

FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 17th November 2021

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Blue Badge Enforcement

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

The Council have recently launched a campaign to clamp down on the fraudulent use of blue badges. Would the Cabinet Member confirm what action has been taken to date and provide details of the outcomes from such actions?

Answer

In cases where Civil Enforcement Officers suspect the fraudulent use or misuse of a disabled persons blue badge, they will ask the user to disclose the badge and conduct local checks, issuing Penalty Charge Notices and making referrals to the Council's fraud team and/or the police if required.

We are now working in conjunction with a specialist fraud company, BBFI or Blue Badge Fraud Investigators, to conduct targeted covert enforcement operations in the borough. Following the completion of procurement and contracting processes, ground level research and engagement with third party organisations targeted operations will be commencing in the next few weeks continuing through to next year.

Offenders can expect to be prosecuted with both misuse and fraudulent of a blue badge carrying criminal convictions with a potential prison sentence or fine of up to £5,000 for those found guilty of fraud.

BBFI have worked with other local authorities and with a good success rate, at the London Boroughs of Waltham Forest, Redbridge and Westminster they have secured between 40 and 53 criminal convictions in recent years.

Officer will bring a report back to the Highways Advisory Committee on the success of the operation once any court hearings are concluded and will include details in the annual parking report. Regular communications sharing updates and successes will also be provided to continue to highlight the issue, the fact the council is clamping down and to dissuade would-be perpetrators from the practice.

Allotment Leases

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

Residents' Association Councillors have been contacted by allotment plot holders concerned that new leases being proposed by Havering Council do not give their allotment sites Statutory protection, and therefore leave the sites vulnerable to being closed and redeveloped. Would the Cabinet Member for Environment clarify what the position is regarding the new contracts and whether Statutory protection will be provided for all of Havering's allotment sites?

Answer

Havering is very fortunate to have such a wonderful selection of allotment sites allowing residents to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

The sites in the borough are long standing and well established, bringing communities together and enabling residents the option of living more sustainable lives.

It is the intention of this administration to increase the number of allotments in the borough to not only add to the community benefits but also as a measure to help respond to the climate change challenge. This will be a feature in the forthcoming parks strategy consultation.

The current renewal programme of Allotment Agreements (leases) does not reference or affect the status of any of the sites. They are renewals of the previous agreements with no amendments that affect the use of the land and are being completed in partnership with the various allotment societies.

Out of the 27 allotment sites in Havering 23 are statutory and 4 have temporary status and this has been the case since they were first created.

Parking Enforcement in High Street, Rainham

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

Would the Cabinet Member for Environment please explain the parking enforcement regime in operation for Rainham High Street?

Answer

The Pay & Display bays in Upminster Road South are operational 8am to 6:30pm Monday to Saturday inclusive. Parking is limited for one hour, which is free, with no return within 2 hours. This policy was brought in by this administration to aid and assist the local businesses in their recovery from this awful pandemic. Civil Enforcement Officers patrol this location daily to ensure restrictions are complied with and safe parking practices are in place.

As with previous years there will be periods of free pay and display parking on Saturday's for customers visiting local shops within across the borough this year starting on 27th November 2021 and running through to Christmas.

CCTV provision in Havering

- 4) **To the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Safety (Councillor Viddy Persaud)**
From Councillor Paul McGeary

When will a Cabinet Report be brought forward outlining the proposals for a revised and improved CCTV provision across the Borough?

Answer

Our officers presented a CCTV project update report to O&S Crime and Disorder Sub-Group in September outlining the range of work that has been undertaken to date and setting out an indicative timeframe.

This work includes a complete audit of CCTV equipment and systems across the borough, identification of premises for a CCTV Control Hub as part of the Council's facilities rationalisation programme, and work to maximise efficiencies through collaboration with the Council's fibre infrastructure programme.

Officers are now finalising work on the most efficient models for delivery of CCTV within the Borough and will be presenting a final report to Cabinet early in the New Year.

Supply of HGV Drivers

- 5) **To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)**
From Councillor Martin Goode

With the growing concern over the National shortage of HGV drivers, can the Cabinet member for the Environment, please provide an assurance that this situation will not impact on both the quality and the availability of HGV Drivers that this Council currently uses to provide essential front line services?

Answer

The Road Haulage Associations survey of its members estimates a shortage of more than 100,000 drivers across the UK, and as such we are concerned with the potential disruption this could cause to our front-line service delivery and Officers are closely monitoring the impacts on contractors and their business continuity plan suitability.

Through partnership working with our contractors' officers have ensured Business Continuity Plans are robust, receiving confirmation from both the key Highways and Waste contractors that risk levels are currently at a tolerable level.

Officers have also increased the pool of agencies our contractors use to recruit HGV drivers from and worked with them to ensure pay rates remain competitive within the context of market demand.

Additionally, officers have introduced a fast tracked LGV driver training program which will lead to increased driver availability once trained, whilst also advancing

ordered materials with longer lead times such as street lighting parts and lanterns.

Ten HGV drivers are employed directly by the Council in the street cleansing, grounds maintenance and highways DSO services and these are all long serving members of staff. Should any of these choose to leave, agency drivers will be recruited in the short term to minimise any impact on the operation.

A further ten HGV licence holders are permanently employed within Transport (oneSource) and are deployed seasonally to assist with winter gritting when required.

Dumping of Waste in Hornchurch Country Park

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

Would the Cabinet Member explain why soil was dumped in Hornchurch Country Park that contained pieces of glass, plastic and other debris that is both harmful and a serious health hazard to both children and animals?

Answer

A sustainable approach to reusing soil has been adopted by the Council and I can confirm that when Officers completed the sift of soil at the point of placement, no hazardous materials were found in any used in Hornchurch Country Park.

This is soil that, rather than having been dumped, is being recycled from other council-led works and is being used to improve the surface of the field by levelling it out.

Officers check the soil before it is used to make sure no harmful objects are present and are checking periodically to ensure that material is not dumped at the site by persons unknown.

These checks will continue until the grass is established.

Reporting Dangerous Conditions on Roads and Pavements

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

Following an incident in Deyncourt Gardens (Cranham Ward) in February this year, where a car left the road in icy conditions and demolished the front wall of a house, I asked officers to look into providing a fast-time telephone number on the Havering Council website, for reporting dangerous stretches of roadway or pavement. I was told that this would be looked into, but there is still no number currently shown. Bearing in mind that we are now coming into the winter period, would the Cabinet Member commit to providing such a number on the website by the end of November this year?

Answer

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The Council can be contacted 24 hours a day. During normal working hours residents can use the general enquiries line of 01798 434343 and out of hours can call the out of hours emergency contact number of 01708 433999. Where accidents have occurred residents should call the emergency services on 999 first.

The Councils winter service standby operation started on 1 November and is ready 24/7 to respond to forecourts of snow and icy weather and grit the roads and pavement after those conditions are experienced.

The service works in priority order to ensure our resources are targeted to areas of greatest need first. This includes the busiest areas, transport hubs, hospital and emergency services depots and main roads. This ensures vital services can continue to operate; however an emergency call out service is also operational.

As stated above, where an accident does unfortunately occur, or where residents wish to report emergency situations, they can contact the Council's out of hours duty officer via 01708 433999. This number is published on the Councils website (<https://www.haverling.gov.uk/contactus>), about halfway down the page and under the heading "out of hours emergencies") and is always staffed out of hours.

Coronavirus Vaccination Programme

**8) To the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Care Services
(Councillor Jason Frost)
From Councillor David Durant**

Please can the Cabinet Member for Public Health provide details of the Executive decision to promote the Pfizer jab or is the Pfizer jab being promoted in Council publications without Executive and Cabinet approval?

Answer

The Council's constitution does not require every communication made by the Council to be the subject of an Executive Decision.

In January 2021, Council received a report from the Chief Executive describing the importance of Covid-19 vaccination, which at that time was only just starting. On that occasion, Council resolved by a clear majority vote to support and promote the roll out of the vaccination programme including the Pfizer jab. Subsequently the safety and benefits of vaccination have been demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt.

Vaccination has been a hugely successful element of the national and local response to the pandemic that every member should be actively supporting and the Council's published outbreak management plan makes clear the central role of vaccination in our response to the pandemic.

Any additional costs incurred in promoting the NHS coronavirus vaccination programme have been charged against monies provided by central government as the coronavirus outbreak management fund – the Council's use of COMF has been set out in a number of Executive Decisions.

Review of the Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy

- 9) **To the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Safety (Councillor Viddy Persaud)**
From Councillor Tele Lawal

When will the review of the Violence Against Women And Girls Strategy be completed?

Answer

The current 3 year Havering Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy was approved by Cabinet on the 17th of April 2019 and runs to April 2022.

There is a dedicated work programme in place that is monitored through the multi-agency VAWG strategic group. The Havering Community Safety Partnership (HCSP) receives regular reports on performance against the work programme.

This year we have seen new legislation which impacts on how we must respond to violence against women and girls.

The Domestic Abuse Act received royal assent in April 2021 and the government launched its "Tackling violence against women and girls strategy" in April 2021.

Work on the new Havering violence against women and girls strategy will be led by the Havering Community Safety Partnership and will begin in January 2022, following the completion of the annual strategic assessment of crime and disorder in Havering.

The plan will be developed in partnership with the members of the VAWG strategic partnership which includes the Council, Police, Health, Probation and the voluntary sector.

The final action plan will be presented to the HCSP in April 2022 before presentation to Cabinet.

Beam Park Station

- 10) **To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)**
From Councillor Natasha Summers

Will the Executive use the non-delivery of a Beam Park station as grounds to appeal the low parking provision for Havering in the London Plan?

Answer

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The administration and officers of this Council remain committed to the delivery of the new station at Beam Park as do our key partners the GLA, TfL and the developers in the area such as Countryside and L&Q.

The funding for the new station is provided by the GLA, TfL and Countryside. That remains intact. The issue with the DfT centres around an indemnity for financial loss as a result of building a new station at this location.

To that end, discussions between all parties continue with a shared goal to agreeing a position so that the station can be built as expected.

The administration robustly challenged the parking standards set out in the London Plan throughout its preparation and during the examination in public. The London Plan was adopted in March 2021 by the GLA and cannot now be legally challenged.

The parking standards set out within the London Plan for outer London Opportunity Areas is 0 – 0.5 spaces per unit. Therefore the standards in which developers will submit planning applications within this range will remain unchanged regardless of Beam Park station being delivered.

Staff Pay and Productivity

**11) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Gerry O’Sullivan**

The Government have pledged that it wants the UK to be a high wage, high skill, and high productivity economy. Would the Leader of the Council confirm what steps this Council is taking to bring this about and how the productivity of staff is measured?

Answer

The council has a people performance management framework to maximise the impact of our work and the outcomes for our residents and deploys tools such as Verto to monitor the delivery of projects against budget and projected outcomes.

Additionally, independent measures of Council performance and productivity demonstrates that Havering Council is a productive Council delivering for residents. The IMPOWER Index is a benchmarking tool which grades councils on productivity (outcome value per £). Using publicly available data sets and looking at performance through six different lenses, it allows councils to compare performance against other authorities, and drill down into their own data. Successive IMPOWER Index reports have identified Havering as the most productive local authority in London and in the top five in the country.

The council is currently refreshing its people strategy which defines how we will build the capability, skills and culture we need for our future workforce, and in turn will ensure we are a modern, progressive and diverse council focused on

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achieving the best outcomes for our communities. Our approach will include a review of our current performance management framework via which individual performance is assessed, managed and rated against agreed performance objectives. This is in addition to the ongoing conversations between managers and their direct reports/teams where any concerns about under-performance are raised and addressed.

In terms of the UK economy, we are looking at how the Council spends money so that we can maximise spend in the UK. One example of this is the Buy British approach being adopted by our JV with Wates Residential. The redevelopment of Napier and New Plymouth Houses in Rainham has a £32m development value. Over 90% of that has gone to UK based companies. This means that over £29m of business has been given to those UK companies. The JV will continue to invest in UK and local companies and target further development contracts with them.

Pay & Display Machines

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

Can the Cabinet Member please confirm that the ability to use cash for parking in pay and display machines will continue to be available in all locations?

Answer

I can confirm that there are currently no plans to remove the payment of cash at pay and display machines. Customers wishing to can also make payment via the Council's cashless payment system operated by RingGo.

New ticket machines will also include contactless card payment and the Council is currently reviewing the use of existing PayPoint terminals provided in shops as a means of paying for parking, maximising the offer and convenience to residents and visitors.

Flag Raising Event

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

Does the Council Leader believe Havering Council is institutionally racist, and if not why did he invite attendees to an unconstitutional Town Hall flag raising event to hold a one minute silence and "take the knee" against racism in Havering as many anti-racists believe this divisive gesture undermines staff morale and community relations?

Answer

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As usual, you are able to turn of a positive event for our staff and community into a negative. In fact our own BAME Staff Forum worked hard to ensure we celebrated Black History Month and they offered an excellent programme. This was done with others in our community. It was up to those who attend how they supported this, be that taking a knee or through some other way.

With regards to the raising of flags – the answer is the same as the last time you asked, unless specified in national guidance and our constitution, they are agreed at the discretion of the Chief Executive. It is right for us to make sure we recognise important times like this and other occasions so that we show we are an inclusive organisation respecting all our staff from all backgrounds.

Therefore, I would suggest it is you who is being divisive and undermining staff morale and community relations.

Proposed Beam Park Station

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

Will the Leader of the Council make a statement about the likely implications for the Borough and its residents following the Department of Transport's refusal to approve the proposed Beam Park Station?

Answer

Regrettably, the delivery challenges for Beam Park station at present are a result of poor project management and business case planning from the GLA, leading to the Department for Transport raising concerns about the station's impact on the viability of the rail line.

Having said that, the administration and officers of this Council remain committed to the delivery of the new station at Beam Park as do our key partners the GLA, TfL and the developers in the area such as Countryside and L&Q. The funding for the new station is provided by the GLA, TfL and Countryside. That remains intact.

The issue with the DfT centres around an indemnity for financial loss as a result of building a new station and concerns the government have with the business case the GLA prepared at this location.

To that end, discussions between all parties continue with a shared goal to agreeing a position so that the station can be built as expected.

Parking Meters in the Borough

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

There appears to be a substantial number of parking meters in the borough that are currently out of action. Would the Cabinet Member advise what steps

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are being taken to get these metres back into use, together with how much income the Council estimates that it has lost during this extended period when the metres have not been working?

Answer

It is regrettable that some of our Pay & Display machines are currently not working and the main reason for this is mindless vandalism, deliberate damage and attempted theft.

There is a shortage of microchips manufactured in Asia due to factories closing during the pandemic and there has been difficulties in obtaining mechanical spare parts for repairs to the machines. In some cases, machines have been out of order due to the manufacturer closing its UK offices, and parts not being previously available.

However, the parking service have been able to source some alternative parts which has enabled repairs to some of the machines. Metric who supplies most Havering's pay & display machines, and their engineers along with the parking team are currently co-ordinating requirements to fix their machines and add in security modifications on the machines that have been subject to on-going vandalism/theft.

Additionally, Officers are using spare parts from machines than cannot otherwise be repaired to redistribute working components to keep other machines running.

A Capital investment exercise is already underway to procure around 120 new pay and display machines. These new machines will replace ones that have been subjected to consistent vandalism and theft, as the newer style machines are more robust and secure. Whilst this procurement has been underway for some time, unfortunately it has been delayed as a result of a shortage of machines coming in to the country and a lack of interest in the market.

It is estimated that up to £100k has been lost annually due to vandalised, theft and broken machines.