

FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 7th September 2022

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Overview & Scrutiny

- 1) **To the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor Gerry O'Sullivan)**
From Councillor Tim Ryan

At of the 5th July meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny board voted to establish a series of task and finish working group as soon as possible, as of yet, not one has been convened. Considering the financial pressure that the Council is under, when will the Chairman set a date for the financial working party to meet?

Answer

As the Overview and Scrutiny Board Members are aware, as detailed in the Councils Statutory Corporate Forward Plan, there is an update on the Council's financial position for 2022/23 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-2027 going to the 28th September Cabinet. This is a key report that will directly help inform the scrutiny focus and subsequent scope of the future related task and finish group.

As Chair I have moved the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting to the 13th October to enable the Board sufficient time to consider the Cabinet update report, and determine their thinking for future scrutiny of this important area.

Given the new membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, there is training arranged on the 26th and 27th September that will cover Overview and Scrutiny methods, techniques, scoping etc. This will be delivered by a trainer from the independent Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. This will enable and support an effective scrutiny function and inform the scoping of the future work programme and associated task and finish groups.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board will hold informal meetings to review and prioritise the work programme list including the scheduling of items.

(No supplementary question asked).

Traffic Calming Measures, Harold Wood Area

**2) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone)
From Councillor Darren Wise**

Please could the cabinet member confirm what actions and assurances will the Council give to residents of Harold Wood that traffic calming measures will be implemented in order to reduce speeding in the Warley Road, Nags Head Lane, Hall Lane, Shepherds Hill Junction as there have been a number of accidents in this location over recent years. This has been raised with the Council a number of times and so far there has been a distinct lack of action.

Answer

We are all aware of a fatal collision that took place at the junction of Shepherds Hill and Hall Lane on 4th August, and our thoughts are with those affected.

Following the accident, Officers attended a meeting with the Police and TFL to discuss possible measures to improve safety in this area.

Furthermore, the Council is aware of other accidents in this area. The Council is actively in dialogue with TFL with a view to submitting a funding bid to implement road safety measures.

A supplementary question asked for details of the timescale for action on this matter. The Cabinet Member responded that this depended on Transport for London funding and further investigations would be needed before a final decision on a solution was reached.

Parking Proposals in Havering

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

Will the Cabinet member make a statement on the proposals to withdraw 1-hour free parking on street across Havering, as well as the removal of the pay by app discount, referencing any public consultation that has taken place and outlining the impact assessment that has taken place on Havering shops and businesses. Do they believe that removing these measures will have a positive impact on our town centres?

Answer

As you are aware, the provision for one hour on-street free parking, alongside the 20% discount in car parks for anyone using the virtual parking app, were introduced during the Covid19 pandemic, as measures to support our residents, businesses, visitors and key workers.

We are now looking at reviewing parking charges across the borough, and a report is due before Cabinet this year.

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A supplementary question asked if the parking policy was in the best interests of local High Streets. The Cabinet Member accepted that there were financial constraints but emphasised that the Administration would do what was right for the Borough.

Climate Change

4) To the Cabinet Member for Climate Change (Councillor Keith Darvill) From Councillor Martin Goode

In 2019, there was a motion by your cabinet colleagues to call for a climate emergency which got defeated though other measures were considered and in particular we welcome the green forum that was introduced by the last administration. Now with the recent extreme temperatures and devastating fires locally, nationally and globally and ongoing warnings and issues with our climate, will the cabinet member and administration now call for and support a climate emergency to be declared in Havering.

Answer

Firstly let me say to all Havering residents and households who have been affected by the recent effects of climate change that the Council's sympathies and support are with you.

I welcome your question and I call for commitment from all Members of the Council to work together to take action to tackle climate change. I welcome the opportunity to work with all parties on this threat to our local Havering and global environment. I also want to work with regional and national bodies to secure the funding to act.

Certainly one of the matters we will be considering is the benefits, at this time, of declaring a climate emergency and framing a declaration we collectively support. In coming months we are looking to strengthen our climate change plans in a planned and measured way within the financial resources available. I will seek views as widely as possible on these plans.

I expect all officers to factor into their actions and decision making measures to tackle climate change. I hope that all Members will contribute to the short, medium and long term commitment of the Council to address the causes and effects of climate change and have a positive impact on the lives of Havering residents.

A supplementary question asked what other measures were being taken to combat climate change. The Cabinet Member responded that consultation was regularly held with action groups in Havering and bids had been made for funding to retrofit homes. Outreach work was in progress with schools and improvements made to recycling. A question and answer session had also been

held recently with a local cycling group. Climate change work was a main platform of the Administration's programme.

Cost of Transportation to Social Day Care Centres

**5) To the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health (Councillor Gillian Ford)
From Councillor Jason Frost**

In a cost-of-living crisis, will the cabinet member justify the recent decision to increase transport costs for some of the most needy in Havering to attend their social care day care centres by up to 50% and would the cabinet explain why a full Equalities and Health Impact Assessment has not been undertaken before the decision was taken.

Answer

The decision by officers was to increase transport charges for our clients, from £10 to £15, for a return journey to a day centre. The cost to adult social care is actually £20, and the charges have been static since 2011. Services are moving towards full cost recovery where possible, due to budget pressures, therefore we are making this decision to bring charges more in line with actual costs.

Prior to enacting the decision, officers contacted all those who will be impacted last week, so that there is time to source alternative methods of getting to the centre if they prefer. A full Equalities Impact Assessment is not considered by officers as necessary, because the impact is on a low number of people – initially thought to be 17, but this has reduced to 15 following work with the individuals – out of a total of nearly 100 regular users of the service.

In addition there is no equalities or financial impact on users who have been assessed to pay a client contribution (with many users assessed as nil charge in any case). Day services are chargeable, and adult social care undertakes a financial assessment of all user's means to pay, therefore only those individuals who have more than £23,250 (the current capital threshold, above which an individual pays the full cost of their care) will be affected. For those under this threshold (which the vast majority of users are), there will be no impact on those who contribute towards their costs, as client contributions will remain the same regardless of any fluctuations in care package cost.

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member had challenged the view that an Equalities Impact Assessment was not necessary. The Cabinet Member confirmed that this was not necessary at this stage but would be undertaken as the numbers of people impacted increased,

Moving Traffic Conventions

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

Will the cabinet member provide a statement on phase two of the moving traffic convention programme, including locations, expected income generation from PCNs and an update on the phase 1.

Answer

Phase 2 of the Moving Traffic Contravention Programme is currently in progress. At present Officers are developing the programme for site selection based on collision data, road classification and the type of contravention.

After a list of new sites has been compiled Officers will work with operators to locate cameras in the most appropriate places according to the criteria on each of the sites.

To date the Council has 43 sites with cameras, with an additional 15 sites due to be in operation this month.

At this stage it is difficult to determine the income from new sites, however they will be implemented to improve safety and generally there is improved compliance reducing the number of PCNs issued over time.

All sites have and will have contravention signs in place.

A supplementary question asked for details of the income generated. The Cabinet Member responded that the 50 sites generated an average yearly income of around £17,000 per site.

Housing Targets

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

It has been reported that the Leader of the Council has recently said that his administration is looking at going out rather than up to meet the housing needs targets of Havering, will he confirm that Havering's greenbelt is safe under the Labour-HRA joint administration and that his administration will fight against any reallocation of the borough's greenbelt.

Answer

The Havering Local Plan which was adopted last year, provides the policy basis for consideration of developments within the Green Belt, alongside the London Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

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Havering is one of London's greenest boroughs with extensive open spaces and with more than half of the borough designated as Metropolitan Green Belt. The spatial strategy of the local plan is to optimise brownfield development with suitable brownfield sites being developed first.

The latter is a key feature of the Local Plan Spatial Strategy. The Local Plan is up to date and will continue to guide development in the Borough.

As instructed by the Inspector who examined the Local Plan, the Local Plan will be reviewed and work on this is under way with a draft Local Plan Review document due in 2023. National policy is that once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans.

A supplementary question asked if the Administration shared the view expressed by the Upminster and Cranham Residents Association that it would fight to keep the Green Belt. The Leader of the Council responded that large housing targets had been imposed on the Council since 2015 and that all options would be considered including building up.

Timetable for Council-wide Review

**8) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon)
From Councillor Michael White**

Will the Leader of the Council provide a timetable for the systemic root and branch review of council and when will the findings be brought forward

Answer

I refer Councillor White to the answer that was given at Council on 13th July 2022.

A supplementary question asked if the original question could be answered. The Leader of the Council responded a comprehensive review of all Council departments would be carried out in order to bring out as many efficiencies and cost savings as possible.

Energy Rebate Scheme

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

Considering the cost-of-living crisis, will the administration provide a statement on why they have opted to provide £17 of financial support to multi-millionaires

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rather than providing increased support to the borough's poorest through the energy rebate scheme?

Answer

The Energy Rebate Scheme has already given £150 to over 68,000 families in Council Tax band A to D at a cost of £10.2 million.

The Energy Rebate Discretionary scheme is funded by a much smaller pot of money £684,900 which Government proposed to be used to assist households needing support in Council Tax bands E to H. The amount allocated was in fact determined by the local authority's band E to H property base. Government gave the authority discretion to assist households based on their knowledge of their community although this was not part of the original guidance.

In designing its discretionary scheme, Havering considered the main Council Tax A to D Energy Rebate scheme and that households received a payment of £150 regardless of their financial situation. While there was insufficient funding to pay every household in Council Tax bands E to H £150, it was fair to consider designing a scheme that also supported every household in Council Tax band E to H as they too experienced unexpected increases in their energy bills.

There was enough funding to award households on benefits, in receipt of a disabled band reduction, receiving free adult social care or in receipt of a severe mental impairment exemption with £150. With the left over funds, the Council was able to distribute £17 to the remaining households in Council Tax band E to H.

Any household who has received the £150 Energy Rebate payment and is still struggling can make an application to the Emergency Assistance scheme or contact their energy supplier to discuss arrangements for payment

A supplementary question asked why assistance was being offered to those in top bands when this could have been used to top up funds to the poorest. The Leader of the Council responded that a review had been undertaken of what other Councils were doing with the rebate scheme and a scheme had been chosen that best fitted Havering's situation.

Environmental Enforcement Trial

**10) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone)
From Councillor Michael White**

Will the administration make a statement on the new enforcement trial that they have launched, which is expected to raise £750,000 from PCNs and a further £100,000 from internal savings?

Answer

In response to the significant increase in littering across the Borough, we are introducing a trial, to bring in an external littering enforcement company to increase our Borough-wide resources. We will soon be inviting bids from private companies to undertake this work for a pilot period of 18 months, starting in April 2023.

The anticipated revenue to be raised from the pilot is expected to be around £75,000 per annum and not £750,000 as stated in the report, as unfortunately, this was a misprint. This sum will be an agreed percentage of the total income from the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for criminal offences such as littering, dog fouling, spitting and other environmental offences across the whole borough.

The revenue savings associated with this pilot will be made from outsourcing the locking of Havering Parks to the respective company.

A supplementary question asked how much the consultancy had cost. The Cabinet Member replied that he had not made any reference to consultancy in his answer.

Refuse Collections

**11) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone)
From Councillor David Taylor**

Will the administration make a statement on the weekly refuse collection and whether this will be maintained over the next four years for both domestic waste and recycling.

Answer

As you are aware, the Council is currently undertaking a procurement exercise for the provision of waste and recycling collections across the Borough, which include discussion on how best to provide a service that meets the need of our residents as well as meeting our Climate Change agenda.

A supplementary question asked if weekly bin collections would continue. The Cabinet Member replied that the financial position of the borough would have to be looked at but that any option chosen would give the best value for residents.

Kerbside Glass Recycling

**12) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone)
From Councillor Jason Frost**

Can the coalition administration confirm that they intend to introduce kerbside glass recycling across Havering?

Answer

The kerbside collection of glass from households is expected to be introduced when the new waste and recycling collection contract commences in 2023.

(No supplementary question).

Appointments to Senior Posts

**13) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon)
From Councillor Joshua Chapman**

The Council is currently recruiting for two new senior roles at grade 11 and grade 12, within the advert, it states that the successful applicant will be expected to attend the Town Hall for meetings 1 or 2 days per month – considering this, will the administration make a statement on home working and if they feel that a manager on £77,000 a year should only attend the Town Hall twice a month?

Answer

The Council is recruiting for two new roles within the Transformation team. This is to reduce the administration's reliance on expensive consultants and contractors and to build stronger project delivery capability internally.

The advert itself makes reference to the Council's existing flexible working policy which was introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and has enabled the council to continue to operate during unprecedented circumstances.

The advert also makes clear what is more important than attending a fixed location is the individual's "ability, drive and commitment to get the job done." Feedback from the recruitment market is that potential candidates now consider flexible working, and an organisation's approach to it, more important than pay and other benefits.

The reference to "1 or 2 days per month in the office" was added to clarify candidate's expectations for the role and to encourage the widest possible pool of high quality candidates to apply.

Feedback from the recruitment exercise indicates we have a strong list of suitable candidates who have applied for the roles.

A supplementary question asked what was the Leader's view on extended home working and if he felt the Senior Leadership Team was spending enough time in the borough. The Leader of the Council responded that the People Strategy and working practices in the Council were constantly under review.

Voluntary Redundancy Scheme

**14) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon)
From Councillor Joshua Chapman**

Can the administration confirm how many voluntary and non-voluntary redundancies were made as a result of the recent redundancy programme and were any redundancies made at senior leadership level?

Answer

As part of the recent Voluntary Release project 51 members of staff will be leaving the organisation. Of these, 3 employees are senior leaders within the organisation, that being Head of Service (Grade 12) or above. There have been no compulsory redundancies as part of this project, it was solely focused on employees coming forward for Voluntary Release.

A supplementary question asked what the Leader was doing to support staff and in any further redundancies were planned. The Leader responded that the Council was currently in the middle of the budget review process and that all options were currently under review.

Redundancy Scheme Savings

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

Can the administration confirm the total annual savings made as a result of the redundancy programme?

Answer

The savings resulting from the Voluntary Release project have not yet been finalised as there are a small number of staff who have not agreed their leaving date.

Some employees have been asked to stay on beyond the expected leaving date of the 30th September to ensure key services remain unaffected and to allow time for these services to map out how their operating models will look moving forward.

The final figures for savings will be available in the next few weeks.

(No supplementary question).