

FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 1st September 2021

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Harrow Lodge Sports Centre Development

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

Would the Cabinet Member confirm at what stage in the planning approval process for the new Harrow Lodge Sports Centre was it agreed that the spoil from the site would not be removed?

Answer

Harrow Lodge Leisure Centre opened its door to residents on 12 April 2021 and to the end of July 2021 there have already been 225k visits. The new Centre is receiving fantastic feedback about the design and the facilities available. This latest investment adds to Sapphire Ice and Leisure in Romford that opened in 2018, an extension in 2017 to Central Park Leisure Centre, doubling the size of the health and fitness facilities and with a further investment in sports and leisure facilities for residents, the new leisure centre in Rainham is due to commence construction in the coming weeks. I am not aware of any other borough investing so heavily in these facilities, providing opportunities for our residents to participate in physical activity to improve health and wellbeing.

The planning application for the Sports Centre involved the provision of the new centre, demolition of the old centre and redevelopment of the original site and car park to provide a new car park. At the time that the planning application was submitted and determined, it was not identified that the proposal would result in any additional spoil being deposited beyond the combined sites as indicated. However, subsequent to the necessary excavation work for the new centre being undertaken, it was identified that the restoration of the old site and new car park provision would not require all the spoil excavated. As landscaping was a reserved matter from the original application further planning applications were therefore submitted seeking to redistribute and landscape the spoil to areas of the park near to the new sports centre. These applications were approved in January and June 2021.

The Leader, Ward Councillors and officers met with residents on site on more than one occasion to listen to residents views about the landscaping proposals. As a direct result of resident feedback, the height of the landscaping was reduced close to the resident's properties by some 30 metres from their

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boundary. As a result, the spoil had to be spread over a wider area, hence the second planning application approved in June 2021.

I am very pleased to be able to update Members that the new car park being created on the site of the old Hornchurch Sports Centre and the landscaping works are currently on schedule to complete in October 2021. This will conclude the Harrow Lodge Leisure Centre development providing first class facilities for residents for decades to come.

A supplementary question asked for the actual project documentation to be made available and who agreed to any changes to the project. The Leader of the Council responded that he would investigate and write to Councillor Middleton re this matter.

Carbon Emissions in the Borough

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

At the Full Council Meeting held on 25 September 2019, a motion by the Upminster and Cranham Residents' Group to declare a climate emergency in Havering was defeated, with all Conservative Group members present voting against it. Since then, the number of councils across the country that have declared a climate emergency has now exceeded 300.

The Local Government Association (LGA) recently stated that local authorities '...through their policies and partnerships, they have strong influence over more than a third of emissions in their area.'

How many of the following measures recommended by the LGA to cut carbon emissions has the Administration currently taken?

- Measured the council's carbon emissions and developed a climate action plan
- Undertaken a policy and service review to align policy, spending and functions with net zero
- Run a net zero training and capacity building program
- Adopted a decision-making process that considers the carbon impact of its decisions

Answer

The Council measures carbon emissions in respect of operational buildings and reviews the published Borough emissions. These were recently considered by Cabinet. Officers are identifying how we can reduce emissions in an affordable way, improving efficiency as well as supporting the UK commitment to be carbon neutral.

I trust that all Members agree with the Leader's statement on the recent IPCC report and our commitment to publish the data we have and work to reduce emissions across the Borough. To encourage our partners and businesses

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locally to improve their environmental policies, the Leader has undertaken to sign up to the Amazon Climate Pledge.

The Leader and Cabinet are reviewing officers' actions and plans related to climate change through a series of targeted workshops and will receive a formal report on these on 10th November 2021 which will coincide with the International Conference on Climate change (COP26), being held in Glasgow. Real change requires a Council wide approach and development of a culture which will consider climate matters in all decisions. The revised plan will replace existing commitments outlined in the Council's third Climate Change Action Plan and build upon this strong heritage of protecting the environment.

The report requested by the Cabinet will complement work being undertaken by the Environmental O&S Topic Group and ensure that Havering is at the forefront of environmental management and to my knowledge, already incorporates the points you make whilst ensuring that the local community interests are protected.

A supplementary question asked why it had taken two years from the UCRA amendment for the Administration to wake up to the issue of the climate emergency. Councillor Dervish responded that he disagreed, stating that he wished to deal with climate issues properly and with a well thought through plan. The pandemic during the intervening period had also delayed progress.

Clean-up of Rainham Creek

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

On 16th June the Interim Highways Manager advised local councillors the Council does not have the equipment to clean-up Rainham Creek, but require and will arrange for a specialist contractor to look at the area and confirm when they are able to undertake the clean-up. Please provide an update on this matter.

Answer

We are making arrangements through our partners for this work to take place in October.

This is the best time to do this so that we minimise impact on users of the area.

A supplementary question made reference to the large number of tin cans in the creek and asked if these could be given to charity in some way.

Households in Temporary Accommodation

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

What are the current number of households that the Council have placed in all forms of temporary accommodation (whether in Borough or out of Borough) and

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the amount of spend from the General Fund on all forms of temporary accommodation in the financial year 2020/21?

Answer

As at the 17/08/21, the council had 17 households in hotels, mainly accommodated as part of the government's "Everyone In" initiative to support rough sleepers through the pandemic, 75 in our hostels, 110 in our HMOs, 620 in private sector leased properties, and 309 in Council properties used as temporary accommodation. This makes a total of 1131, which is one of the lowest levels the council has seen.

The General Fund total temporary accommodation expenditure for 2020-21 was £10,733,353. This was funded by income, mostly from tenants rents of £7,587,367 and government grants of £1,884,896. This makes the net total expenditure of £1,261,090.

A supplementary question asked for an update on the review of PSL tenants getting more permanent accommodation. Councillor Chapman responded that a report of the review had been taken at Cabinet and many families had now been moved to better accommodation. The new Homeless Assessment Centre had also helped with this.

Electrical Safety Certificates

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

From Councillor Brian Eagling

Due to Harvey Tyrell, aged 7, being electrocuted in the King Harold Public House, Harold Wood, will the Cabinet Member agree to write to Havering's clubs, pubs and restaurants to ask them to voluntarily display, in a prominent position, their Electrical Safety certificate as at present there is no requirement for them to do so by the Council? The General Public visiting these premises would then be able to see that the Electrical Safety tests had been carried out and that the Certificate is in date.

Answer

Yes, the Public Protection team has written to the clubs, pubs and restaurants within Havering to suggest and recommend they display the current electrical safety certificate in a prominent position. However, there is no legal requirement that states that electrical certificates shall be displayed and therefore we cannot enforce that premises do so.

A supplementary question queried if businesses could be asked to display their electrical safety certificates. Councillor Persaud confirmed that the Public Protection Team had written to pubs, clubs and restaurants in Havering about this matter.

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Free Swimming Sessions

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

Given the financial impact that the pandemic has had on the finances of both SLM and the Council, would the Leader of the Council confirm how the Council and/or SLM are able to afford to provide 60,000 free swimming sessions for children over the summer?

Answer

I am exceptionally proud that up to 60,000 free swimming sessions are available for Havering's young people during all school holidays up to and including summer 2022. Our young people, along with all young people in the country, have had to endure disruption to their education and their own growth and development, because the opportunities to participate and engage have been stifled due to this awful pandemic. Free swimming encourages young people to participate again in healthy physical activity.

Free swimming is at no cost to the Council. There is also no cost to SLM in providing free swimming. Following two weeks of very successful uptake of the free swimming offer – 95% in the first week and 90% in the second week of available free swims – SLM are seeing an increase in secondary spend, for example in the cafe and as a result this is reflected positively in their Havering financial account. SLM are also confident that free swimming will result in new members and increased participation at the centres.

A supplementary question asked how the contractor could supply the free swimming sessions given the loss of income. The Cabinet replied that there had not been any loss of income as the contract agreed with the contractor generated significant profit and had been a success.

Healthy Streets Scorecard

**7) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Gillian Ford**

As Havering has once again scored bottom on the Healthy Streets Scorecard, could the Leader of this Council confirm if the Administration have lobbied TfL for Active Travel funding?

Answer

The Scorecard published last month ranks Havering in 32nd place out of the 33 London local authorities for overall "healthy streets" action. London Borough of Hillingdon came last.

Havering has historically received funding for Active Travel measures from Transport for London (TfL)

Earlier this year, TfL announced that they had secured a financial settlement with the government to cover the period of June through to 11th December.

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Boroughs were advised to submit a funding programme for that period, which Havering did on 25th June.

Havering's submission included over £500k for Active Travel measures including cycle parking, measures to support sustainable travel to/from our schools, funding to deliver a further six school streets and to support the development of an Active Travel Strategy for the borough.

Unfortunately, TfL's financial situation has meant that boroughs have received a very small amount of funding to cover this period. This is very disappointing given the focus the Mayor has put on the Healthy Streets agenda in recent years.

We are awaiting guidance from TfL on funding settlements beyond 11th December, however the Council will continue to lobby TfL for additional funding to support the borough's Active Travel agenda.

A supplementary question asked what measures the Leader would be putting in place to get Havering off the bottom of the Healthy Streets scorecard. The Leader stated that the large size of Havering and the high level of car use meant the borough was always likely to be low down on this sort of scorecard.

Roadworks in Rainham & Wennington Ward and disruption to Bus Routes

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

When the bus route in Rainham and Wennington ward north of the A1306 is disrupted due to road works, all buses are withdrawn from this area, rather than rerouted for a temporary period. This is a serious problem for many people, particularly if the disruption extends over many days. What action can the council take to expedite road works and ensure a TfL bus service continues north of A1306 during road works?

Answer

The recent emergency works in Briscoe Road to repair a collapsed sewer required a full road closure and local diversion. The works were scheduled for 3 weeks and were completed on 20 August

Buses were unable to use the local diversion and did make investigations into alternatives routes, which were not possible due to low trees and parked vehicles.

This meant that the services had to curtail at A1306 for buses to continue safe operation.

If works are planned in advance, not emergency works, then there is time to make necessary accommodation works to cut back trees and put controls in place to enable buses to use alternate routes. Some of the borough's roads are not wide enough and may need parking to be displaced to enable buses to pass freely.

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member agreed that buses should not be stopped in the area and that roads should be resurfaced to avoid damage to local houses. The Cabinet Member responded that he was happy to support bus routes in Havering and around £10m p.a. had been invested in Havering's roads over the last four years.

Flood Prevention in the Borough

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

What measures are being taken by the Council and other statutory authorities to improve flood prevention in the Borough?

Answer

The Council in its role as Lead local flood authority (LLFA) works with all other relevant statutory authorities including Environment Agency, Thames Water, Anglian Water, National Rail, London Underground, TfL as well as neighbouring local authorities.

This work includes regular quarterly meetings to discuss and share as a group on going issues and ways for mitigating flood risk in respective areas.

Each flood risk management authority has assets they are responsible for and they all need to work together to assist surface water on its journey to nearest watercourse or treatment plant.

The council is looking at ways we can attenuate surface water flow before it reaches the sewer system, this helps by slowing down and not overloading the existing pipe system.

Studies have been commissioned in the past to look at flood alleviation schemes in some critical drainage areas and they have returned as not financially viable. Usually, a combination of the scale of engineering measure and number of properties directly flooded. We are looking at opportunities for more natural flood management within the catchment areas as opposed to dealing with the immediate areas being flooded. Interventions upstream to mitigate risk to properties down stream

The latest S19 report in respect of the flooding experienced in August 2020 has been published. We are in process of commissioning additional S19 reports in respect of the recent flooding experienced in June and July this year.

The council is also investing in additional deep cleaning of all drainage assets across the highway network, from the gully pot to the sewer.

This work will feed into the ongoing Climate Change programme and cabinet report for 10 November, as indicated previously in Question 2.

A supplementary question asked if flood prevention should be given a higher priority, particularly given incidents such as the recent flooding in Taunton Road about which a petition had been presented at the Council meeting. Could an interim report be prepared for Members on the areas in Havering that were most susceptible to flooding? Councillor Dervish stated that he understood the Member's concerns and that flooding had also occurred in his own ward. Maps

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available from the Environment Agency did show areas of flood prevalence. Reviews of Havering's drainage system did take place and a gully cleansing team was employed.

Vehicle Crossovers

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

Could the Cabinet Member please confirm the extent of the backlog of vehicle crossover applications from residents and what is the average time taken in 2021 from when the application was submitted to when the formal quotation was accepted and work completed?

Answer

The current backlog of outstanding vehicle crossovers is 63, this has reduced from the 200 in March 2021.

224 crossovers have been completed since 1 April and we are currently completing between 60-80 crossovers a month

The aim is to bring the turnaround time down to 8-10 weeks – from initial enquiry to completion of works.

As of 20th August we are providing estimates/ quotes within 3 weeks, previously at 10 weeks

The average time from payment to works completed is now at 10 weeks, previously 12 weeks

In regard to overall process the turnaround time of 22 weeks has been reduced to 13 weeks and aim to hit our target of 10 weeks by October 21

We do need to acknowledge that our investment of £10M per year on highway infrastructure has generated additional requests for vehicle crossovers, especially when they are eligible for a 25% discount.

In addition to this the recent pandemic has impacted the process, with a combination of contractor and staff absences isolating during this time. In turn delaying and increasing the backlog times.

A supplementary question asked why there had been delays in the installation of some crossovers and the Cabinet Member agreed to investigate if Cllr Wise could provide details.

Impact of Flooding in Havering

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

During the last few months, various areas in Havering have suffered from very serious flooding. Would the Cabinet Member confirm what specific measures he has put in place to minimise the effects of flooding in these areas and to ensure that the Thames Water drainage system is fit for purpose?

Answer

The Council in its role as Lead local flood authority (LLFA) works with all other relevant statutory authorities including the Environment Agency, Thames Water, Anglian Water, National Rail, London Underground, TfL as well as neighbouring local authorities.

The existing drainage system was designed and constructed for a 30 year return period, which was 50 years ago.

Thames Water are obliged to carry out investment across their asset infrastructure, there are ongoing studies/ programmes to primarily deal with foul sewerage issues but there are also initiatives to subsidise opportunities for removing surface water from the drainage system, such as sustainable urban drainage solutions

The recent intense rainfall events have demonstrated in different areas across London how susceptible we are to surface water flooding.

There is only a finite amount of water which can enter the sewer and original highway design usually allowed for some attenuation within the highway extents We work with Thames Water to ensure they can carry out sewer repairs as soon as possible, in addition to any sewer cleaning. In addition to this we do regularly clean highway drainage in our identified hot spots, especially when we get some advance notice of weather warnings

The latest S19 report in respect of the flooding experienced in August 2020 has been published. We are in process of commissioning additional S19 reports in respect of the recent flooding experienced in June and July this year.

The council is also investing in additional deep cleaning of all drainage assets across the highway network, from the gully pot to the sewer.

This work will feed into the ongoing Climate Change programme and cabinet report for 10 November, as indicated previously in Question 2.

A supplementary question asked for details of the position with flooding in Abbs Cross Road which had been reported to the Leader on two occasions. The Leader would check on this situation and respond to all Members.

Hornchurch Football Club

**12) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Chris Wilkins**

The Upminster Councillors were as delighted as the rest of Havering by the very great success of our home team in the recent cup final, and were also very pleased that the Council are acknowledging this by organising an open bus ride and reception for the team.

To give then a lasting memory of their achievement, will the Council update the antiquated showers currently used by Hornchurch Football Club?

Answer

I too add my congratulations, as previously, to Hornchurch Football Club on their tremendous achievement in winning the FA Trophy. A quite outstanding effort by all involved with the Football Club and one of immense pride for the Borough.

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The Council has recently agreed a long term lease with the Football Club. This will provide the Club with security for the foreseeable future and the ability for them to secure external grants and funding to invest in what is important for them. As an example, the Football Stadia Improvement Fund is funded by the Premier League and awards grants to stadiums in the English football pyramid.

A supplementary question asked if the showers at the football club would be upgraded. The Leader of the Council responded that the football club was free to seek external funds or the Opposition could propose a budget amendment to fund this work.

CCTV in the Borough

**13) To the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Safety (Councillor Viddy Persaud)
From Councillor Graham Williamson**

An FOI request of May this year highlighted that some 26% of the Council's monitored 318 cameras were not operational. Apart from this hampering the MET's ongoing fight against crime, what will Council be doing to rectify this situation and will it recompense Council tenants for their CCTV charges when not working?

Answer

As Members are aware, we are in the process of reviewing the entire CCTV system across the Borough, but, due to a change in lead officer in June, the programme of work is delayed by approximately 2 months.

In reply to the Council question, the FOI information provided in May was a snapshot in time and referred to cameras across the whole of the Borough and not just those in Council Housing locations. If it is found that any cameras in our Housing areas were not working for 3 x months continuously, arrangements will be made for respective tenants to be compensated.

It is important for Council to note, that the CCTV service is full cost recovery and whilst a percentage of cameras may not be operational at a point in time, there continue to be revenue costs to cover 24/7 staffing, transmission leases, licence fees and maintenance costs.

A supplementary question asked if refunds for CCTV charges were actually being made. Councillor Persaud stated that she would get further details on this from officers and pass these on to Councillor Williamson.

Strategic Plan for Parks

14) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)

From Councillor Paul McGeary

When will the Strategic Plan for Parks be published?

Answer

The Parks Strategy is currently being revised. Covid-19 has seen a big impact on how public spaces are regarded and utilised, with more residents working from home and therefore using their local spaces more regularly, as well as more emphasis being placed on outdoor activities and general public health. Havering is proud to be home to 16 Green Flag parks, with two achieving this status in the last 12 months. The Parks capital programme will see £1.6m invested into projects this year, and similar next year. Projects are wide ranging, from play area and car park improvements through to drainage improvements and signage installations.

A public consultation will take place which will then inform the objectives and actions in the document. Officers from Environment and Communications are currently planning the consultation which will take place shortly. The intention is to take a final draft of the strategy to Cabinet by the end of the year.

A supplementary question asked if the Parks Strategy would include the installation of secure boundaries at the nature reserve in Dagnam Park. The Leader of the Council responded that improvement works would be subject to consultation and it was not possible to guarantee specific improvements prior to consultation.

“Love Clean Streets App”

15) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)

From Councillor Gerry O’Sullivan

The Council encourage residents and members to use the “Love clean streets” App. Would the Cabinet Member explain why so many jobs are closed down on the system before the work has actually been completed and who is actually responsible for monitoring the system to ensure that the information on it is accurate?

Answer

The Love Clean Streets app was introduced as a way for our residents, fellow Members, or the many people who visit our borough for work or leisure to quickly report matters of concern to us. It has worked for people, and we are grateful to those who help us keep our streets and rural areas free of litter and fly-tipping.

However, we agree the user experience is not sufficient and therefore we have been undertaking a review of the system and a decision has been made to move it to the new CRM as a part of the Council’s ICT investment fund. The Digital Vision Project Team are developing our own version of a reporting tool,

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which can be easily amended to meet the needs and wishes of our customers and will provide 360 feedback on reports raised.

Keeping our borough clean is one this Administrations key objectives, and the development of a new CRM with increased functionality for all users is another measure to help achieving this.

A supplementary question asked for details of the cost and value for money of the app system. The Cabinet Member stated that he would write to Councillor O'Sullivan with details of the cost.