housing since April 2012.

It is now possible for Councils to build new homes within the Housing Revenue Account (new Council homes on secure tenancies) without having to pool any of the surplus that we make on the rental income into a national housing subsidy system. We retain all our rental surpluses, which removed one of the financial disadvantages of building new homes ourselves.

In addition there are other changes which now make it worthwhile building new homes, if we choose to do so. When the discount ceiling on the Right to Buy was raised to £75,000 in April this year, the Government announced a new way of sharing the capital receipts from the Right to Buy.

Under the Self Financing Business Plan, there are a certain number of sales assumed to be taking place, which are based on historical trends. For Havering, this is assumed to be 13 sales a year, throughout the life of the 30-year Business Plan. In year 1, this is assumed to be 10 sales. If only 10 homes are sold under the Right to Buy, the capital receipts on these 10 sales will be shared with Government in the usual way (75% of the receipt is pooled). However, if there are a greater number of sales (and the evidence is that the increased potential discount has encouraged a larger number of sales than usual), then the receipts above the anticipated number of sales are dealt with differently. After administration costs are deducted, and the level of debt that the property carries removed, the remaining surplus can be used to build or fund new affordable homes subject to certain conditions.

I am pleased to say that we have signed a funding agreement with the Government, to undertake to use any new RTB receipts arising from sales in this way, which means that we will undertake to use this money to deliver new homes within 3 years of the receipts

being received. If we had not signed this agreement, then the money would have had to be returned to the GLA, for use on new homes elsewhere in London.

I think therefore that it is true to say that the Government has already done quite a bit, to encourage the delivery of new council homes. However, I am pleased to say that it is a matter of local policy, whether we build or not, or choose to deliver homes ourselves or in a different way. I think it will be some time before we start to use the newly available capital receipts, and in the meantime, we will be sticking to our target of delivering 250 new affordable homes a year, either directly or through partnerships with Housing Associations, which fulfils our housing strategy target to meet the housing needs of local people in this Borough.

**10 PARKING ENFORCEMENT: STAFF DEPLOYMENT ON BANK HOLIDAYS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)**

By Councillor Clarence Barrett

In respect of Parking Enforcement, would the Cabinet Member confirm:

- a) How the Parking Enforcement Team is deployed on Bank Holidays in comparison with normal weekdays?
- b) The number of operatives on duty on a Bank Holiday compared with normal weekdays?
- c) Since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012, the average number of tickets issued on a Bank Holiday compared with a normal weekday?

**Answer:**

In answer to point a), rota's are in place every week with different shifts. Bank holidays are operationally managed in the same way as any other working day (which is 7 days per week)

In answer to point b), again they are treated no differently. There will always be the issue of the availability of staff and rota commitments and of course then taking into account annual leave and sickness.

In answer to point c), in terms of PCNs issued, for CCTV the averages are equal since the beginning of the year, average of 52 issued on a Bank Holiday Monday, average of 52 issued on a 'normal' Monday. We issued 41 CCTV PCNs on Good Friday, to date this year on a 'normal' Friday we average 68 PCNs.

For CEOs on scooters who issue tickets via a hand held machine, we average 50 PCNs per 'normal' Monday, whereas we average 79 PCNs on the Bank Holiday Mondays. On Good Friday we issued 99 hand held scooters PCNs, to date this year on a 'normal' Friday we average 62 PCNs.

11 **GLA ELECTION: SPOILT BALLOT PAPERS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Community Safety (Councillor Geoff Starns)**

By Councillor David Durant

In the election for GLA Mayor how many ballot papers were deemed invalid and how do they compare with the previous GLA Mayoral elections?

**Answer:**

For 2012 Election in the Havering and Redbridge constituency, the number of rejected ballots was as follows:

Mayoral: 27,719 (first and second preference)

Constituency: 1,993

Assembly List: 1,727

This compares to an overall total of 541,882 good votes which includes both first and second preferences on the Mayoralty, the Constituency and Assembly lists.

For 2008 Election in the Havering and Redbridge constituency, the number of rejected ballots was as follows:

Mayoral: 29,000 (first and second preference)

Constituency: 3,246

Assembly List: 2,594

This compares to an overall total of 634,524 good votes which includes both first and second preferences on the Mayoralty, the Constituency and Assembly lists.

For 2004 Election in the Havering and Redbridge constituency, the number of rejected ballots was as follows:

Mayoral: 22,554 (first and second preference)

Constituency: 7,271

Assembly List: 3,638

This compares to an overall total of 508,913 good votes which includes both first and second preferences on the Mayoralty, the Constituency and Assembly lists.

12 **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN: PLACEMENTS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Children & Learning (Councillor Paul Rochford)**

By Councillor Paul McGearry

How many families who have children with child protection plans have been placed in the Borough by other Councils during the last 12 months and how many such families have the Council placed outside the Borough during the same period?

**Answer:****Temporary transfers into the London Borough of Havering**

The number of children made subject to child protection plans by other local authorities who have been living temporarily in the London Borough of Havering during this period is 44.

This number is fluid and is subject to change as local authorities hold review child protection conferences where a plan might be ceased or children return to live in their originating local authority area.

The current figure at 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012 is 24.

Case management responsibility for those children living temporarily in Havering remains with the originating authority.

**Cases transferred permanently into the London Borough of Havering.**

Where a child subject to a child protection plan from another local authority area becomes ordinarily resident in Havering, the originating local authority will request a transfer in child protection conference requesting that Havering takes case management responsibility for the child/children.

From 1st July 2011 until 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012 there have been 9 transfer in child protection conferences.

The details about these cases are as follows:

Number of transfer in conferences	9
Number of children	19
Number of sibling groups	4
Number of children who remained subject to child protection plans	12
Number of children where the CP plan was ceased at the point of transfer (the children became subject to CIN plans.	7

**Transfer of cases out of the London Borough of Havering from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 until 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012.**

Case Type	Total	Sibling groups	Individual children
Cases transferring to other local authority areas temporarily	7	1x3 1x2	2
Cases transferred to other local authority areas permanently	5	1x2	3

13 **ISSUE OF BLUE BADGES**

**To the Cabinet Member for Transformation (Councillor Mike Armstrong)**

By Councillor Gillian Ford

Would the Cabinet Member provide an update regarding the issuance of Blue Badges and in particular:

- a) How many applications are dealt with annually?
- b) How many applications are currently outstanding?
- c) What is the target 'turnaround' time for an application?
- d) What is the current 'turnaround' time for an application?

**Answer:**

- a) We dealt with the following numbers of applications annually:

2009/10	4,181
2010/11	4,256
2011/12	5,469

- b) At the present time there is no backlog.
- c) The target 'turnaround' time for an application is two weeks for an automatic application and 4 weeks if we need to mobility assess them (that's 4 weeks on the proviso that they call us for an appointment within 5 days of us writing to them requesting they contact us to make an appointment)
- d) The current 'turnaround' time for an application is two weeks for an automatic application and 4-6 weeks for mobility assessed applications.

14 **OLYMPIC SECURITY: MILITARY USE OF HIGHFIELD TOWERS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)**

By Councillor David Durant

Olympic security should not be used as an excuse for the overt and gratuitous display of weaponry. Therefore Council permission for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to use Highfield Towers as an observation post should be qualified with a requirement for military personnel not to overtly display weapons, particularly machine guns, when entering and leaving the building.

Following the test exercise, the Head of Housing and Public Protection informed me that she would review the test exercise and discuss with the MoD whether displays of weapons have been an issue with the local residents. What was the outcome of this review?

**Answer:**

The test exercise took place on the weekend of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> May. Officers reviewed the event at our regular liaison meeting with Homes in Havering. The Director of Housing Services at Homes in Havering, who has been working with the Ministry of Defence on this issue, confirmed that no concerns had been raised by any resident over the exercise. The only event of interest is that the MOD were able to prevent a gang of young men breaking into the roof space, who were intent on restoring their pirate radio signal station, which had been removed by the military.

We have accordingly signed a licence agreement with the MOD to use the roof space during the period of the Olympics, and they will occupy this space from 12<sup>th</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2012. As you know, they are not proposing to use Highfield Towers for anything other than an observation point. No missile launchers will be used at this site. We have conveyed to our colleagues in the MOD the need to be sensitive to the views of residents, but it does not appear that the residents are unduly concerned about the proposed arrangements, and in any case I am confident that the MOD are fully aware of the need to work in co-operation with local residents.

15 **DAGNAM PARK: PROTECTION OF WILDLIFE**

**To the Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns & Communities (Councillor Andrew Curtin)**

By Councillor Pat Murray

What safeguards for the natural environment are being put in place to protect wild life (including Great Crested Newts) and important local flora in the area of Dagnam Park on which the Council propose to construct football pitches?

**Answer:**

The protection of the natural environment is a key objective of Havering's Parks and Open Spaces Service. In order to ensure that during the project the wildlife of Dagnam Park is protected and there is no breach of any Environmental Legislation, advice on the methodology to follow has been sought from Havering's Conservation Officer.

The advice that has been drafted by the Conservation Officer is being followed to ensure minimum disturbance to the landscape and minimal environmental impact on the formation and maintenance of the football pitches. The advice also calls for future monitoring of the wildlife in following years to review any impact.

16 **MINI-GOLF COURSE, HALL LANE UPMINSTER****To the Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns & Communities (Councillor Andrew Curtin)**

By Councillor Clarence Barrett

Given the worsening condition of the mini golf course in Hall Lane, Upminster, would the Cabinet Member please set out the planned level of investment over the next two years in order that the facility avoids further deterioration and can be enjoyed by the community?

**Answer:**

The Upminster Pitch and Putt course has been open to the public this year, as in previous years. The Council continues to maintain the course on a day to day basis, but there is no capital or revenue funding available to make any investments during this financial year.

The Council will consider the merits of investment at the Pitch and Putt course ahead of the start of the next financial year (i.e. prior to April 2013); but consideration of such investment will need to take in to account the investment needs of other open spaces and sporting facilities across the borough.

17 **SOCIAL CARE FEES****To the Cabinet Member for Individuals (Councillor Steven Kelly)**

By Councillor Ron Ower

Would the Cabinet Member confirm how much is currently owed in social care fees, by how many people and how far this dates back to?

**Answer:**

The number of people owing the council money relating to social care continues to be reduced and the total amount owed is reducing steadily. An increasing proportion of debt is secured against property; these debts will be paid off when the properties are sold. Though the overall amount is still higher than we'd like we are pleased with the direction of travel and we are confident we will collect the majority of the money owed.

Current debt secured by property -	£1,236,886.16
Total unsecured debt -	£2,664,501.30

**Position at 31/3/2010****Res Care**

Total owed - £4,523,154.86  
Secured debt - 1,145,108.88  
Total debtors - 994  
Oldest invoice - 31/10/97

**Non-res care**

Total owed - £600,021.19

Total debtors - 1063  
Oldest invoice - May 2003

**Total**

Total owed - £5,123,175.96  
Total unsecured debt - £3,978,067.10  
Total debtors - 2057  
Oldest invoice - 31/10/97

**Position as of 11/7/2012**

**Res Care**

Total owed - £3,361,061.90  
Total debtors - 515  
Oldest invoice - 17/5/99

**Non-res care**

Total owed - £540,325.52  
Total debtors - 857  
Oldest invoice - July 2008

**Total**

Total owed - £3,901,387.42  
Total debtors - 1372

**18 DESIGNATION OF CONSERVATION AREAS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns & Communities (Councillor Andrew Curtin)**

By Councillor Linda Hawthorn

While noting the good news that the two areas in Hornchurch are, quite rightly, to be designated as conservation areas, would the Cabinet Member please consider the area in Upminster encompassing the Windmill, Old Chapel, Convent, St Laurence Church and Rectory (all listed buildings) for inclusion next time?

**Answer:**

Conservation Areas are only designated in areas which have a distinct character and appearance which is of historic and/or architectural interest. Within the area of Upminster to which the question refers, whilst the five listed buildings are all very valuable, the quality of the remaining buildings is variable and most of the infill buildings are not of architectural or historical interest. As such, officers do not consider that designation of a conservation area would be justified and, based on preliminary discussions, the English Heritage Area Advisor agrees with this assessment. Designation of a conservation area would not provide any additional planning controls or benefits for the listed buildings.

19 **COMPETITTON IN THE BILLBOARD MARKET****To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)**

By Councillor John Mylod

Given that Clear Channel and JC Decaux have agreed with the Office of Fair Trading to open up competition for billboard space, would the Cabinet Member confirm what effect this will have on Havering Council?

**Answer:**

Answer: JC Decaux have agreed in a letter to the Chief Executive that they will not restrict competition for billboard space and therefore in the future if and when billboard space becomes available it will be open to competition.

20 **EARLY RETIREMENT AND REDUNDANCY OF STAFF****To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)**

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member confirm the number of employees who have taken early retirement during the past five financial years, together with any costs to the Council. Can the same information be provided for those who have been made redundant?

**Answer:**

Before 2010/11 the level of redundancies within the Council was not significant

Over the past 2 years with the implementation of the Transformation agenda this situation has unfortunately changed. Numbers of redundancies and associated costs have been: -

2010/11	17 Redundancies	£195k
2011/12	108 Redundancies	£1,217k

These redundancy figures will include individuals, who because they were aged 55 or over and due to their length of service, were entitled to their pension

In 2011/12 additional costs relating to pension strain, plusages etc. for the 108 employees made redundant were £1.1m

During this period a number of employees will have additionally left the organisation through flexible retirement, ill health retirement, early retirement - with or without reduced benefits. All early retirement requests are reviewed taking into account individual circumstances and a financial business case.

21 **NOTIFYING REPAIR OF PAVEMENTS: COST OF POSTAGE**

**To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)**

By Councillor Linda Van den Hende

Would the Cabinet Member set out the annual cost of postage where residents have been personally advised by him that their pavements have been repaired?

**Answer:**

Letters are hand delivered by officers to residents affected by major footway works prior to works commencing. At this point we ask if residents are interested in applying for a vehicle crossover to be constructed in conjunction with the works. The letters go out in the Highways Managers name and the Leader of the council.

It is difficult to put a cost on this operation as it is carried out by council officers in conjunction with other works.

22 **USE OF COUNCIL PURCHASE CARDS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)**

By Councillor John Wood

The Public Accounts Committee at the House of Commons have reported their concerns about the inappropriate use of procurement cards by users and not having to produce receipts. Would the Cabinet Member confirm what procedures are in place to ensure that this would not happen in Havering?

**Answer:**

Within the Council, the issuing of cards, limits and categories of spend they can be used for is tightly controlled. Claims are made through the Oracle system, requiring management authorisation with a review of all receipts.

23 **COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT: NUMBER OF CLAIMANTS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)**

By Councillor Brian Eagling

Would the Cabinet Member confirm the number of claimants of council tax benefit during the last financial year per ward?

**Answer:**

<b>No. of CTB Claims</b>	<b>Ward Name</b>
1,424	Brooklands
544	Cranham
1,165	Elm Park
409	Emerson Park
2,270	Gooshays
605	Hacton
1,099	Harold Wood
1,233	Havering Park
1,936	Heaton
688	Hylands
1,090	Mawneys
647	Pettits
1,036	Rainham and Wennington
1,439	Romford Town
985	St Andrew's
1,282	South Hornchurch
763	Squirrel's Heath
274	Upminster
<b>18,889</b>	

24 **SAVINGS IN 2011/12****To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)**

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member confirm that all agreed savings for the last financial year were met, and if they were not, what savings targets were missed and why?

**Answer:**

The Council's budget for 2011/12 included an overall savings target of £11.4m, as set out in the report to Council in February 2011. The largest element of this, some £9.7m, was part of the savings items set out in the report to Cabinet in July 2010, as part of the Council's strategic approach to meeting the challenges faced by the broader financial climate, and in response to the Coalition Government's austerity measures.

Of these savings, other than a minor shortfall in the target for the Customer Services transformation programme, not only was this target delivered, but some of the savings agreed by Cabinet were delivered earlier than scheduled. The overall savings figure achieved against the July 2010 target of £9.7m was around £9.9m.

The small shortfall on Customer Services was due to the fact that this is a highly complex programme impacting on services right across the Council, and it was not possible to fully extract the savings target during the year.

The over-performance on savings contributed to an overall under-spend for the financial year.

25 **USE OF EMAIL FOR NOTIFYING EVENTS**

**To the Cabinet Member for Transformation (Councillor Michael Armstrong)**

By Councillor Ray Morgon

In May I received two letters in the courier, one about the Armed Forces Day 2012 and the other about a presentation from Network Rail. In an effort to save on paper and printing costs, why were these not sent to members by e-mail?

**Answer:**

Increasingly it is the case that more and more of council business is being dealt with electronically. Often Members are advised of matters via email, however there remains a number of members who refuse to use computers and email which means that for officers to ensure the effective dissemination of their message they are required to use more traditional means unfortunately.

Calendar Brief is regularly used for the promotion of messages to Members, however it is not always possible for information to be included in it if it falls around a deadline period for example.

I would be very happy to see all council communications to members to be dealt with via email as that would see a considerable reduction in costs both in postage and printing.

Officers are in the process of setting up a trial for members who no longer wish to receive physical mail deliveries to have all mail scanned and sent electronically. We would welcome additional Members to join the trial.

26 **MONITORING OF STREETCARE ACTIVITY**

**To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)**

By Councillor Nic Dodin

Would the Cabinet Member confirm how this Council monitors productivity, quality and outputs of its staff and contractors in respect of StreetCare services?

**Answer:**

The productivity of our own staff are monitored by Performance Development Reviews (PDR's) and One to One meetings with managers. The quality and outputs of staff are measured differently depending on the work carried out, for example StreetCare cleaning operatives are measured by the NI195 surveys. We have a robust set of performance

measures that are monitored by Members regarding StreetCare activities, further monitoring takes place at Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and by the Group director and Head of Service (HOS) on a monthly basis.

Regarding contractors, StreetCare officers meet with the various contractors on a regular basis to discuss issues that either party may have, and develop strategies for dealing with these, in line with the current procurement policy regarding contract monitoring.