

FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 9 September 2020

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Quality Assurance in Residential Accommodation for the Elderly

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

In a recent radio interview, the Leader stated that he had introduced the Quality Review Panel. We would certainly agree the need to ensure quality developments are built in Havering, so would the Leader explain why on the Serena, Solar and Sunrise complex for elderly residents they will have to take their rubbish down in the lift and then walk outside to dispose of it.?

Answer

Solar, Sorena and Sunrise is to be a modern supported housing development designed for the over 55's in a clean and safe environment. It is expected that residents can live independently being provided with support, as and when they need it, to enable them to continue living in their own home. As such these are deemed high risk buildings and the design of these new homes is intended to reduce risk where ever possible whilst increasing independence.

Refuse chutes have been omitted from this development because experience shows that they can regularly become blocked, generate unpleasant smells, attract pests, and can be unsuitable for food waste. In addition, the chutes discharge into bins that require storage facilities and these also create similar management issues as described for the chutes. It is known that the chutes and storage areas themselves create a fire risk, hence the support for Underground Refuse Systems (URS).

Underground Refuse Storage is a more modern way to manage refuse and better at reducing all the issues mentioned regarding refuse chutes and bin storage. In addition, it helps contain any possible fire risks, compared to refuse chutes.

Following Grenfell, there is a heightened need for fire safety strategies to further reduce possible fire risks in all building, including the design of new buildings, thus promoting the safety of residents.

The use of underground space is a key issue in creating an environmentally friendly and sustainable development that is clean, modern and safe. So, in this case, the refuse system that would usually be unsightly at ground level, has been located underground. This has helped to maximise ground-level space for more productive purposes including landscaped gardens and paths, as well as improving visual amenity.

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Experience indicates that installing underground bins can also reduce the overall costs associated with maintenance and the management of refuse collection.

Whilst we would expect residents to be able to make full use of this modern and safe design themselves, less mobile residents will be given support if required through assisted collections.

Capital Borrowing

2) To the Cabinet Member for Finance & Property (Councillor Roger Ramsey) From Councillor Christopher Wilkins

Could the Cabinet Member give details of all the Capital Borrowing the Council currently has, what purpose it is for, as well as the cost of servicing the debt. The reason I am interested is that the Council seems to be using a lot of Capital Borrowing recently. The latest news is that the Council will be taking over the building of the first stage of the much-publicised Wates collaboration. Wates have withdrawn and Havering will be providing the £20M shortfall. Can you confirm where the funding is coming from? This is in addition to the properties that have been recently bought on the new Crow Lane development. Borrowing rates are low at the moment, but repayments still need to be made. I raised concerns at full Council in February, and also mentioned that some of the Council's borrowing may be considered to be reckless, in view of the financial uncertainties at that time.

Answer

- At 31st March 2020 the Council's Capital Financing requirement (CFR) was £353.4m, split as General Fund (£156.2m) and HRA (£197.2m). This represents the amount of Capital Expenditure that has not been financed by capital receipts, capital grants or contributions from revenue. The Council has taken £235.2m of long term external borrowing with the remainder £118.2m being financed by internal borrowing using cash balances.
- The Council sets an authorised limit which is the maximum amount of debt that the authority can legally borrow in compliance with the Local Government Act 2003. At 31st March this was £497.0m so the Council's current external borrowing of £235.2m is comfortably below this limit. The cost of financing the external borrowing is split between interest and repayment (MRP).
- The Audit Committee and Council Tax Setting Council review the capital strategy and treasury management strategy annually
- The table below sets out the cost of this borrowing to the General Fund and HRA as at 31.03.2020

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Lender	Total	Amount HRA	Amount GF
Long term Borrowing			
PWLB	228,234,077.47	194,253,114.83	33,980,962.64
LOBO _ Danske Bank	7,000,000.00	3,559,147.38	3,440,852.62
Grand total	235,234,077.47	197,812,262.21	37,421,815.26

2019-20 Interest

PWLB	7,390,995.61	5,812,333.26	1,578,662.35
LOBO - Danske bank	252,000.00	128,129.31	123,870.69
Grand total	7,642,995.61	5,940,462.57	1,702,533.04

- Many capital schemes generate income or deliver efficiency savings for the Council and the HRA.

Napier New Plymouth

The Council had originally set aside a gross HRA capital budget of £46m for the scheme including £9m of equity. The projected new budget is £60 million, a net increase of £14 million. (An additional £20m for the affordable housing less the release of £6m equity, no longer needed). Currently, the HRA borrowing rates are favourable, £20m borrowing will attract financing costs equivalent to c£0.296m per annum,

The uplift can be accommodated within the £287.7million affordable housing budget set aside for the 12 sites. The change will add up to 71 units of new Council housing boosting HRA revenues, which will along with the 126 rented units generate sufficient revenue returns to service the financing costs and debt on the scheme within 40 years. The Napier New Plymouth project delivers good value units to the HRA.

Crow Lane

The acquisition of Crow Lane is estimated to cost £15.3M, and is funded from a dedicated HRA acquisitions capital budget. Borrowing of £15.3m will attract financing costs of £0.226m. Upon completion the Council will take ownership of 38 new units of affordable housing, which will generate sufficient net income to

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service and repay the associated debt within 50 years. The scheme delivers a high proportion of 3 and 4 bed family housing.

HRA self-financing

It should be remembered that a system called HRA Self-Financing was introduced in April 2012 which replaced the historic Housing Revenue Account subsidy system. The HRA self-financing regime has given local authorities the freedom to invest in their own stock from their own income. However, in return there was an "allocation" of national housing debt between local authorities. The London Borough of Havering was given a debt allocation of c£170m.

To date, the HRA self- financing debt remains at £170m which is the bulk of the HRA borrowing currently. The cost of servicing this debt is circa £6m pa. The Council has since April 2012 borrowed a further £28m increasing the HRA debt to £198m.

The HRA business plan presented to Cabinet in Feb 2020 assumed the funding for of £287.7m for 12 Estates and £15.3m funding for Crow Lane, the business plan also assumed and incorporated new borrowing of £60m, of which the Council has only utilised £25m to date.

Vision Screening in Schools

- 3) **To the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families (Councillor Robert Benham)**
From Councillor Keith Darvill

The NHS recommends Vision Screening for 4 to 5 year olds and according to Public Health England they are usually carried out in schools. Do all primary schools in Havering carry out such screening test?

If any schools do not carry such test will the Leader a Member disclose those schools and the reasons why they fail to carry such important screening?

Answer

LBH commissions NELFT to carry out vision screening of children in Reception (4-5 year olds) as part of the School Nursing Service. The screening is part of a universal health assessment that also includes hearing screening and the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP).

In the 2018/19 school year, 95% of Reception pupils received this screening.

In the 2019/20 school year, 71% of Reception pupils received this screening. This lower coverage was due to NELFT following national guidance to redeploy staff into Covid-19 roles and due to schools closing for many pupils during the summer term.

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The latest national guidelines are for the NCMP to recommence in January 2021. We will work with NELFT and continue to follow guidance (as this becomes available) on recommencement of hearing and vision screening.

There are no schools that refuse this screening.

Installation of CCTV Cameras in Rainham Village

**4) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Jeffrey Tucker**

In Calendar Brief (10/8) the Cabinet Member for highways recognised the many complaints from residents and businesses about HGVs illegally using Rainham Village Conservation Area as a short-cut to Ferry Lane industrial area.

The solution is to install CCTV cameras at the junction of Bridge Road and Lamson Road by the roundabout by Tesco, Rainham. This solution has the support of London Riverside (BID) Ltd, GLA Assembly Member Keith Prince and local Councillors and is particularly necessary due to an increase in waste facilities in the area. On September 16th the Cabinet will be discussing its CCTV strategy. Will this matter be included on the agenda?

Answer

I fully understand and sympathise with residents on this issue and so totally agree that we need to take action to address it. I have had discussions with Officers to look at options for installing a static CCTV camera in the area to enforce the restrictions and once there is formal agreement to do so, work will start to install the scheme.

The enforcement of the existing 7.5t weight restriction in Rainham by way of static camera is not within the scope of the new CCTV strategy as this is a broad document and does not deal with specific localised schemes or issues. The Public Space CCTV Strategy looks at the way the Council intends to use cameras, which are installed, managed and monitored by the Council for a range of objectives, which will be considered and agreed at the Cabinet meeting.

Care Home Visits following the Lifting of Government Restrictions

**5) To the Cabinet Member for Adult & Social Care (Councillor Jason Frost)
From Councillor Martin Goode**

Can the Cabinet Member please confirm what arrangements have been made following the governments guidance to Councils on the restarting of care home visits?

In particular, for the many residents of Havering, who are living with some form of dementia. The importance of regular visits from families and friends play a significant role in their care and wellbeing, regular contact with loved ones not

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only helps people living with dementia to feel secure, but also helps them to maintain basic cognition and communication skills.

Coronavirus has disproportionately impacted people affected by dementia and lockdown restrictions have meant little to no contact with loved ones in care homes.

Answer

I could not agree more with Cllr Goode on the importance for care home residents, particularly those suffering with dementia, being able to receive visits from their family and friends. That is why the most recently published national guidance easing the restrictions on non-clinical visitations to care settings has been most welcome. However, it is very well understood that for many families the revised guidance remains highly restrictive insofar as only one nominated loved one is able to be a regular visitor into the place of care.

I know that Care Providers themselves are also very concerned about the long-term impacts of restrictions to visitors, both families and other external parties. Unfortunately, care providers are obliged to follow national guidance regarding their operations. However, I can assure Cllr Goode that officers in Adult Social Care and Public Health are keeping a constant check on the latest information updates from the Dept for Health and Social Care on the guidance for care homes and other care settings, and any changes, further loosening of restrictions will be communicated immediately.

Care homes have had to quickly develop alternatives for their residents to connect with their loved ones, ensuring they review their range of activities to support them with holding onto as much of their function and quality of life as possible. However please be in no doubt that I understand this is no substitute for face to face physical time with families - my heart goes out to all those affected- unfortunately it is essential that residents within care homes are protected from any new introduction of COVID-19 into their settings.

Public Space Protection Orders around Schools

- 6) **To the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Safety (Councillor Viddy Persaud)**
From Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member confirm why the Council allowed the Public Space Protection Orders around schools to expire in November 2019?

Answer

The Public Space Protection Orders around the schools were valid for a period of 3 years from the date of making in November 2016. The effectiveness and success of the PSPO's was monitored throughout the period since their introduction. The levels of incidents and injuries had reduced over the period to levels which are comparatively very low. It is difficult to extend a PSPO if the issue has reduced. In 2019 the Highways, Parking & Traffic team started to

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review options to manage the areas given the low levels of incident and found a range of alternatives that could be more effective way of managing issues around schools.

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, and government advice to not use public transport, this has been reviewed and the service has been working to introduce alternative options.

SERCO Contractual Obligations

**7) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Linda Van den Hende**

Can the Cabinet Member please give details as to the financial sanctions which apply to SERCO for missed collections, including the requirements placed on SERCO for remedial action?

Answer

During lockdown household waste tonnages increased by over 33% as a result of people staying at home and tonnages are still around 10% higher than at the same time last year. This obviously places a huge demand on Serco.

Despite this the focus has been on ensuring a weekly waste service and collections have been made during the scheduled week, even if some collections were not made on the regular day.

As a result of robust contract management Serco have deployed additional collection teams and have also reviewed their management structure. These actions have significantly improved performance over recent weeks and the vast majority of collections are now being made on the scheduled day.

Serco have a set of performance indicators containing targets related to the collection of household waste in Havering. Should these targets not be met, Serco are issued with a financial deduction. The targets are quarterly and comprise:

1. Missed waste collections per 100,000 scheduled (target of 73 or fewer) with a maximum financial deduction of £10,000.
2. Total actual number of missed garden waste, bulky waste and clinical waste collections, with a target of fewer than 42, 1 and 1 respectively. Each have a maximum deduction of £1,666.
3. Percentage of missed collections rectified on time with a target of 96% or higher and a maximum deduction of £5,000.

Each indicator is treated on a Red/Amber/Green basis, with incremental deductions dependent on performance – green meaning the target has been met and no deduction is issued, Amber with a 75% deduction and Red with a 100% / maximum deduction.

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Regarding remedial action, a missed collection should be rectified either by the end of the day (if reported before midday), or by midday the following day (if reported after midday).

Review of Private Sector Leasing

**8) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman)
From Councillor Paul McGeary**

Will the Lead Member for Housing make a statement about the progress in reviewing Private Sector Leasing arrangements and when does he anticipate announcing his proposals?

Answer

Extensive work has been undertaken by officers to improve the management of PSL properties and improve the conditions for residents.

We shall bring a report to Cabinet in November 2020 to further the partnership with Mercury Land Holdings to procure good quality properties to be used as an alternative to PSL. These will be affordable to the residents as well as the council.

Elsewhere on the agenda tonight we have the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy. We have prioritised the prevention of homelessness which will reduce the demand for temporary accommodation. This is despite the anticipated increase in people becoming homeless which is expected following a predicted increase in unemployment as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ending of the moratorium on evictions. Therefore, the current supply of PSL properties will be required to continue to meet the housing need of existing households.

The Council is also in the process of planning the development of a new family welcome and assessment centre in Hilldene that will provide high quality accommodation for over 80 families, replacing the current hostels. We are also develop a range of supported housing for single vulnerable people.

HGV Traffic in East Hall Lane

**9) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor David Durant**

At last meeting the Mayor kindly presented a petition on behalf of the residents of Wennington Village. In response the Cabinet Member for highways promoted a scheme in Calendar Brief (10/8) to remove East Hall Lane from the local 'weight zone' which means HGVs would only be able to access East Hall Lane from the A1306.

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This would be very welcome news to residents who are subject to high speed HGVs driving along Wennington Road at all hours to access a site in East Hall Lane, operating without planning permission – a situation that has been on-going for many years. Please can the Cabinet Member provide an update on how soon this scheme can be progressed?

Answer

I fully understand and sympathise with residents on this issue and so totally agree that we need to take action to address it and have had discussions with officers to progress the scheme.

However, as you may be aware, the recent deterioration of the carriageway surface in East Hall Lane has led to its partial temporary closure meaning that vehicles cannot currently access it from the A1306 on safety grounds. As I am sure it can be appreciated, until this issue is resolved and the road has been brought to an acceptable and safe standard, we would not be able to progress with a traffic scheme that would increase the amount of HGV's using this part of the carriageway and in turn exacerbate the issues.

East Hall Lane has been added to the HIP programme as a high priority and once this has been addressed we would then be in a position to arrange formal advertisement of the proposal.

Proposed designs are already being progressed and we aim to have these ready for agreement to consult in the next month or two.

Public Realm Works at Harold Wood Station

**10) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Darren Wise**

Now that we are easing out of lockdown, could the Cabinet Member confirm the situation of the public realm works at Harold Wood station, when the remaining work will be completed and what representations has the Council made to get the station works finished?

Answer

As a result of TfL's financial situation following the Covid-19 Pandemic, Transport for London (TfL) instructed the Council to pause all works at Harold Wood station and withdraw from the site, in support of the government lockdown measures.

As a consequence, the previously committed funding for the scheme of £250k for 2020/21 was withdrawn. At that stage public realm works at Harold Wood station were 90% complete.

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Officers have been in conversation with TfL (who are the scheme sponsor) since the middle of April regarding future funding for this scheme. TfL are currently in negotiations with the Department for Transport (DfT) for the provision of financial support for the second half of the 2020/21 financial Year.

TfL are expecting to receive confirmation of their central government bailout in September 2020. The Council will then be informed if there is sufficient funding available to complete the scheme.

Should funding become available, it is anticipated that a programme of no longer than eight weeks would be required to complete the scheme.

Enquiry System Compatibility

**11) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Paul Middleton**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm why applications like “Love Clean Streets” do not link up with other systems to ensure that the enquiry can be properly tracked?

Answer

Love Clean Streets is linked with Mayrise, and enquiries can be tracked. However, to be able to investigate and respond to this query effectively, it would be helpful if we can be advised on what the specific issue is, which we can then raise with the LCS developer.

There are plans to implement a new Digital Platform with the intention to integrate with relevant back office systems, which will provide customers with appropriate updates to their enquiries.

Town Investment Fund

**12) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor John Tyler**

The Government has announced a Town Investment Fund to assist with safeguarding the future of our High Streets, can the Leader please inform us how much Havering has bid for this support for each of our Town Centres?

Answer

There have been two announcements regarding funding for Town Centres recently.

If the question is referring to:

£3.6bn Towns Fund announcement on the 6th September 2019 whereby capacity funding was allocated to 100 local authorities to develop proposals for a

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Town Deal investment plan. Havering was not allocated any funds despite having submitted an expression of interest in March 2019.

The original bidding prospectus can be found here

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/783531/Future_High_Streets_Fund_prospectus.pdf

The published eligibility criteria restricted bids to defined classes of public authority of which LB Havering was included. Bids were invited in respect of 'towns' rather than entire 'districts'; 'town centres' but not neighbourhood centres. Eligible towns would need to be 'facing significant challenges'. Based on discussions with MHCLG, it was determined that only Romford was considered to present challenges of a scale likely to meet bidding criteria.

If the question is referring to

MHCLG – Reopening High Streets Safely Fund (RHSSF) European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) whereby Councils across England are to share £50m of additional funding to support the safe reopening of high streets. Havering's fund allocation is to be £231,057.

A grant action plan has been submitted to the MHCLG with proposed projects and initiatives to deliver

- 1) A communications campaign to support businesses and to communicate 'shop safely' messaging to reassure residents that their local high street is a safe to shop.
- 2) Recruit a public protection post to support the safe reopening of high streets and support businesses to be Covid-19 compliant.
- 3) Develop Covid-19 recovery action plans for five town centres across the borough to consult local businesses, residents, and other stakeholders to identify measures which will tackle existing issues in the area and to devise a programme of immediate and future town centre improvements.

The Council is awaiting the outcome whether the proposed projects submitted will be eligible via the ERDF Fund, this is expected within the next month.

Management of Borough Sports and Leisure Facilities

13) To the Cabinet Member for Public Protection & Safety (Councillor Viddy Persaud)

From Councillor Keith Darvill

What steps are taken to monitor the level of complaints relating to the management and operation of the Borough's sports and leisure facilities and are performance and the delivery of service level agreements monitored regularly to enable performance disclosure to the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee?

Answer

Everyone Active have a robust complaints procedure which allows complaints to be answered in a timely manner. The complaints system also allows trends to be identified and resolutions sought for any issues highlighted.

Constant communication lines exist between Council officers and Everyone Active. This is an effective way to ensure any issues that may be raised are dealt with in an efficient manner.

All areas of the contract are monitored against key performance indicators and are reported, in depth, on a monthly basis to Council officers. A quarterly report is then formulated and discussed by all relevant parties at the Quarterly client meeting.

As a minimum, the Leisure Centres are visited every 2 weeks by Council officers to ensure the high standards are being maintained by Everyone Active. Outcomes of these inspections are logged to create and identify areas of strength and weakness, with set timescales in place for any highlighted issues to be resolved.

The performance information is available should the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee wish to review it.

Hall Lane Pitch & Putt

**14) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor David Durant**

The Hall Lane Pitch & Putt was included as an Open Space in the draft Local Plan as part of Havering's Open Space Strategy, but was removed to facilitate building on the land. Please can the Cabinet Member advise Council who took this decision?

Answer

The site is designated in the existing Development Plan (the Local Development Framework) and the Draft Local Plan as open space and this designation has not been removed.

In July, the Strategic Planning Committee resolved to grant outline planning permission for the redevelopment on the site to provide up to 37 units. The application was assessed on the basis that the site is designated open space

Harrow Lodge Park

**15) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Stephanie Nunn**

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Would the Cabinet Member explain why silt has been allowed to make its way back into the lake at Harrow Lodge Park and why has oil been allowed to build up to the side of the silt lagoon?

Answer

The silt lagoon at the head of the lakes functions to hold waste and silt from entering the lake and each time we experience any rainfall material will be washed down into the trap.

There is no confirmation that the material within the trap is oil but there are circumstances when irresponsible parties discharge such waste into drainage systems that flow to and discharge into the River Ravensborne.

Environmental Health are confirming whether there is oil within the trap and then this may be investigated by the Environment Agency and a subsequent clean-up will follow.

The debris captured by the grill above the silt trap will be removed this week. This grill is programmed to be cleared on a monthly basis