

FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022

Appendix 1

**MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

**Disposal of Assets**

- 1) **To the Cabinet Member for Development and Regeneration (Councillor Graham Williamson)**  
**From Councillor Osman Dervish**

Can the Administration confirm if they are considering the disposal of any assets and, if so, have they identified a date to do so and which ones as well as any that have been discounted for disposal?

**Answer**

Thank you for your question Cllr Dervish. As you will recall, from the MTFS your administration agreed only a few months ago, there is a requirement in the overall council budget to achieve some £10m in capital receipts during 22/23. Your administration had considered a list of potential sites for disposal that council officers had compiled. This administration will review that list to establish whether we feel there are any sites that should be disposed of and what capital receipt can be achieved or whether there are any other opportunities to generate the £10m needed in the current agreed MTFS that we inherited from your administration. Any changes to the requirement to achieve the £10m receipt or proposals to dispose of individual assets will be presented to future Cabinets in the proper manner, which will include engagement with all interested stakeholders.

A supplementary question asked what would be the timescale for the disposal of any assets identified. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that it was not possible to give a specific timetable at this stage but that this would be communicated as soon as it was known.

**All Age Autism Strategy**

- 2) **To the Cabinet Member for Adults & Health (Councillor Gillian Ford)**  
**From Councillor Darren Wise**

Over the last few years, there has been considerable work done by stakeholders on the All Age Autism strategy and this was due to go to Cabinet just prior to the election in May. Could the Cabinet Member confirm that the strategy will not be amended and delayed yet again and please provide a timescale for this to be issued?

**Answer**

We have been working with stakeholders to ensure they are all in agreement and are committed to the action plan.

The cabinet report is scheduled to be presented on 10th August cabinet meeting along with the final strategy.

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We do not anticipate any further delays in progressing to the final stage of publishing the all age autism strategy.

A supplementary question asked how the autism action plans would be monitored. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that Overview and Scrutiny and the Autism Board would lead on this and that she would also be involved in this work. Condolences were recorded to the family of Karen Streete who had worked extensively on the autism strategy and had recently passed away. The Cabinet Member also passed on her thanks to Councillor Wise for his work on the strategy.

## **Review of Council**

### **3) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon) From Councillor David Taylor**

Can the administration confirm a date for when their 'root and branch' review will be complete and a report brought to Council?

#### **Answer**

The Administration will systematically work through council services over the four years of the administration.

A supplementary question asked is savings would be identified in the first 100 days of the Administration. In response the Leader of the Council reiterated that all areas of the Council would be reviewed over the next four years.

## **Grass Verges**

### **4) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone) From Councillor Martin Goode**

Could the Cabinet Member please confirm, when the consultation letters were sent out to the residents that are impacted by the grass verge recommendations report, and the resulted outcome of this consultation

#### **Answer**

I thank Cllr Goode for his question.

The resident engagement letters are due to be issued this month

The consultation will cover the affected areas and will be open until the end of July 2022. Following the closure of the consultation the responses will be assessed and used to decide on the final arrangement and scheme details.

A supplementary question asked how many responses had been received to the consultation letters. The Cabinet member confirmed that the consultation letters would be sent out towards the end of July.

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## Special Responsibility Allowances

**5) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon)  
From Councillor David Taylor**

Can the administration confirm if any SRAs have been increased vs those from April 2022?

### Answer

A small number of allowances have increased slightly, specifically those for the Leader, Cabinet Members, the Mayor and Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee Chairmen. There are now also 55 Councillors from the previous 54. It should be noted however that there are now only two Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committees, compared to six under the previous Administration. Allowances we have abolished include those for Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the now removed position of Deputy Cabinet Member. The abolition of the Adjudication and Review & Highways Advisory Committees as well as of the Joint Venture Working Party has resulted in further savings in Special Responsibility Allowances when compared with the previous Administration.

(No supplementary question).

## Waterloo Estate Regeneration

**6) To the Cabinet Member for Development and Regeneration (Councillor Graham Williamson)  
From Councillor Joshua Chapman (asked by Councillor Osman Dervish)**  
Will the new Administration be seeking to reduce the density on the Council's Waterloo estate regeneration proposals? Can a timetable be given of when a detailed planning application be made to the council for the Waterloo scheme?

### Answer

Thank you for your question.

The Waterloo and Queen Street scheme, including the overall density of the development, was approved by the previous administration prior to submission and subsequent consent by the Local Planning Authority.

As we go forward we will, as a prudent Administration, have regard to various factors such as housing need and demand, financial viability and market conditions and changing legislative requirements, for example around Building Safety and Climate Change. If it should become necessary to make any changes in response to these factors, then we reserve the right to make them. We will also review the overall design for the later phases of the development, as they come forward over time, looking at design features such as height and massing and the provision of open space, informed by viability, in the usual way.

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The scheme will be built out over a number of years. Phase 1 which is currently underway already, has the benefit of detailed consent and will be built out in accordance with that consent. Further phases of the scheme have outline consent so it will be necessary to submit a number of reserved matters applications as we go forward; these will be submitted as appropriate in the period 2023 -2028.

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member agreed that it was important to ensure certainty of build costs in developments. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that he did agree that, given the current economic turbulence, rising building costs were certainly an issue.

**Local Plan**

**7) To the Cabinet Member for Development and Regeneration (Councillor Graham Williamson)**

**From Councillor Joshua Chapman (asked by Councillor Dilip Patel)**

Will the Administration provide an update on the timetable for an updated local plan, and confirm whether there exists enough brownfield sites at prevent greenbelt release?

**Answer**

The published Local Development Scheme gives information on the Local Plan and the timetable for the work associated with the update.

The Local Development Scheme was approved at the same time as the Local Plan was adopted in November 2021.

The Local Plan update will need to be underpinned by proportionate, relevant and up to date evidence and informed by a Sustainability Appraisal. Officers are already working to update this evidence base.

The timeframe for initiating some of the updates has changed meaning that the proposed first early stage public consultation on the new Plan and its objectives is anticipated later this financial year.

The process of identifying and assessing potential sites for new development for new homes and businesses involves looking at sustainable sites that are suitable, available, viable and therefore deliverable.

The identification and assessment of these deliverable sites is at an early stage so it is not yet possible to confirm whether there exists enough brownfield sites to prevent green belt release.

A supplementary question asked if it could be confirmed that Green Belt sites would not be released for building. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that

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this was a Cabinet decision. Whilst efforts would be made to release Brownfield sites first, this would depend on the housing targets for the borough.

**Voluntary Redundancy Scheme**

**8) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon)  
From Councillor Osman Dervish**

Will the Leader of the Council give a statement on the current state of the voluntary redundancy programme; will it meet its targets of savings or does he believe that additional staffing redundancies are needed?

**Answer**

The Voluntary Release process is still ongoing, so I am unable to say anything further at the moment. A statement will be given once the process is complete.

A supplementary question asked when the update would be released. The Leader of the Council responded that this could not be confirmed at this stage.

**Capital Spend on Highway's Network**

**9) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone)  
From Councillor Osman Dervish**

Can the Administration make a statement on the expected capital spend on the Borough's highway network for each of the next four financial years?

**Answer**

Thank you for your question, Councillor Dervish.

The Council is committed to improving the condition of the borough's roads and pavements. I have asked for a report to be brought forward detailing the current road and pavement condition borough wide, assesses the ongoing need and levels of investment, provides a comparison between where we are now compared to where we started from, and the selection criteria for a new programme going forward.

This will enable an informed decision to be made. The Council's budget assumptions for the investment have not changed and the above will also ensure maximum value for money of any investment. I anticipate this work will be completed within the next two months.

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member was committed to retaining the £10m expenditure in highways in the new Administration. The Cabinet Member responded that he was committed to this, provided that it showed value to Havering residents.

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## Housing Targets

**10) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon)  
From Councillor David Taylor**

Can the administration confirm if they have secured a meeting with Central Government, and the GLA to discuss housing targets?

### Answer

Thank you for your question Councillor Taylor.

I have been clear in my commitment to working in a collaborative and engaging way with any party that has influence, power or finances over the borough and intends to maintain that position.

Efforts are being made to secure a meeting with Central Government departments, local MPs and the GLA. The Administration is committed to ensuring Havering's interests are progressed and discussed fully with all parties.

A supplementary question asked if any meetings had been agreed as yet. The Leader of the Council responded that he had met with two local MPs and would be meeting the GLA representative shortly. Efforts were also ongoing to arrange a meeting with the Mayor of London.

## Corporate Forward Plan

**11) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon)  
From Councillor Joshua Chapman (asked by Councillor Osman Dervish)**

When will an update corporate plan be brought forward by the Administration and will this be submitted to the scrutiny board for discussion?

### Answer

I have always been very clear that I believe visibility and transparency of performance management is really important to ensure we focus on delivering the right things for our residents. The Corporate Plan is a key component of this approach.

During the lockdown period, the Council moved from Business as Usual into its Emergency Response arrangements, and a Corporate Plan was not required.

As the Councillor will be aware, the Cabinet is working closely with SLT to set Havering's Vision, and the Corporate Plan that will help set out the key areas, along with performance indicators that will show the progress.

I anticipate taking our draft Corporate Plan to Cabinet in the Autumn and hope that the Scrutiny Function will have a Critical Friend role before or after that, as it's for the Scrutiny Members to determine their work-programme. As Leader of

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the Council I will start as I mean to go on, and discuss this with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, in line with the Statutory and Good Scrutiny Guidance, which advocates for a close-working protocol between the Cabinet and Scrutiny Function, which is fundamental to effective Scrutiny and ultimately better outcomes for our Residents.

(No supplementary question).

## **Overview & Scrutiny**

### **12) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon) From Councillor David Taylor**

Members were informed that only one task and finish group could be launched at any one time by an Overview & Scrutiny committee. Considering the changes to the committee structure, is this still the case? And are any savings expected?

## **Answer**

It will be for the respective OSCs to determine their work plans and to consider what task and finish groups should be set up to look at specific areas, having regard to the needs of the Council and the available resources to support these. The administration is committed to providing training to Members of OSB to ensure the effective operation of the Scrutiny function.

A supplementary question asked for clarity over whether there was a limit of one task and finish group per Committee. The Leader of the Council stated that he had never said there was such a limit and that several task and finish groups had recently been agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

## **Romford Market**

### **13) To the Cabinet Member for Development & Regeneration (Councillor Graham Williamson) From Councillor John Crowder**

What plans are in place to mark the 775<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Romford market charter and will the administration confirm any additional capital investment within the Romford over the next four years.

## **Answer**

The Council plans to mark the 775<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with an event running over the weekend of 9-11<sup>th</sup> September, celebrating the heritage of Romford Market and its Charter. Final details are being worked up across a range of stakeholders including the traders and Romford BID.

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The Council is keen to sustain and enhance Romford Market as a key and unique component of the borough's economy and retail offer. There have been previous investment proposals for the Market and Market Place, not all of which progressed to implementation. Our aim is to consult with the relevant stakeholders in advance of committing to appropriate and considered set of proposals aimed at rejuvenating the vitality of the Market for the benefit of residents, traders and the broader town centre.

(No supplementary question).

**Support for Free School Meals**

**14) To the Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Councillor Oscar Ford)  
From Councillor Osman Dervish**

With the country in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, will the administration commit to maintaining non-term time free school meal support for Havering's children?

**Answer**

Since 2020, the Covid Winter Grant and Housing Support Fund schemes along with funding from the Council's budget has been allocated to cover the cost of children's meals for families on welfare benefits during the school holidays. This is at the rate of £15 per week per eligible child and funding has been approved up to the end of the December 2022 holidays.

Government advise further funding will be made available from September 2022 that will enable Members to consider extending non-term time free school meal support to the end of March 2023.

Decisions are also planned in 2022, for the Housing Support Fund grant to be allocated to assist low-income households including pensioners, vulnerable adults, Care Leavers and families with children.

We await further clarification regarding future government funding.

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member would ensure the service would continue to be funded, regardless of the availability of Government funding. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that he was looking at other resources due to the inherited financial situation. The position would remain under review but it was necessary to deliver a balanced budget.

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## Financial Savings

15) **To the Cabinet Member for Finance & Transformation (Councillor Chris Wilkins)**

**From Councillor Joshua Chapman (asked by Councillor Keith Prince)**

With the Bank of England expecting inflation to reach 11% by the end of the year, will the Administration make a statement on the expected impact that this will have upon the current financial position of the authority, and will they outline any additional savings that will be brought forward as a result?

### Answer

The administration is fully aware of rising inflation rates and the consequent pressures on the Council's budget. The budget set in March did include both inflationary and demographic growth which has in part mitigated this pressure. The current level of inflation has however contributed to an in year pressure and Council is in the process of developing action plans in order to reduce costs where possible. The pressure and mitigating actions taken will be reported in the Period 3 revenue monitoring report.

A supplementary question asked when the Period 3 report would be published and the Cabinet Member confirmed that this was scheduled to be in September.