

FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 23rd March 2022

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Street Cleaning Regime

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

The Leader of the Council in his budget statement committed to improving services. In January this year, the street cleaning regime changed from each street being cleaned every 10 working days to every 15 working days. Would the Cabinet Member explain how this is a service improvement?

Answer

The COVID-19 pandemic affected all parts of lives, and this included the services the Council provide. In order to keep our staff and residents safe during this awful time, the Council implemented new rules for staff to follow should they test positive for COVID-19 or have an underlying health condition. For the street cleansing team, this resulted in proportion of both our permanent and agency staff isolating as risk assessments proved that they were at danger of being severely affected if they were to test positive for COVID-19.

The effectiveness of the team was affected during this time, and therefore in September 2021 it was decided that a Deep clean of the whole Borough was needed in order to bring all areas up to the required standards that we saw before the pandemic. This Autumn Blitz was part of the Covid recovery plan to bring the Borough up to required standard we expect residents to see. This was completed at the beginning of January 2022.

Following this coordinated operation, a new deployment model for the cleansing of residential roads has been developed.

This area-based approach to cleansing focuses the Council's finite resources on roads with the greatest levels of demand, and whilst most residential roads are serviced every 15 working days, roads which need more frequent attention are visited weekly, and in some instances daily.

Town Centres will continue to be resourced and managed as they were previously but with enhanced supervision. In addition, there remain teams dedicated to cleaning shop parades, emptying litter bins, removing fly tipping, servicing rural roads and industrial area, cleaning footpaths, removing graffiti, and mechanically sweeping main roads.

A supplementary question asked if the change in cleaning frequency from 10 to 15 days has taken place. The Cabinet Member responded that he had ensured that roads needing the most attention would receive this.

Speed Restrictions in North Ockendon

2) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish) From Councillor Ron Ower

The Council has been inundated with emails regarding the “restrictions put in at Ockendon Rd, North Ockendon “to reduce speeding through this area”.

Would the Cabinet member please confirm when the 30 mph signage that was requested last year between the two chicanes will be in place?

Will he also confirm that as a matter of urgency our suggestion of a mini roundabout at the same junction of Fen Lane and Ockendon Rd is put in place to also assist in reducing speed?

Answer

Following a decision by the Portfolio Holder in 2019, the permanent implementation of the traffic calming scheme in Ockendon Road North took place in April 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic funding was then staggered and allocated in two parts by TfL over the 2020/21 and 2021/22 period. The first element of funding was used to implement the civils works and the latter was used to undertake the legal works for the change in speed limit only.

Regrettably due to an unanticipated delay the 40 to 30mph speed limit change did not occur at the same time as the civils work due to the legalities around the traffic order process.

As a result of the statutory consultation for the speed limit change element of the scheme, officers have received 10 responses and the outcome of these responses will be provided to members by the end of March. An Executive Decision is also being prepared for the Portfolio Holder to discuss the officer recommendations. Pending the Executive Decision, the speed limit element of the scheme will be implemented thereafter.

With regards to the request for a mini roundabout at the junction of Fen Lane and Ockendon Road officers can confirm this was added to Calendar Brief on 21st December 2021, but this would be subject to funding from TfL.

A supplementary question asked if preference would be given to a mini-roundabout and if ward Councillors would be kept advised. In response, the Cabinet Member reiterated that works would be brought forward if TfL funding was available. The Cabinet Member was happy to keep local Councillors advised regarding any consultation.

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Allocation of Homes in the Rainham Area

**3) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman)
From Councillor Jeffrey Tucker**

How have houses been allocated on the 2 Dovers Corner developments, north and south of A1306, (Council/Wates and Persimmon Homes) and on the old library site (Persimmon Homes) on Rainham Broadway?

Answer

The planning process has secured 51 affordable homes at Knightswood Place, 16 homes are for rent and tenants would be allocated by the Council. 35 homes are for shared ownership with nomination rights for the Council. The affordable housing is being provided by Estuary Housing Association.

6 affordable rented homes will be provided at Broadway, with tenants allocated by the Council.

A total of 197 affordable homes will be provided at Napier/New Plymouth. Of these, 126 will be Council rented homes and 71 low cost home ownership, with allocation determined by the Council.

The rented housing will be allocated to local households in housing need on the Housing Register according to the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme. The nomination rights remain in perpetuity and lettings are monitored through the Housing Choice and Allocations Team.

For local home ownership dwellings the sales will be targeted at applicants with a local connection who have applied on the Council's new Housing Opportunity Register – which provides options for households who are not eligible for social rented housing in the borough.

A supplementary question asked how many of the homes would be given to local people. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that properties would be allocated in accordance with the Council's allocation scheme. Existing estate residents would have the option to take up rights to return to the new properties.

Flood mitigation measures for the Taunton Road area of Harold Hill

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

On 17th November 2021, the Council resolved to call on the Executive to review earlier work completed to assess the flood risk, review the complex mechanisms that lead to flood risk and to report on options to mitigate, reduce or remove the risk in the Taunton Road area of Harold Hill. When will the Executive be able to deliver the report?

Answer

A technical review of the detailed work previously completed has been undertaken by officers. The study outlines the flooding mechanism and offers several options that may be implemented to reduce the flood risk in the area.

Often, as is the case here, flood risk (and actual flooding) is a result of several complex mechanisms, and factors include catchment, rain intensity, recent rainfall and topography and no single or simple solution is available.

The options set out in the report do show that flood risk in this area could be reduced, however, indicative costs for the various options are over £1m due to the extent of works.

The Council has investigated, and will continue to investigate, funding opportunities as well as continue to work with other agencies such as other boroughs with shared catchments, the Environment Agency and Thames Water, to reduce the overall flood risk in the area and support collaborative work

Unfortunately there is no funding to progress work at this time so the scheme remains on the Council's forward programme pending funding streams being identified.

A briefing to the Lead Member, setting out the current position, will be provided before the end of the month.

A supplementary question asked what attempts had been made to obtain funding from alternative sources and if Members could see the report on the previously completed work. The Cabinet Member responded that regular lobbying for funding was undertaken and he would ask officers to circulate the report in the flooding work.

Dropped Kerb, Kingsbridge Close

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

Could the Cabinet Member please confirm, why a resident at 11 Kingsbridge Close who submitted an application for a dropped kerb on 3rd May 2021, yet 10 months later they still haven't yet received any reply or update on their application and why a resident at 10 Kingsbridge Close have paid £11,000 for a dropped kerb in January, but are also still waiting to hear on any progress?

Answer

The applications for both 10 and 11 Kingsbridge Close are complex and fall outside the dropped crossing policy and procedure. However, given the nature of the applications they are being given full consideration by officers for approval suitability.

Both the applications are for long access (vehicular) tracks across grassed amenity space and the extent of construction is well beyond a normal vehicular crossover.

Both properties are located a long distance from the road and require access routes to be built across the large green amenity areas.

The application for 10 Kingsbridge Close was approved and construction is being arranged. The applicant is aware that construction will be completed within two months.

The application at 11 Kingsbridge Close is currently being assessed. This will include a local resident consultation and estimate of costs, before an Executive Decision is brought forward for member approval.

A supplementary question asked if the vehicle crossover policy would be updated. The Cabinet Member responded that the policy was being reviewed but that open space would need to be balanced with the needs of residents.

Reactive Road and Pavement Repairs

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

Would the Cabinet Member confirm the amount of monies spent on reactive road and pavement repairs in each of the last five years?

Answer

A financial analysis has been undertaken this month (March 2022), and the reactive maintenance expenditure over the past five years is recorded as follows:

For the year 2021/22 the expenditure was - £3,005,035

For 2020/21 - £2,943,130

For 2019/20 - £1,556,405

For 2018/19 - £2,036,304 and

For 2017/18 - £1,922,118

It should be noted that any underspend in reactive maintenance is allocated to preventative planned maintenance.

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A supplementary question asked how effective the decision making on the highways repair programme had been. The Cabinet Member responded that he did not agree that programme was inefficient.

Hoppy Hall Car Park

**7) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Ron Ower**

Would the Cabinet member please confirm when exactly the barrier will be replaced at Hoppy Hall Car Park, Off Corbets Tey Rd, Upminster ?

We have been complaining about this for almost a year.

With the Car Park open at night it has attracted anti-social behaviour much to the annoyance of local residents

Answer

I believe Cllr Ower's question refers to issues raised in September 2021 relating to the entry and exit barrier system being damaged and requiring full replacement.

A complete new system is required to replace the broken barrier arm and a works order was raised immediately with the maintenance company in September 2021, and they have been contacted regularly to arrange for the works to be completed but are experiencing delays in their supply chain.

The Council's supplier has confirmed they will be commencing the works in early April 2022. In the meantime, the Environment Tactical team are patrolling the car park and the Police have been made aware too of the anti-social behaviour occurring.

We are also looking at putting up a re-deployable CCTV camera at the location for littering, fly-tipping and ASB but this is likely to take a few weeks due to backlog.

The height barrier was repeatedly left unlocked by users of the car park who require access to replace the bottle banks and cleansing of the car park.

A supplementary question asked if Councillors would be kept informed of developments and the Cabinet Member agreed this would be the case.

CCTV and Community Warden Service

**8) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman)
From Councillor Graham Williamson**

There are tenants and leaseholders in my ward who are being charged a CCTV and Community Warden service that they do not receive. They are not part of the estate concerned (Cherry Tree) but are merely on the same street

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but over 200+ yards away and obviously quite separate. Why is this continuing despite the Council being advised of the anomaly?

Answer

Traditionally, the maisonettes at 80-84 Cherry Tree Lane are all part of the same estate, and that is set out in the leases of those properties.

More broadly, if a property is located on an estate that has the benefit of CCTV coverage, regardless of where the cameras are situated, a resident is liable to contribute towards the cost of providing this service to the estate.

A supplementary question asked if the unfairness of the current charges was being investigated by officers. The Cabinet Member responded that efforts were always made to allocate charges in a fair and transparent way and refunds could be made at the end of the year if necessary. A consultation on the provision of CCTV would be undertaken with tenants and leaseholders during the summer months.

Road and Footpath Resurfacing in the Gooshays Ward

**9) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Paul McGeary**

Will the Cabinet Lead Member set out the number of roads and footpaths planned for resurfacing in the Gooshays Ward for the next 3 years?

Answer

The council is currently working to a three-year HIP programme for road and pavement resurfacing which commenced two years ago.

Since the start of the programme 39 miles of pavements and 55 miles of roads have been resurfaced borough wide.

The current programme, albeit subject to change includes 2 pavements and 4 roads in Gooshays wards.

The prioritisation process places no geographical weighting on a street's inclusion on the programme.

The services are currently undertaking a borough wide condition survey for the next three-year programme due to commence in 2023, in which the condition of every street will be reassessed. This data will be used to review and recalibrate the remaining programme as well as report progress. The survey will be completed by the end of April 2022.

A supplementary question asked why there were so many examples of poor surfaces in Harold Hill. The Cabinet Member explained that it was not just the

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surface condition that had to be considered but the structural condition of the road, how the road was used and safety issues.

Grass Verges

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

Could the Cabinet Member please confirm, when the consultation will start and go out to the residents that are impacted by the grass verge recommendations report, that was approved at the February highways committee meeting

Answer

A report to Highways Advisory Committee was recently submitted seeking approval to commence the informal consultation / resident engagement for the conversion of several grass verges into additional parking spaces with the committee recommending that the engagement exercise should commence.

I am pleased to report I have given approval this week for the consultation to commence.

A supplementary question asked if ward Councillors would be advised of the consultation deadline and the Cabinet Member confirmed that this would be the case.

Council Overspend

**11) To the Cabinet Member for Finance & Property (Councillor Roger Ramsey)
From Councillor Ray Morgon**

Would the Cabinet Member provide an up to date statement on the Council's overspend this financial year broken down between directorates, together with an explanation as to why it occurred in each case?

Answer

The period 10 monitor has recently been sent to all Members and shows a projected overspend of £10m at year end. The Council is working hard to reduce this overspend through containing costs and only spending where it is absolutely necessary.

The overspend is driven by the well documented rise in social care costs through increased client numbers and provider costs.

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Adults is projecting a £5.8m overspend due to additional demand. The Council is working closely with its Health partners to secure funding to help mitigate this pressure

Childrens are projecting a £5.2m overspend again driven by a significant increase in client numbers and referrals resulting in higher numbers of looked after children. There is an overspend on passenger transport due to increased clients requiring support as part of their health care plans. A proportion of the costs of passenger transport can be charged to the COMF grant which will improve the outturn position in this area

A number of savings proposals were also delayed due to lockdown. These are being closely monitored and will now be fully delivered in 2022/23.

These pressures were partially offset by an underspend on treasury management as delays to the Capital programme meant we have not needed to externally borrow to the extent originally planned in March 2021.

A supplementary question how the predicted overspend would be reduced. The Cabinet Member responded that overspends were projections by officers and often changed during the year. The Government had relaxed limits on the use of the Covid grant and so this could be used to cover the overspend on children's transport. There was also expected support from the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group for ongoing care costs which would also serve to reduce the overall overspend.

Weight Restrictions in East Hall Lane

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

Local councillors were told once planning enforcement action finished, highway officers would be free to make a decision to remove East Hall Lane from the 7.5t weight zone as the most cost effective way to stop HGVs entering East Hall Lane from Wennington Road and Village.

Now that the enforcement action has concluded, highway officers are delaying a decision due to other priorities. Will the Cabinet Member for Highways agree to progress removing East Hall Lane from the weight zone to prevent future problems, as businesses are regularly setting-up and operating without planning permission in East Hall Lane.

Answer

The Council cannot remove the scheme until the road condition is improved and the estimated costs of repairs is circa £1m for which there is currently no funding available. However officers are currently working through options on whether any funding for such a scheme can be secured. Unfortunately though, the scheme cannot be progressed until the road condition is resolved.

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I'd like to remind Cllr Durant that HGV's can of course legitimately access East Hall Lane if they are accessing a business or residential property on the road, and that the current weight restriction helps to protect the road surface from further damage and the risk that would present to motorists.

A supplementary question asked if the Councillor a site meeting to discuss the issues and the Cabinet Member stated he was happy to arrange this via officers.

Parks Strategy

**13) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Paul McGeary**

When will the long-awaited Draft Parks Strategy be published as it has been in the Forward Plan for many months and now it appears to have been withdrawn?

Answer

Thank you to Cllr McGeary for his question, his reference to the Forward Plan is very welcome. I am sure you are, like me, proud that we have excellent green spaces with 16 Green Flag parks, with two new parks having achieved this status in 2020. 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 public health.

The Forward Plan entry was withdrawn in error and I can confirm that this has now been reinstated for the April publication.

The Parks Strategy is a document which will inform how our wonderful parks and open spaces will be managed and further improved over the next 10 years, so it is important we do not rush and get it right allowing time to hear the views of our residents and stakeholders.

The future improvements of our parks and open spaces is a high priority for the organisation and it is pleasing that to date we have had a large amount of engagement on the initial draft strategy. It is, of course, critical we now undertake a full and comprehensive consultation with internal and external colleagues and organisations such as our residents, business, Friends of Parks Groups, allotments societies, voluntary sector, sports clubs, Public Health and walking groups, to name but a few, before finalising the document. It is also crucial that the Strategy delivers on the commitments given in the recently agreed Climate Change Action Plan.

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A supplementary question asked if the strategy would address the safety of deer and local residents. The Cabinet Member responded that he would look to bring forward the safety of deer in a future version of the strategy.

Measurement of Productivity

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

Would the Leader of the Council provide data and evidence to demonstrate how productivity is measured within Havering Council?

Answer

The way productivity is measured varies across the Council. We report a wealth of service-specific data to central government, and our directors use the same to evaluate performance and achievement of value-for-money. Much of this data feeds the IMPOWER index, which rated Havering 5th most cost-effective Council in 2019 for the second year running.

For demand-led areas, statutory and local PIs assess our ability to 'get it right first time', e.g. re-referrals to Children's Social Care, adults completing a reablement package requiring no further Adult Social Care, homelessness avoided. The concept of reducing 'avoidable contact' is embedded in customer services and measured through customer satisfaction methodologies.

Workforce productivity levels are considered using a range of methods including HR metrics (e.g. absence rates), caseloads and quality assurance. PDR processes underpin productivity through target-setting and workforce development.

Commissioned services are measured against contract terms and SLAs. We aim to achieve optimum value-for-money through effective procurement, shaping the market with our commissioning activity, and digital innovation.

Members are aware that some performance reporting was paused during the pandemic and we are not yet back to business-as-usual. Appropriate measures of productivity will be considered as part of the corporate planning process for 2022/23 and Covid recovery.

A supplementary question asked where this data and information could be found. The Cabinet Member responded that he would ask the Chief Executive to send two copies of the IMPOWER index to each Councillor. Further data could also be found on the Members' section of the intranet.

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The Cabinet Member added that Overview and Scrutiny should be used to hold the Administration to account but that hardly any questions on financial performance measures had been asked by the Opposition.

Road Improvements in the Rainham Area

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

Briscoe Road (on the bus route) and Abbey Wood Road (on the bus route) are in poor condition and in need of road resurfacing and repair, as is Brookway, Rainham.

I've been informed by Officers these roads are not on any schedule for resurfacing. Therefore please can the Cabinet Member for Highways agree to schedule these roads for improvements?

Answer

I can confirm the information provided is correct. The roads listed above are structurally sound and do not warrant full resurfacing at this time, when assessed against other streets in the borough.

As mentioned in my earlier response, the HIP programme is currently being reviewed and the new programme will be available later in the calendar year.

I can also advise that the Council has already resurfaced the bus route section of Lake Avenue. Thorn Lane and Berwick Road (which are also part of the bus route loop) are programmed for resurfacing in March.

A supplementary question asked if any site meeting could also include road improvements in the Rainham area Lake Avenue and the Cabinet Member confirmed he was happy to include this as part of any site visit.