

FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 24 March 2021

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Support for Early Years' providers during the Pandemic

- 1) **To the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families (Councillor Robert Benham)**
From Councillor Stephanie Nunn

Would the Cabinet Member explain why have Early Years Providers not been given adequate financial and emotional support during the pandemic?

Answer:

I disagree with your question. We have provided a wide range of support to the sector since the pandemic struck, including protecting funding for 2/3/4 year old places when numbers of children have dropped.

There has also been a discretionary grant allocated to those providers who remained open during the initial lockdown, and this discretionary grant has been increased by a further £1.03 million last month. This is also open to nurseries, playgroups and childminders, many of which have remained open to support children of critical workers through the pandemic.

These funds are in addition to other support provided and still being delivered.

Over the past year, the Council has been providing free training, responding to enquiries and leading briefing sessions each term. The introduction of fortnightly wellbeing support calls to managers, which began in January, are now well underway. Additionally, meetings with senior officers and the Lead Member have recently been held to discuss pressures which the sector has experienced during the course of the pandemic. Further discussions (and visits to settings once circumstances permit) are set to take place.

Previously paid-for PPE was made free from London Resilience Forum just after Christmas and the Council looked into the feasibility of using a number of early years sites for rapid Covid testing, but this wasn't taken forward as the DfE agreed to allow early years providers access to home rapid testing.

For those settings still unable to access the home testing, the Council has extended the rapid testing sites opening hours.

Unfortunately, we can't prioritise staff for the vaccine as the decisions are made nationally, but we're continuing to lobby the Department for Education for the whole education workforce to be included as early as possible in the next phase of the vaccination programme.

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Therefore it is clear from this support that we are committed to working in partnership with the Early Years sector and will continue to support them in any way we can in managing the ongoing challenges faced by the pandemic within the financial envelope that we have.

This support is set within a broader context where the Local Authority has also targeted significant funding to support families on lower incomes via a successful holiday free school meal scheme. The Scheme will continue to offer support during the Easter holiday period.

A supplementary question asked why it had taken a meeting with early years providers and Residents' Association Councillors to get action on this issue. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that he had become aware of the matter via press coverage in early January and then been approached by two early years providers in February. He had met with the Director and would undertake site visits once this was possible.

Families in receipt of Universal Credit

**2) To the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property (Councillor Roger Ramsey)
From Councillor Gillian Ford**

How many Havering families were in receipt of Universal Credit for the years; 2019-2020, 2020-2021 year to date?

There has been a significant growth in the number of families in receipt of Universal Credit in Havering since the start of the pandemic. In November 2019 there were 7,442 receiving Universal Credit but by November 2020 this figure had more than doubled to 18,071.

The Council has stepped in to support families in need over the pandemic period by setting up the Havering Helps scheme. The Council allocated an additional £1.5 million from its reserves back in March 2020, right at the start of the pandemic, to ensure that there would be sufficient funding available to support all families in need.

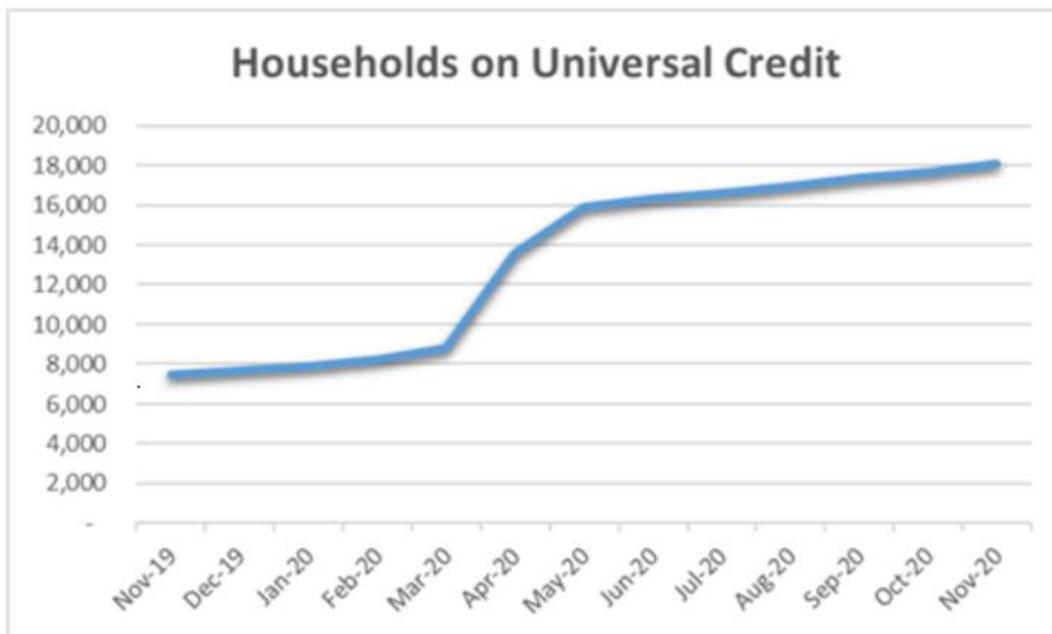
The scheme was further modified in the autumn of 2020 to increase the Havering Helps payments being made per family from a limit of £100 in any one month to a limit of £170 in any one month.

So far, over 5,000 payments have been made to families and individuals totalling nearly £700,000.

In addition, the Council has provided funding for families of children usually in receipt of free school meals to pay for food at home. In the October half term, this amounted to £71,000. A further Executive Decision would be taken to give funding for the Easter holiday period.

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It is anticipated that the number of residents on Universal Credit will remain high even once lockdown has been eased and the Council will work with partners such as the DWP and in conjunction with local organisations through initiatives such as the Apprenticeship Scheme and Kickstart to support residents to re-skill and to get back into work.



A supplementary question asked if the rolling back of the furlough scheme would lead to an increase in the number of households claiming universal credit. The Cabinet Member felt it was difficult to predict this as many factors were involved. The continuing of projects such as the 12 Estates and Upminster Pitch and Putt developments would boost local businesses and employment.

Flooding in Rainham

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

Following my call for local residents regarding the receive flooding contact information and further assistance needed as requested to our Chief Executive at the last full Council meeting regarding the recent flooding in the Rainham and Wennington Ward.

Can our Council please advise what action if any has now been taken following this request to provide flooding contact information and the further assistance needed as to alleviate the continued fears from local residents regarding these recent flooding happening again?

Answer:

The Councillor is correct in recognising the heroic response by Council officers to the awful flooding back in August. Their actions helped residents whose homes had been devastated during the crisis and as part of the recovery effort. The budget recently agreed for the next financial year also recognises this, and has identified additional resources for this area of work.

Regarding the storm in August 2020, a Section 19 Report under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 is being produced which investigates the severity of the storm, assess the hydrology in the area, and liaises with both internal and external partners in order to identify any contributing factors that may have increased the flooding experienced. This report will be available in May, and the outcomes and recommendations will be published on the Havering website.

There is an area on our website which provides publically available details of our multi agency flood plan for the whole borough in the event of major flooding.

In addition to this we will be updating our existing strategic flooding documents once revised national climate change targets are released.

External partners such as Network Rail and Thames Water have met with The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive and have already identified works within their land and infrastructure, and have completed remedial works to prevent any future flooding. The RSPB who manage the Rainham Marshes area has confirmed there are no blockages or issues at this location.

Council officers and contractors routinely inspect and complete maintenance works to Havering owned drainage, gullies and flood plains to ensure there are no blockages. The addition of a new gully sucker will increase our capacity to respond reactively and proactively to any highway drainage issues.

In order to protect our residents, any major development within the borough must include sustainable drainage systems within their planning application and complete these during construction.

These methods will allow water to be retained safely at source and will help to reduce the risks of future flooding, and the devastating effects this can have on local residents and businesses.

A supplementary question asked if a letter could be sent to local residents giving immediate contact details in case of flooding. The Cabinet Member stated that he had asked officers to engage with those residents and would follow up on this.

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Review of Environmental Policies

**4) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Keith Darvill**

On 10th July 2019 the Council passed by 48 votes to 3 a Motion which acknowledged public concerns relating to to:-

- 1) the impact of Climate Change;
- 2) the reduction in air quality; and,
- 3) the need to improve significantly recycling of waste products.

It then called upon the Executive to review its policies to ensure that Havering leads the way on environmental protection. What progress has been made in reviewing its environmental protection policies?

Answer:

Members will recall that the Council engaged with a team of specialist independent consultants, whose skills and knowledge were secured at no cost to the authority, to do an initial review to bring together any environmental activities the Council is taking to tackle climate change.

The review identified this as a complex area that crosses Directorates and Portfolios. A number of different policies and strategies were identified, each of which helps the Council tackle the causes of climate change and are at different stages of review and implementation. These include agreed actions and milestones to improve the environment, and these are ongoing.

A report was referred to the Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee for review and a Topic Group established, to consider the actions proposed and developed by officers, including arranging reviews of all policies and strategies. The Topic Group brief was ratified on 18 February 2021.

I can also inform Members that Havering is one of only six pioneering London Local Authorities to be piloting an IT platform which baselines climate change outputs across the borough and models positive impacts from interventions we could implement. This system has been used to great effect throughout Scandinavia and others parts of the UK.

Regarding the continuing implementation of the Air Quality Action Plan to tackle local air pollution, key measures being taken forward are the addition of electric charging points within our car parks, ensuring the next mayoral car is electric, and that our pool car network will also change to be electric.

The Council are committed to the implementation of a network of Electric Vehicle Charge Points across the borough, readying the infrastructure for the future. This will include the Council leading by example and upgrading its fleet where possible to electric vehicles.

This is significant step to reducing vehicle emissions in the borough which is the largest source of local air pollution. A Cabinet report will be brought forward in the

near future on an electric vehicle strategy for the Council.

Regarding recycling, Havering is working with ELWA and the partner boroughs to produce a long term waste disposal strategy, which will cover waste reduction, reuse, recycling and waste treatment. In the shorter term, Havering has produced a Reduction and Recycling Plan, submitted to the GLA, which outlines our continued commitment to recycling and waste reduction through various engagement programmes, as well as collections.

A supplementary question asked why it had taken 21 months to get an update and whether a more detailed report could be provided. The Leader of the Council responded that he had supported the Labour Group motion and that electric charging points would be provided in Council car parks. The Overview and Scrutiny process could be used to look at these policies in more detail.

Dog Fouling in Parks

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

Are the Council going to do an advertising campaign by putting signs on park entrances and plastic cards secured to trees by cable ties to remind dog owners to pick up and bin their dog's poo and park users to bin their litter or take it home, as a reminder to keep our parks clean and tidy this coming Spring and Summer?

Answer:

The Council has been working hard to support our communities during the pandemic keeping parks and streets clean as much as possible. Clearly, the pandemic makes our work more challenging and it does not help when people behave carelessly and don't clear up after themselves or their dogs.

The Councils Enforcement team patrol locations where reports of dog waste being left have been received, and will take enforcement action under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 if necessary. The Council has previously considered whether a Public Spaces Protection Order would be appropriate, however, this would not enhance the existing powers available to the Enforcement Officers.

The work of the communications team ensures that people know the consequences their actions have on the local community has. The methods of doing this include using our newsletter, social media and encouraging residents, schools and the wider community to join us in events such as community litter picks, where we can do so safely due to the restrictions in place. Members are invited to these if they are taking place in their wards.

In addition, entrance signage and some interpretation boards in our key parks and open spaces display the 'do not litter' and 'pick up after your dog' symbols and pavement stencils.

I am also pleased to let fellow Councillors know that the Council will once again launch the Cleaner Havering campaign to help encourage a change in behaviour. We will of course inform Members of that work nearer the time. Councillors could be provided with dog fouling posters and stickers for their local areas.

A supplementary question asked when the campaign re dog fouling in parks would begin. The Cabinet Member responded that signs were already at park entrances and that the Cleaner Havering campaign would relaunch in spring and summer.

Flooding in Havering

6) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish) From Councillor Ray Morgon

Given the increasing incidence of flooding across Havering, would the Cabinet Member clearly set out what flood alleviation works are planned over the next twelve months in Havering to stop so many residents properties being damaged by flood waters?

Answer:

Flooding is a natural occurrence that is usually the result of either heavy rainfall over a long period or an intense storm event which can overwhelm existing capacity within our rivers and watercourses as well as surface water drainage systems.

In order to manage the risk of flooding to protect life and property, the Council does carry out regular maintenance of our drainage assets such as highway gullies, ditches and flood storage areas.

The Council also liaise with external partners such as the Environment Agency, Thames Water and Network Rail, to ensure that they too maintain their land and infrastructure, which in turn alleviates potential flooding to properties that adjoin their land.

In addition to this we will be updating our existing strategic flooding documents once revised national climate change targets are released.

As stated in my response to Cllr Tucker's question, the Council understands fully the destruction and devastation flooding to residential or commercial property can cause.

The recently announced budget recognises this and has identified additional resources for this area of work. This will include 3 new flood wardens/ officers as well as a new vehicle for gulley cleansing.

There are three locations in the borough we have identified for flood alleviation works in the next 12 months.

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These are: firstly, dredging the lakes in Harrow Lodge Park to remove sediment and debris at the bottom of the lakes; secondly, we will work with Thames 21 to introduce a natural flood plain in Rise Park; and lastly works will take place to construct an overflow and soakaway also in Harrow Lodge Park adjacent to a residential property.

A supplementary question asked if there would be sufficient resources for this work given the loss of the main flood officer in a recent restructure and if the flood risk from the mound at the rear of the Hornchurch Sports Centre could be addressed. The Cabinet Member responded that there had not been any amendment to the budget from the Residents' Association Group and that the restructure would ensure flood resources were available. The Council had reacted quickly to remove the mound from the rear of the Sports Centre.

Road Schemes

**7) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor John Tyler**

How many road schemes initially proposed by Members, other than those involving the addition or removal of a single restricted bay (such as disabled bays etc.), are currently still outstanding, and what is the average length of time for those outstanding schemes, since their appearance in Calendar Brief?

Answer:

Since April 2020 the council has received 69 scheme requests from Members, of which 10 are currently on-going. The remaining 59 are scheduled to be completed in the next financial year. In addition to the schemes proposed by Members, a further 88 scheme requests were received from the public or proposed by officers.

The Coronavirus pandemic has had a major impact on staffing levels, work programming and on site completions leading to delays in progressing the requests received, but the team is working hard to programme the remaining schemes, and to have these completed as soon as possible.

It should be noted that some of the outstanding schemes are dependent on the provision of external funding sources, such as the Local Implementation Plan funding from Transport for London, which is currently on hold and therefore we have not been able to progress these schemes. Naturally these will be prioritised once funding is again available.

The Highways Team would hope to complete works within 6 months from the date a scheme is advertised on Calendar Brief, dependent on complexity and funding, however due to the pandemic this has not always been possible and some schemes have taken longer.

A supplementary question asked if it was acceptable that a request for parking

restrictions in Chelmer Road, Cranham had not been proceeded with after two years. The Cabinet Member agreed that this was not acceptable and would look into the matter.

Mardyke Community Hall

**8) To the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property (Councillor Roger Ramsey)
From Councillor Natasha Summers**

Many of our community centres are struggling due to the lockdowns. The Mardyke Community Centre, has received a ring-fenced grant from Clarion Housing, but what further assistance can the Council provide to help keep this vital community asset open and serving local residents?

Answer:

The Covid-19 pandemic has hit the community organisations that run local community halls very hard. At the beginning of 2020/21, all the Council's commercial lessees were offered the opportunity to move from quarterly in advance rent payments to monthly in arrears. However, with lockdowns continuing for longer than initially anticipated, the financial position has got tougher for the community organisations running the community halls. The Council recognises that this mitigation does not go far enough for all the community organisations.

The Council is of the view that vibrant community halls will be crucial to the mental, physical and emotional health of the communities they serve as we emerge from the pandemic. It is therefore important for the Council to consider what support can be provided to those organisations hardest hit and least able financially to weather the current storm.

An Urgent Decision was published on Monday 22 March which introduces two forms of assistance, both of which can be applied to community halls where the Council is the lessor:-

- Where the Council is the landlord, it will revise the payment terms further so that the rent for community halls can be repaid over a longer period, reflecting the predicted recovery of activity as the current lockdown eases and their cashflow returns. Individual repayment plans will be offered to these community halls that aim to make payments affordable in the short term but which will ensure that all rent and arrears are repaid by 31 March 2023.
- Where a community association leases a community hall from the Council, they will be invited on 29 March to submit an application by 19 April should they believe they are eligible for a rescue package from the Council. Once the deadline has passed, all applications will be considered and grants will be allocated based on the severity of the financial challenge faced by each organisation. The resulting package of financial support should not exceed

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£10,000 per centre and there should not be more than one package per centre. The total rescue programme will be capped at £100,000.

A supplementary question asked if the Mardyke Community Centre would be made aware of the rescue package that could be applied for from 29 March. The Cabinet Member confirmed this would be the case and applications would be looked at on a case by case basis.

Removal of Automated Public Conveniences

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

Will the Executive reinstate the automatic public conveniences ('APC') which were removed recently following a 'Non-key Executive Decision' made in January 2021 until such time as a fully comprehensive community toilet scheme is introduced in each area of the 7 APC's removed?

Answer:

The contract to provide, manage and maintain Automated Public Conveniences with JC Decaux has now expired. The existing stock has been assessed and is no longer fit for purpose as the 15 year old facilities have become unreliable, worsened by a shortage of parts availability preventing timely repairs. These units have now been removed and will not be reinstated.

Usage of the units dropped by up to 51% in some areas, and 12.7% overall, between 2018 and 2019. Overall usage was around 1300 users per month, spread over the 7 sites. This low level of usage means that the toilets were costing the council over £13 per visit.

Whilst the provision of public toilets is a non-statutory service, the automated facilities in South Street Romford and at Gidea Park station will remain and are part of a different maintenance contract. There are also public toilet facilities in :

- Langtons Gardens
- Harrow Lodge Park
- Raphael Park
- Upminster Park and
- Romford Market

Additionally the Council is introducing a community toilet scheme to ensure a wider provision of facilities throughout the Borough. Subject to the relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions officers will be conducting engagement sessions with both the public and local businesses to implement a community toilet scheme in the coming months. Officers are investigating the possibility of including this scheme within the upcoming community hubs, such as the Hilldene hub, opening in May 2021. Furthermore,

where redevelopments are planned, such as at Hilldene shops, local businesses will be engaged with accordingly.

A supplementary question asked if automated public conveniences should not be removed without the involvement of ward Councillors and the putting in place of replacement facilities. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that the contract for the conveniences had ceased and that it was costly to extend this.

Consultation on Park Strategies

**10) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Jan Sargent**

As the last year has proven, for many of us our parks, which make up large areas within our wards have been more important to us than in any other time recorded.

Areas of sanctuary are vital for our health, wellbeing and where we can become close to nature and wildlife. With this in mind can you please explain why ward councillors are not involved and informed in consultations with regards to major plans or alterations in their ward?

Answer:

We have a fantastic variety and award winning parks and open spaces in this Borough which this Council are proud of, with 16 of our parks awarded Green Flag status.

The value of our parks as vital assets for the borough has been highlighted during the Covid-19 lockdowns where usage of our spaces was extremely high, and provided much needed sanctuary for residents and places for physical and mental wellbeing.

This Council remains committed to upholding these standards and continuous improvements of our parks, which will be demonstrated by the upcoming 10 year Parks Strategy currently being produced with a public consultation planned for later this year. This strategy will set out how the parks will be managed, the objectives and plans for the next 10 years, from which projects will be established to deliver the strategy.

Where the Council have undertaken full restoration of parks, for example in Raphael Park and Langtons Gardens, then public consultations have taken place which have involved all the community including ward Councillors. However, the majority of projects within our parks are relatively limited, and so consultations are not carried out.

Where improvement projects or works of any significant scale are being undertaken

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then ward Members are informed, with officers sending out the relevant information prior to works commencing.

I will assume Cllr Sargent is referring to the project at Dagnam Park, and I can confirm that the details of the works being planned were provided to ward Councillors before the works commenced in 2020.

The works impact on a small area of the park and include improved signage, woodland management, the creation of new pathways, clearing of the river and the replacement of a gate at Settle Road.

A supplementary question asked why there had not been any consultation on the planned removal of further woodland in Dagnam Park, which 10,000 people had signed an on-line petition against. The Cabinet Member replied that these trees were being removed to allow other wildlife and fauna in the park to flourish and that his understanding was that consultation had taken place.

Performance Measurement

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

Would the Leader of the Council demonstrate how this Council measures quality of service and outcomes within each Directorate?

Answer:

As Leader, I seek out external validation of the Council's quality of service and outcomes. It is "not a one size fits all approach", but must be considered through a range of independent inspections such as Ofsted, the Corporate Parenting Panel, the Care Commission and external audit.

From a financial perspective, Havering has been identified as one of the most productive councils in the country and the most productive in London and the south east in the two most recent IMPOWER efficiency reports (2018 and 2019).

I also look to performance indicators from resident and customer satisfaction surveys (e.g. Housing, IPSOS MORI) and feedback from consultations, complaints, forums and feedback surveys from customers of directly provided services such as housing tenants and leaseholders and users of commissioned services such as adult social care.

Powerful demonstrations can be seen through outcomes that are highlighted in "case-studies", that show how our services have improved lives. This is something we need to make more of as Councillors - it's the greatest indicator of how outcomes make our communities life better - we need to consider how we do quantify that in this way.

But measuring quality of service and outcomes is not just the role of the Leader. As Members we get valuable insight through our surgeries/enquires, and undertake assurance of quality and delivery through our roles on various Committees and the Scrutiny Function. It is important that Overview and Scrutiny Board and its Sub-Committees play their part in determining how they want to monitor the performance of the Council on an ongoing basis. The Adjudication and Review also plays its part by monitoring the complaints received by the Council and the responses returned to those raising important issues in relation to service delivery.

A supplementary question asked when such information would be published and Councillors given information about service quality and outcomes. The Leader of the Council responded that this information was publicly available and the Councillor should read the relevant reports etc.

Monitoring of Pothole Repairs

**12) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Linda Hawthorn**

Can I please be advise how repairs to our pot-holes are monitored, and the percentage which have to be re-done within 3 months of the original repair?

Answer:

Our recent budget announcement included a commitment of £10M a year dedicated to improving the condition of our highway network – this improvement will reduce the number of the number of potholes appearing, and any potential failures of previously repaired highways.

This rigorous and robust regime of inspection and repair enables the Council to successfully repudiate the majority of highway claims, and combined with the ongoing Highways Improvement Plan this situation can only improve.

Havering is responsible for over 740km of roads and 1074km of footways and our level of capital investment per km is above the average level for other London boroughs

In addition to investing in the boroughs Highways through an ambitious capital programme the Council also reacts and responds to minor road defects including the occurrence of potholes. The Council repaired a total of 1,855 potholes during 2020 and does not have any accounts of permanent repairs failing within 3 months.

We have seen the number of pothole repairs fall from 2,588 in 2018 to 1,855 in 2020 which reflects the ongoing investment we have committed to improve the highway network.

Repairs to our network are monitored via our robust safety inspection system, the frequency of these inspections range between monthly on our busier roads to annual inspections on our quieter residential roads. We currently have 4 Area liaison officers

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undertaking regular safety inspections across the borough

If a defect is reported via a member of the public or found during one of the officer inspections, there is a target repair response time in place of 28 days, with anything classed as urgent repaired within 7 days, or if a pothole is dangerous a repair will be undertaken with 24 hours.

A supplementary question asked if more pothole monitoring officers would be employed. The Cabinet Member responded that he would like all officers to monitor potholes. The use of I-pads etc would mean there would not be a need to employ further staff for this role.

Covid-19 Vaccination Rollout

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

Full Council decided to promote the government's vaccination roll-out without advertising the pros and cons of doing so, including the vital need for informed consent, as the drug companies are indemnified against any claims due to side-effects! However has the Executive monitored the roll-out and collated feedback from those involved about the efficacy and side effects of the different vaccines? If so, please provide details.

Answer:

The MHRA, not local government, monitors the safety and efficacy of vaccines. As of 7 March, after administering 22.6 million doses of coronavirus vaccine in the UK, the MHRA reported that the overall safety experience with the two vaccines currently in use is as expected from the clinical trials. As such, the expected benefits of the vaccines in preventing COVID-19 and serious complications associated with COVID-19 far outweigh any currently known side effects.

Further information is available online -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine-adverse-reactions/coronavirus-vaccine-summary-of-yellow-card-reporting>

In addition, vaccination is known to have played a major role in the UK's reduction in infection rate in contrast to Europe's increasing rate ([New York Times](#)). A similar reduction was also seen in Israel, where similar vaccine brands are used. The Oxford-Astra-Zeneca vaccine trial in the US has recently been completed with more promising results than earlier trials.

As the confidence in the vaccines has increased, almost 100,000 Havering residents have received their vaccine.

The Leader of the Council, with the Director of Public Health, would be keen to meet the Leader of the IRG should he have any remaining concerns regarding vaccination.

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A supplementary question asked if the Leader felt the roll-out of the Covid-19 vaccine represented value for money. In response, the Leader of the Council emphasised that the vaccine roll-out had significantly reduced deaths and pressure on the NHS. He added that it was therefore ignorant and shameful for a Councillor to suggest people should not have the vaccine.

“Better Living” Budget Savings

**14) To the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Care Services (Councillor Jason Frost)
From Councillor Paul McGeary**

The Councils Budget proposed savings in Adult Care of £3.569million under the heading ‘Better Living’. Will the lead member provide examples how working with residents will develop and link into their own personal networks rather than relying on statutory services and how such ‘new working’ will reduce expenditure?

Answer:

Better Living is our strengths based approach to conversations with people who may need more care and support. Using this practice, we will no longer approach conversations from a position of ‘what’s wrong with you and how can we fix it?’- usually by involving a range of professionals and services; we will be developing and establishing long-lasting networks of support that fits more naturally with how people want to live among their family, friends and wider community.

We believe this approach to keeping people supported and connected to their family, friends and community is at the heart of a person’s sense of wellbeing. Better Living works to focus on the needs of the person, enhancing their safety while also resetting our relationship away from costly long term packages that do not necessarily meet the needs and wants of the person, only intervening when it is right and appropriate to do so. It has already supported those feeling socially isolated, reconnected family and communities and has been integral to our approach to ensuring support during the pandemic.

It is of note that the Better Living Programme has been discussed at O&S Individuals Subcommittee, as part of updates to the committee on other relevant adult social care reports.

Officers will set up an All Member Briefing in early May 2021 about the Better Living Programme, including evidence of why the approach works and the better outcomes we are achieving with residents. Updates had also been given at the Individuals Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

A supplementary question asked if the £3.5m saving in year 1 of the programme was realistic and if more details could be given. The Cabinet Member agreed this was an ambitious target but the aim was to meet this. He would respond to Councillor McGeary in writing with further details of the Better Living programme.

Insurance Claims for Road Defects

**15) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Gerry O'Sullivan**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm how many insurance claims per month were received between March 2019 and February 2021 due to potholes and other road defects and for the same period how much this council has paid out to resolve these claims?

Answer:

From March 2019 to February 2021 the Council received a total of 113 insurance claims related to potholes and road defects. On average this works out at 4.9 claims per month on our network. The Council paid £18,228 over 12 separate occasions.

We have committed to investing £10M a year to improve our highways network, and the benefits of this can be seen with the number of pothole repairs reducing from 2,588 in 2018 to 1,855 in 2020.

With this level of investment we expect the number of highway insurance claims to fall annually.

A supplementary question asked how many category A road defects there were currently. The Cabinet Member would respond to Councillor O'Sullivan with these details.