

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Note: Questions 1 to 8 were answered at the meeting. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.6(a), the remainder were treated as if put for written answer

1 PARKING AT LAKESIDE SHOPPING CENTRE

To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)

By Councillor Clarence Barrett

In a recent consultation regarding the expansion of Lakeside Shopping Centre, this Council commented that 'Havering considers the proposal is unacceptable because it makes no commitment to the introduction of a parking charging and management regime. Free parking will give Lakeside an unreasonable competitive advantage over other town centres in Essex and outer London including Romford.'

Would the Cabinet Member expand upon why he feels that Lakeside should introduce parking charges?

Answer:

Havering Council considers that the provision of free car parking allows Lakeside to enjoy an unreasonable competitive advantage over other town centres in Essex and Outer London, including Romford. This advantage is derived from promoting and prioritising customer travel by car, over other less environmentally damaging forms of transport, with customers being attracted to Lakeside from an extensive area.

Havering is keen to tackle congestion and rising traffic levels in the borough to ensure that it remains an attractive place for people to live, work and do business. Lakeside's ability to attract significant numbers of car-borne customers through the provision of free parking not only undermines the Council's efforts to reduce traffic levels, but also poses a threat to the vitality of Romford Town Centre and other town centres in the borough. The Council is keen to protect Romford and other shopping centres, to ensure that Havering residents continue to have good local opportunities for employment and leisure activities.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member did not disagree that an offer of free parking in the run to Christmas might be helpful but reminded the questioner that there had been considerable investment in the Romford Town Centre and income from car parking fees played a considerable part in paying for that.

2 BUS STOP, BROADWAY, RAINHAM

To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)

By Councillor Jeffrey Tucker

To remove bus route congestion and enhance the Rainham Village Conservation Area can the Administration assist local residents and councillors in preventing them from using it as a changeover.

Answer:

Following a similar request in the summer, officers contacted Transport for London who responded that it would not be possible to move the bus stop.

For information, however, I can inform the Councillor that there are plans to create a new bus stop at the War Memorial opposite the existing stop outside the Redberry Guest House. The carriageway is of sufficient width to accommodate this and has been approved by TfL.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed to meet the questioner on site in due course to review the situation once the new traffic scheme had been implemented but reminded the Council of the difficulties that had been experienced with TfL elsewhere in getting changes made,

3 USE OF WASTE DISPOSAL FACILITIES AT FROG ISLAND

To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)

By Councillor Barbara Matthews

From last month Bedford Borough Council entered into a six year contract with Shanks to manage the local authority's black bin waste. This will amount to treating some 50,000 tonnes per annum, which had previously been sent to landfill and incineration, saving Bedford approximately £1 million per year. This process will be undertaken using the mechanical and biological treatment (MBT) plant at Frog Island. Given that this borough, along with the East London Waste Authority partners, have paid for this facility what benefit will we derive from this arrangement?

Answer:

Household waste tonnages have reduced across the East London Waste Authority (ELWA) region, resulting in there being excess processing capacity at the Mechanical and Biological Treatment Facilities. ELWAs Integrated Waste Management Contract allows the operator, Shanks, to seek commercial/non contract waste to fill any spare capacity and to pay ELWA a royalty amount in respect of each additional non-ELWA tonne of waste processed.

ELWA officers are currently in negotiations with Shanks to ensure the best financial outcome for ELWA from the Shanks/Bedford arrangement. These negotiations are confidential because they are commercially sensitive.

Any additional income received by ELWA as a result of these negotiations will be reflected in future levy calculations and payments made by the Boroughs.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that Members would be advised in due of the income generated by this use of spare capacity and the effect of that on the borough's payments to ELWA.

4 USE OF ALLOTMENT LAND

To the Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns & Communities (Councillor Andrew Curtin)

By Councillor David Durant

Allotments are a popular and genuine green idea that should be promoted by the Council.

Therefore will the Administration promise not to appropriate for planning purposes any allotment land, before a full audit of allotment usage and waiting lists is carried out to ensure all registered allotment land throughout Havering is being fully utilised?

Answer:

The Administration believes that allotment gardening is important to society for three main reasons - other than the obvious one of it being a great source of pleasure and enjoyment for many people.

We believe it is important to the health and wellbeing of Havering residents, providing another way for people to get exercise but also, importantly, being an excellent source of fresh fruit and vegetables, which are so important to good health. As a result allotment gardening contributes strongly to the preventative strands of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, particularly those relating to obesity, physical activity and diet-related illness.

We believe it is important to the green character of, and nature conservation in, the borough, and work with allotment societies has played a part in gaining the impressive nature conservation results in Havering which were reported at the last Council meeting. Specifically, we have worked with the borough's allotment societies to promote the use of sustainable means of pest control, promote species habitats, and with societies and Essex Beekeepers to identify sites for hives, which both help with the pollination of crops and help to conserve bee species.

Finally, we believe that the strength of the allotment societies in the borough is a central part of a strong community infrastructure and voluntary sector, with all the social benefits which flow from this.

For these reasons we have always promoted allotment gardening, in partnership with all the borough's allotment societies and other community groups, and as a result of this allotment gardening is thriving in Havering.

Working together with allotment societies we regularly audit allotment usage and waiting lists through an annual survey of site stewards, the results of which are reported to the Allotment Liaison Group, involving the local authority and all societies, which I chair. Working together, we use the results of the audits to plan increases in allotment provision and capital spend in a strategic way.

As a result of these audits and our shared strategic approach with societies, we have been able to create over 500 extra allotment places throughout Havering since 2008. Among others these include;

- 8 more places at Archibald Road.
- 29 at Ashvale Gardens.
- 44 at Bretons Farm.
- 11 at Chase Cross.
- 17 at Chelmsford Avenue.
- 10 at Dunningford.
- 33 at Grey Towers (North).
- 22 at Grey Towers (South).
- 20 at Havering Grange.
- 12 at Heath Park.
- 35 at Keats Avenue.
- 10 at MacDonald Avenue.
- 6 at Macon Way.
- 14 at Maylands.
- 6 at Melville Road.

- 5 at Mungo Park.
- 18 at Norfolk Road.
- 172 at Pretoria Road.
- 3 at Robin Close.
- 8 at Sowrey Avenue.
- 16 at Stewart Avenue.
- 2 at Uphaving Terrace.

The gap between the number of plots currently vacant in the borough and the number of people on the waiting list is 39 people. We propose to provide for more than half of these places by creating 20 extra plots at Melville Road, even though the waiting list there is only 4 people. We recognise, however, that people from the north or middle of the borough may not find spaces in the south of the borough convenient or accessible, and so we will continue to work with allotment societies to seek ways of providing extra allotment places in all communities across the borough.

Since 2007 an extra £225,000 has been invested in Havering allotments by the Council, a sum often added to by the borough's excellent allotment societies. This has funded the provision of toilets at sites, and other improvements including fencing and paths. The number of active sites in the borough has been increased from 26 to 27.

Allotment gardening, allotment societies, and the relationship between societies and the Council are all thriving in Havering, something which marks Havering out from other boroughs, and I am glad that we are continuing to improve and expand allotment provision.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member emphasised that the Council had adopted a "green" approach to its strategic operations.

5 **WYKEHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

To the Cabinet Member for Children & Learning (Councillor Paul Rochford)

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Last month there was an article in the Romford Recorder about changes in facilities at Wykeham Primary School provided by the Cabinet Member. Two weeks later there was a letter from the Head Teacher at the school in the same newspaper contradicting the information. Would the Cabinet Member confirm who is correct?

Answer:

The article in the Romford recorder on 28 Sept 2012, 'Rooms to be Converted...', referred to the Council's plans for meeting the pressing need to provide additional primary places at a large number of schools by bringing former general teaching class rooms back into use, as well as by providing additional accommodation where the need could be clearly demonstrated. In many cases these would be class rooms that had been converted into libraries and ICT bases at the time primary school rolls were falling.

The Head of Wykeham Primary, Mahrukh Katpitia-Mistry, wrote to the Recorder (12 Oct 2012) because she felt the article failed to give an accurate impression of the work Wykeham were doing to improve their facilities. The school were not closing IT centres, art rooms or libraries and the Head wanted to clarify to parents that these facilities were not being taken away – all the facilities needed would still be provided.

Both the article and letter from the Head of Wykeham were correct and as the Head indicated in her letter:

“We have exciting plans for the development of our primary school which includes developing new facilities for our older years and I am looking forward to teaching the borough's children in a school well equipped for the future.”

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member declined to comment on the questioner's lack of direct response from the school but reiterated that the Council and the school were agreed on the way forward.

6 ST HELEN'S COURT, RAINHAM

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)(answered in Councillor Kelly's absence by Councillor Barry Tebbutt)

By Councillor David Durant

The approach road to St Helen's Court, off Upminster Road South, Rainham is an un-adopted road. As a result the road is used for commuter parking.

Now that St Helen's Court, formerly managed by Homes in Havering, is under direct council control, can this approach road be adopted by the Council and parking restrictions introduced to remove commuter parking to assist Rainham Village Conservation Area and shopping centre?

Answer:

This is one of many requests we have received to carry out works to control parking and improve road facilities for residents. The fact that Homes in Havering have been brought in house makes no difference to the process of deciding whether to adopt a road or not, or to install one type of parking system or another. The issues are ones of process, cost and priority.

In principle, the road can be adopted as public highway, but it would require a check that the Council is the land owner for all areas proposed for adoption, otherwise other landowners would also need to be party the proposal which complicates the process to a certain extent.

The areas proposed for adoption would need to be brought up to a standard which does not create excessive and unreasonable burden on Streetcare's maintenance budget and from a cursory look at the road it is apparent that the carriageway and footway are likely to require repairs, the street lighting would need to be upgraded and we would need to look at the condition and status of surface water drainage and gullies.

We would also need to look at the pedestrian routes in the road. There is pedestrian guardrail placed everywhere very close to the footway edge which potentially gives us a risk in terms of vehicle damage and claims therein as the recognised set back is greater for a highway. Additionally, all footway dropped kerbs would need to be upgraded to be flush and with the requisite tactile paving.

A parking scheme could be proposed during the process and ideally agreed to coincide with adoption, but this would need to be funded, designed, consulted and reported through the Highways Advisory Committee process. In addition, a similar process would be required to impose the local 20mph speed limit on the road.

On the subject of investment in either the road or parking scheme, the Homes and Housing Service have received a number of requests for parking schemes, and are currently identifying all

the areas where parking is a problem, and to develop an overall plan for prioritised investment in parking schemes to address problems of commuter parking, and the mismatch between car ownership and car parking space.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member stated that, although the length of road in question might be short, the amount of work required to bring it up to adoption standard would be likely to cost considerable sums of money and there was no guarantee that the private land owners affected would be willing to co-operate in such an exercise.

7 HORNCHURCH POLICE STATION

To the Cabinet Member for Community Safety (Councillor Geoff Starns)

By Councillor Barbara Matthews

Would the Chairman of the Crime & Disorder Committee please set out what representations he has made to ensure that Hornchurch Police Station remains open?

Answer:

The Council has made initial enquiries regarding the review of assets being undertaken by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the potential closure of Hornchurch Police Station as a result of this.

We are informed that the Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC) estate contains over 800 buildings many of which, including some police stations, are considered as providing poor working conditions for staff, and as being inefficient for modern day policing and these are being replaced by more modern, efficient and geographically responsive facilities.

The MPS is currently reviewing the whole of its property estate to ensure that best use is being made of it and to identify efficiency savings that can be reinvested into operational policing.

As part of this the MPS are looking at Hornchurch police station and what facilities will be needed in the future to meet operational policing requirements in the borough.

To date, no proposals for this building have been put to the MOPAC, but this could provide an opportunity to improve the estate at the same time as delivering substantial savings that will allow the MPS to protect operational capability.

No decision is likely to be made by the MOPAC until later this year. In accordance with the sale of previous buildings in the borough, it is anticipated that the Metropolitan Police will provide the necessary communication with the community at the appropriate time.

We have requested further information on any firm proposal to close Hornchurch Police Station so that we can then give a considered response.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member reiterated that, while the police were looking at improving their operational arrangements and that representations were being made on behalf of the Council as opportunity arose to them about the impact of police station closures.

8 **SALE OF ELECTORAL ROLL INFORMATION**

To the Cabinet Member for Community Safety (Councillor Geoff Starns)

By Councillor Clarence Barrett

Would the Cabinet Member set out how much income the Council has received over each of the last three years by selling personal details from the electoral roll to individuals and organisations?

Answer:

The Electoral Registration Officer has no say in whether the Electoral Register is sold or not as the supply and sale of the Electoral Register is strictly controlled by the Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001.

Since 2002 persons have been able to opt out of the 'Edited Register' which is the version of the Register which may be supplied to anyone and may be used for any purpose including commercial and marketing purposes.

The 'Full' version of the Register may only be sold to government departments and other bodies and credit reference agencies and their usage is severely restricted in the Regulations. The Regulations also specify the price both Registers must be sold for which has not been altered since 2001.

Details of the sales of both Registers for the last three years, by Havering, are given below:-

2009 Register

Full Register Sales – Equifax (£508.00p) ; Experian (£486.50p); Call Credit (£486.50p); Crediva (£486.50p); and Aristotle (£293.00p) bought a copy of the whole Borough; i_CD publishing (£113.00p) bought a copy of the Hornchurch Constituency.

Edited Register Sales - The Hair Exchange (£74.00p) bought a copy of the Hornchurch Constituency; Searchlight (£174.50p); and Bell Pottinger Public Affairs (£174.50p) bought a copy of the whole Borough and the Church of the English Martyrs (£78.50p) bought a copy of several Wards.

2010 Register

Full Register Sales - Experian, Equifax, Callcredit and Crediva: whole register plus monthly updates (£489.50), Aristotle: whole register only (£296).

Edited Register Sales - JBSM Driving School, Romford only (£33)
Individual Hornchurch & Upminster, Dagenham & Rainham, (£113)

2011 Register

Full Register Sales - Experian, Callcredit and Crediva: whole register plus monthly updates (£489.50) Equifax: whole register plus monthly updates and overseas (£505)
Aristotle: whole register only (£299)

Edited Register Sales - Coast Insurance, polling district HT2 (£23)

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member stated that the cost of the details sold varied according to the specific sections requested by the purchaser.

9 USE OF BED & BREAKFAST ACCOMMODATION

To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Lesley Kelly)

By Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Cabinet Member confirm how many families are being housed by this council in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, and how many of these have been there for over six weeks?

Answer:

The Housing Service is not currently housing any families or single people in Bed and Breakfast accommodation. The Housing Service only uses B&B accommodation on the extremely rare occasions that the Council's hostels are full. This most recently occurred earlier this year when Abercrombie House was being completely refurbished and four or five rooms were consequently out of action at any one time. Even then, only eight households had to spend some time in a B&B, with the average stay being three nights. The maximum one of these families stayed in a B&B was six nights.

Children's Services have duties towards parents and children who have no recourse to public funds while they await Home Office decisions, such households could not be assisted by the Housing Service. Such households are placed in B&Bs. There are currently two lone mothers, each with a child, accommodated in B&Bs. One of these has been in the B&B for more than six weeks.

10 PROCESSING OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

To the Cabinet Member for Individuals (Councillor Steven Kelly)

By Councillor Ray Morgon

In respect of planning applications and appeals, over the past three years would the Cabinet Member set out:

- a) How many planning applications have been submitted?
- b) How many appeals have been lodged?
- c) The number of refused applications that went to appeal?
- d) How many appeals the council lost?
- e) The cost of the lost appeals to the council?

Answer:

- a) Planning Applications Submitted

2009/10 – 1715

2010/11 – 1869

2011/12 – 1822

2012/13 (year to date) – 953

b) & c) Appeals are most commonly lodged against refusal, with very few, if any, each year being appeals against non-determination (figure given in brackets)

2009/10 - 79 (0)

2010/11 – 51 (0)

2011/12 – 52 (2)

2012/13 (year to date) – 48 (0)

d) Appeals Allowed or Part-Allowed

2009/10 – 25 (32%)

2010/11 – 12 (24%)

2011/12 – 15 (29%)

2012/13 (year to date) – 12 (25%)

e) No separate data is held on the costs associated with appeals – such costs are absorbed within the overall cost of the Planning Service.

11 **LIBRARY USERS - NUMBERS**

To the Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns & Communities (Councillor Andrew Curtin)

By Councillor Linda Hawthorn

Would the Cabinet Member advise the number of registered library users in each of the last three years and how this is monitored?

Answer:

A registered library user is someone who has a library card. When a resident joins Havering Library Service this is recorded by the Libraries Management computer system and the ongoing figures are monitored by the Library Services Manager and Libraries Management Team for action as appropriate.

In the seven months that we have figures for so far in 2012, 158, 375 people are members of Havering Library Service. This is 69% of the local population, making the Library Service easily the most popular service of choice which the local authority offers. This is already two thousand more than the figure for the whole of 2011/12, when 156,533 people were members. In 2010/11 there were 167,712 members.

These figures do not include those who the Library service work with in schools, academies and playgroups, leading the development of literacy and reading among children, young people and families. Nor do they include work with groups for whom reading has particular health and social benefits, such as MIND, the Mental Health Forum, Robert Beard Disability Group and the Queen's Hospital. The Reader Development Team made 1,628 such visits last year.

Figures for library issues are included in the Members' performance Pack, and showed an increase in the last quarter. In addition to this there have been just under 290,000 visits to the Havering virtual online library so far this year.

12 **AIDS FOR THE DISABLED****To the Cabinet Member for Individuals (Councillor Steven Kelly)**

By Councillor June Alexander

Would the Cabinet Member confirm how many requests for aids in the home for disabled people have been received by the Council in each of the past four years and how many of these were agreed, what were the budgets and what was the expenditure?

Answer:

We currently have the following information on the number of Aids and Adaptations agreed for the last two years, (2011/12 and 2010/11).

Items of Aid and Adaptation agreed, budget and expenditure

Year	2011/12	2010/11
Number Agreed	6036	4518
Budget	£1,026,510	£1,137,090
Expenditure	£1,020,253	£1,006,788

However to obtain the information for the years 2009/10 and 2008/09 would require significant officer time. Officers will provide this information and forward to Councillor Alexander at a later date.

13 **SALE OF DUNNINGFORD SCHOOL SITE – CAPITAL RECEIPT****To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)**

By Councillor Barbara Matthews

Would the Cabinet Member set out what capital receipt was received for the sale of the Dunningford School site in Elm Park and what will this sum be used for?

Answer:

£9,699,057 was the sale price for Dunningford. The Council does not ring fence any capital receipts. All proceeds from disposals are accumulated together to finance the Council's capital programme, which is approved by Council as part of the annual budget setting process. However the programme to create two new primary schools proceeded on the basis that the proceeds of Dunningford and other sites vacated would enable the Council to build two new schools. To date the building costs stand at £8.9m in respect of Hylands Primary and £8m re Elm Park Primary. Spend was incurred before the receipts were realised thus it was necessary to utilise other sources of funding in order to manage the cash flow.

14 ENFORCEMENT OF PAVEMENT PARKING CONTROLS WHERE MARKINGS HAVE BEEN OBLITERATED

To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Tebbutt)

By Councillor Linda Van den Hende

Would the Cabinet Member explain what the rule is, in enforcement terms, where white lines on pavements which permit parking have been partially covered due to footway patching making the designated area incomplete?

Answer:

If the circumstances as described have taken place, then the restriction still applies in that motorists are required to park within a footway parking bay markings. However, the Civil Enforcement Team will make a judgement in each circumstance as to whether the condition or potential obstruction of the restriction or parking bay would lead to a motorist to be unsure of the restriction etc. and therefore be directly the reason why a vehicle has been parked in contravention.

15 RECOVERY OF LOSSES FROM ICELANDIC BANKS

To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)

By Councillor Ron Ower

Would the Cabinet Member set out how much we have recovered to date from the £12.5 million invested in Icelandic Banks?

Answer:

The recovery process for the money held with Icelandic banks is still ongoing. To date we have received just over £7m.

16 ASH TREES: DIEBACK DISEASE

To the Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns and Communities (Councillor Andrew Curtin)

By Councillor Linda Hawthorn

In view of the dieback disease which is now affecting our native Ash trees, what measures have been taken to check our trees are fungus free, as the advice which has been circulated is that any affected trees should be felled and burnt as soon as the disease is detected?

Answer:

The Parks Team, Parks Grounds Maintenance and Highway Tree Team are currently surveying the Ash Trees in the borough. Officers will take advice from the Forestry Commission should the disease be found.

17 **PROCEEDS OF MAYOR'S CHARITABLE APPEALS**

To the Cabinet Member for Value (Councillor Roger Ramsey)

By Councillor Ron Ower

The Mayors' Charities always provide an excellent focus for raising funds for worthy causes. Would the Cabinet Member set out how much has been raised in each year since 2002?

Answer:

When funds are donated in response to a mayoral appeal payment these may in some cases be made directly to the nominated charity rather than through the Council. Payments made to the Council are processed through the "The Mayor of Havering General Appeal Fund". In accordance with the relevant regulations records are kept for a set period and for each financial year as opposed to each mayoral year. It is therefore not feasible to give a full account of funds raised in each mayoral year or for the period requested. However efforts of our mayors in promoting worthy local causes deserve the support of all members.