

FULL COUNCIL, Tuesday 15 December 2020

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS – SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Parking Charges in Hornchurch and Upminster Town Centres

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

Businesses in Hornchurch and Upminster Town Centres are suffering due to the Covid19 pandemic. Hornchurch is losing a major retailer (Peacocks) which is a huge loss to the area and we are likely to see more shops close unless more positive action is taken. An experimental order to introduce 29 on-street parking spaces in Hornchurch Town Centre with a free hour parking has been introduced, but is having little impact and are in the main next to existing car parks that remain mostly empty. During the lockdown period these car parks were made free to use and were 90% full – which shows there is a requirement for off street parking. Would the Cabinet Member introduce one hour free parking in Hornchurch and Upminster Town Centre car parks to encourage the use of the car parks and help save the shops?

Answer

The Council are supporting local businesses, high streets and residents across the borough and this is why measures introduced from 3rd August for parking included a 20% discount when paying by the cashless app (Ringo) in all Council Car Parks. This was in addition to introducing a number of new on-street parking bays in Hornchurch to increase opportunities for parking and across these we have introduced one hour **free** parking.

This means local residents can visit Hornchurch and Upminster, shop for up to one hour, so putting money into the local economy and not have to pay to do so. In addition, if people want to support local businesses for a longer period for things like a haircut or having a meal, again they can do so by paying a discounted rate in the car parks and again this supports the local economy.

And further to this, we have once again introduced free parking in Council Car Parks over five weekends across the Christmas and new Year period to help people shop locally and support the local economy. The parking offer in Havering is better than our surrounding boroughs. Neighbouring boroughs such as Newham, Redbridge and Thurrock offer no reduced or free parking charges within their Council owned car parks and only a limited 30 minutes at some on-street locations.

Some initial analysis demonstrates that the average uptake of customers using car parks and benefitting from the 20% discount when paying cashless so far this year is, on average 34% of all transactions across the borough. It would therefore

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appear to be a welcomed much improved offer to the customer with an upward trend over a much shorter period when compared with 2019/20 which was 28%.

Almost half of the total number of on-street transactions since August have been made using the cashless app. With 45% of all on-street parking utilising the 1-hour free parking period compared to 26% in 2019/20 when 30 minutes free was offered.

We will continue to monitor use of car parks and parking bays but I believe our parking offer is popular and being well-used and it is too earlier to consider changes to the system.

Supplementary:

Thank you for your response to my question Cllr Dervish, unfortunately it does not answer my question.

Will you give back the free one hour parking in Hornchurch and Upminster car parks that the current administration removed?"

Answer

Until this administration introduced the 1 hour free parking offer for on street bays this year, there has never been a free 1 hour parking offer in Hornchurch and Upminster. Therefore, your question is moot.

Mayor's Charities 2019/20

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

Would the Leader of the Council confirm how much Councillor Michael Deon Burton raised as Mayor for his chosen charities?

Answer

When funds are donated in response to a mayoral appeal, payment may in some cases be made directly to the nominated charities rather than through the Council. Payments made to the Council are processed through the "The Mayor of Havering General Appeal Fund". In accordance with the relevant regulations, records are kept for each financial year as opposed to each mayoral year and passed to the Charity Commission. However, the efforts of current and past Mayors in promoting worthy local causes deserve the support of all members.

Supplementary:

Would the Leader of the Council confirm the amount that has been paid to the Cllr Michael Deon-Burton's General Appeal Fund to date?

Answer

Respectfully, I refer the Member to the answer given to the initial question

School Streets

**7) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Christopher Wilkins**

The Council has introduced the School Streets' Scheme in Cedar Avenue, where Branfil School is situated. Local Members were provided with very short notice regarding the scheme. During the consultation period, Local Members did raise concerns regarding increased congestion and pollution for those living in adjoining streets, prior to the scheme being introduced. There appears to have been no, or little, consultation with residents in adjoining roads. Can the Cabinet Member confirm:

What steps will be taken to alleviate the pollution and congestion in the adjoining roads, where the School Streets' Scheme was introduced?

Answers

We monitored roads surrounding all of the School Street schemes during November. This involved looking at the volume and type of traffic using the school streets scheme. We used video cameras to record and analyse the behaviour of motorists, such as double parking, drop kerb obstruction and dangerous manoeuvring. This monitoring took place for one week during the morning and afternoon school runs.

Pollution cannot be measured in any meaningful way for a period of less than six months to a year. Diffusion tubes passively monitor nitrogen dioxide and are highly unlikely to demonstrate any effect on minor roads with low traffic volumes. Air Quality mesh monitoring provides hourly monitoring and is more effective, but unfortunately is too expensive and not covered by TfL funding.

The results from the monitoring will provide the basis for a lesson learned report – including any suggested actions - for the consideration of senior management and Members.

The school's streets scheme was consulted on with those residents where the restrictions would be put in place. This is our normal practice with any traffic and parking consultation, in that the consultation is with those affected by the restrictions being proposed and not the surrounding areas. Other boroughs in London have forged ahead with changes to their streets in response to the Covid pandemic with no consultation with local people and as a result have received considered backlash and, in some cases have had to reverse the work they'd implemented. Taking the approach we have, ensure local residents are on board with our proposals before we undertake any costly work.

Supplementary:

When will my original question be answered? The answer below does not provide an adequate response. There is a mention about a report in the answer, but it lacks any detail or provides any timescales. In the final paragraph, I am not sure what points are being made.

Answer

The report will ready in the New Year. The results of the monitoring and the experience of the project team involved with the school street schemes projects, along with the knowledge of Highways, Traffic and Parking Control officers will all be important in developing the report. The report will consider the effect of any displacement on the surrounding roads for all the schemes and make recommendations to alleviate any perceived problems with congestion as a result.

“DoingMyBit” Campaign

8) To the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Safety (Councillor Viddy Persaud)

From Councillor David Durant

The Council’s “DoingMyBit” campaign was launched without undertaking a Medical Risk Assessment into the pros and cons of mask wearing and without a report being approved by Cabinet. This failure matters as the morally coercive campaign could undermine human and employment rights and result in an increase in Disability Hate Crime, and make the council potentially financially liable for any medical harm caused to people from heeding the campaign.

In view of this does the Cabinet Member for Public Protection agree the “DoingMyBit” campaign should be halted until an MRA is undertaken and a full report on the matter is prepared and approved by Cabinet?

Answer

No, I do not agree.

It is a lawful requirement to wear face coverings in public settings. The hugely successful Public Services Communications award winning Doing My Bit campaign sets out to raise awareness of this along with a range of other measures to prevent transmission of Covid-19 and save lives. And because it is lawful requirement, people could be fined if they are not exempt.

Exemptions based on age, health or disability exist so that people who cannot wear one do not have to. We have promoted initiatives supporting awareness of this.

Nobody who is exempt from wearing a face mask should experience discrimination or aggression because of it and because of that risk it is vital that only those with a legitimate reason use that exemption.

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For those who are not exempt, there are no 'cons' of wearing a mask. It is part of being a decent and compassionate member of society.

The spread of this virus is enabled by the spread of hoaxes and lies. I hope Cllr Durant will see fit to retract his statement that, and I quote, "if you wear a face mask for a long period of time this could actually reduce your oxygen levels in your blood and cause you more harm". This is not true and has been comprehensively debunked by doctors. It is damaging and dangerous to spread this sort of fake news.

Supplementary:

In response to my Q8 you said, in part:

"The spread of this virus is enabled by the spread of hoaxes and lies. I hope Cllr Durant will see fit to retract his statement that, and I quote, "if you wear a face mask for a long period of time this could actually reduce your oxygen levels in your blood and cause you more harm". This is not true and has been comprehensively debunked by doctors. It is damaging and dangerous to spread this sort of fake news".

I find this an extraordinarily ill-informed response, as restricted breathing is an elementary complaint and as there are many other harms from mask wearing. Please reference your sources and have you researched contrary medical opinion, as your response makes the council financially liable for any harm caused to those who heed council coercive mask wearing advice.

Answer

The approach adopted by the Council is informed by the available evidence and influenced by the majority, authoritative and peer reviewed opinion from experts. I am afraid that your constant questioning on the subject continues to distract the authority's effort in responding to the global Covid-19 pandemic. It is misuse of officer time and therefore the Council's resources to respond to these questions. I understand that the Chief Executive, Director of Public Health and Monitoring Officer have written to you to confirm they will not be responding to your questions where you seek to debate the majority held views on Covid-19, its effects and efforts to respond rather seek direct assistance for you to perform your function as a Councillor. Accordingly, there will be no response to this supplementary question.

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Havering Local Register

**12) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman)
From Councillor Linda Hawthorn**

There are many buildings in Havering, which although of local interest, are not eligible for national listing. We used to have a local list of such buildings, which gave them some protection. This has been shelved for many years now. Can the Cabinet Member please advise when this list will be returned, and Councillors are able to apply for buildings in their wards to be added to it?

Answer

A review of the existing entries on the Local List and the ability to propose additions to it will be considered further as part of the future planning policy work programme, following the adoption of the Local Plan.

The Local List highlights heritage assets which are of local heritage value, ensuring that their importance is taken into account through the planning process. Any impact upon these assets is always reviewed and carefully considered as part of the decision making process on planning applications.

Havering's Local List has not been 'shelved' - it continues to exist and is available to view on the Council's website.

This Council is extremely proud of our borough's rich history and heritage and we will always do our utmost to protect it.

Supplementary:

When is it expected that the Local Plan will actually be signed off?

Answer:

It is anticipated that the Local Plan will come forward for adoption in the first quarter of 2021-22. However, this is entirely dependent upon the Council receiving the Planning Inspector's Final Report on our Examination. Once this has been received, timescales will be more clearly defined.

Charging Points for Electric Vehicles

**15) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Reg Whitney**

Given the increasing demand and need for electric vehicles, would the Cabinet Member confirm the Administration's Strategy on charging points?

Answer

The Government wants the UK new car market to offer no petrol or diesel vehicles by 2030.

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The Department for Transport (DfT) has restated its vision that all drivers of Electric Vehicles in the UK should be able to access public charging infrastructure that is affordable, efficient, and reliable.

The current London Plan requires all new developments with parking provision to include 20% of the spaces with Electric Vehicle Charging Points ready to use and 20% of the spaces ready prepared for the addition of charging infrastructure when demand increases in the future.

Havering's emerging Local Plan states that developments will need to include the minimum required electric vehicle charging points in line with the London Plan requirements.

It is recognised that electric vehicle (and hybrid vehicle) numbers will increase significantly over the coming years and that presents both opportunities and challenges.

Last year the Council commissioned a study on Electric Vehicle Charging Points and the potential demand for such infrastructure in the borough.

Further work is taking place exploring options for how EVCP infrastructure can be introduced in the borough and the funding opportunities that are available.

Supplementary:

Would the Cabinet Member confirm when it is intended to have a Cabinet report on EVCP infrastructure?

Answer

The Council is currently considering various options for taking forward the delivery of EVCP infrastructure in the borough and the funding opportunities that are available. Should any of these options be pursued, they will be progressed through the appropriate approval mechanism.