



FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 23rd November 2022

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

ULEZ

1) **To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone)**
From Councillor Keith Prince

Will Havering co-operate with the installation of equipment for the expansion of ULEZ?

Answer

Havering's commitment to tackling climate change is clear for everyone to see. In Havering, net CO2 emissions have decreased by an average of 35% across all main sectors since 2005, and I am proud that the Council's adopted Climate Change Action Plan sets out how the borough will become carbon neutral by 2040 or sooner.

That said, I do not consider expanding the Ultra-Low Emission zone as the right approach for tackling climate change in outer London. Like other outer London Boroughs, Havering lacks the public transport connectivity that boroughs in central and inner London enjoy. Without suitable alternative public transport options available, our hard-working residents have little option but to travel by car when making journeys within the borough, particularly between the north and the south. I will continue to lobby all layers of government from Ministers at the Department for Transport, to City Hall, to see that change.

Transport for London (TfL) consulted on proposals to expand the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) out to the GLA boundary over the summer. The Council objected to the proposed expansion in the strongest possible terms, considering it nothing more than a regressive flat-rate tax which will impact many hard-working families already struggling to make ends meet due to the cost of living crisis.

The Leader and I took the opportunity at a recent meeting with the Deputy Mayor for Transport, Seb Dance, to again stress Havering's firm opposition to the proposed ULEZ Expansion.

Whilst Havering will do everything within its powers to object to the proposal, should the Mayor of London ultimately decide to progress the scheme then Havering will deliver its legal obligations and responsibilities as the Local Highway Authority.

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member would commit to opposing the ULEZ and not cooperate on it with Transport for London or the Mayor. In response, the Cabinet Member confirmed that he wished to protect residents but would also have to do what was legally required.

Planning Enforcement

2) To the Cabinet Member for Development & Regeneration (Councillor Graham Williamson)
From Councillor Darren Wise

As reported in the Romford Recorder and confirmed by the Leader that 60% of the planning enforcement team has been reduced due to budget savings. Could the Cabinet Member confirm:

- how many current ongoing enforcement cases are open and;
- how many staff are dealing with enforcement cases and what is the ratio of cases to each enforcement officer

Answer

As of the 8th November, there are 646 open investigations. This number changes week to week depending on the number of case closures and new cases reported. Of these, 153 cases have had an Enforcement Notice or Breach of Condition Notice served.

There are five officers handling casework, this will reduce to four at the end of November. Casework is allocated to officers based on the nature and complexity of the alleged breach. If, at that time, all the casework on hand is equally split, officers could have approximately 180 cases each. An alternative split would change this ratio. It will not be possible for the officers to each handle a caseload of this size. There will be impact on the time it takes to investigate cases and to take action where it is needed.

The contraction of the team is temporary to help manage spend in this financial year, and the intention is to return to a substantive structure in the new financial year.

A revised Planning Enforcement Policy will be progressed to help manage the volume of planning enforcement casework which requires investigation.

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member planned to outsource the planning enforcement service to an external company. The Cabinet Member responded that this had not been discussed. Some agency staff were used currently but this would be revisited.

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Greenbelt Statement

**3) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon)
From Councillor John Tyler**

In a recent radio interview you stated that you were "...not wedded to the Green Belt." Would you explain what you mean by that statement

Answer

What I did not add on the radio interview was "I am not wedded to the green belt because there may be special circumstances where building on the green belt might be the right thing to do and the benefits of doing so outweigh the loss of greenbelt, much of which is of poor quality and in any event not always accessible to the public".

A supplementary question asked how much more of Havering's Green Belt would be lost to business. The Cabinet Member responded that the data centre proposal represented special circumstances where the benefits outweighed the loss of Green Belt. A publicly accessible ecology park would also be included in the development.

"Plan for Patients"

**4) To the Cabinet Member for Adults & Health (Councillor Gillian Ford)
From Councillor Joshua Chapman**

Has the Borough received a funding allocation under the Government's 'Plan for Patients' to help support discharge into social care? If so, how much has the Borough received?

Answer

The governments 'Plan for Patients' was published by the former Secretary of State for Health & Social Care, Therese Coffey, on 25 September 2022. As the councillor is aware, the then SoS launched a £500m Adult Social Care Discharge Fund. Details of the distribution of the funding was only published on Thursday 17th November as part of the government's autumn statement.

The funding nationally is to be paid out directly to councils with adult social care responsibilities, but also via Integrated Care Boards (ICB), with both tranches of money to go into the better care fund for use to support discharge arrangements from acute hospitals. Of the £500m, social care will receive £200m directly, whilst ICB's will receive £300m.

Of the £200m, Havering via the adult social care relative needs formula is set to receive just under £840k, with the North East London ICB being given £7.4m for distribution across health and care in the ICB area. The funding will be paid in two tranches – the first 40% in early December and the remaining 60% on or before 31st January 2023. The ICB monies has been weighted by population but also takes into account the ICB's discharge performance. This disadvantages areas who have better discharge performance as they will get less money. North

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East London has the best discharge performance in London and the 6th best in England, which means less money as a proportion of population from the winter funding for NEL ICB, which in turn means less available for its constituent health and social care economies including Havering.

The funding is being made available to systems for activities that support discharges from hospital. This includes enabling more people to be discharged to appropriate settings, including from mental health settings, and prioritising those approaches that are most effective in freeing up the maximum number of hospital beds. The funding is also to be prioritised in boosting the provider social care workforce capacity through recruitment and retention activity linked to supporting discharge activity.

It is too early to say what NEL ICB will choose to spend their allocation on – however it is of note that the fund is to be used “flexibly by local health and care systems”. This means the NHS allocation is unlikely to simply be passported to borough social care departments within NEL, as there will be other winter pressures that the ICB will want to ensure is addressed, such as community health services, linked to expediting discharge.

The funding has to be pooled in the Better Care Fund between the NHS and adult social care with plans to be submitted by 16th December 2022 and will be assured via the regional Better Care Fund regional and national teams. Fortnightly activity reports will be required, alongside a final spending report in Spring 2023 after the end of the financial year.

A supplementary question asked if an all Member briefing could be arranged on how the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund monies would be spent and the position with Adult Social Care Finance. The Cabinet Member responded that a briefing on the use of the new funding could be arranged. The Overview and Scrutiny process could be used to obtain further details on the financial situation.

Parks Contract

**5) To the Cabinet Member for Corporate, Culture & Leisure Services (Cllr Paul Middleton)
From Councillor Brian Eagling**

Would the Cabinet Member provide full details of the tender for the locking and unlocking of park gates under the Parks contract including the number of tenderers being sought, the cost of the service, the times and frequency of visits planned, the number of anticipated fines likely to be given out (if the Council has such a by-law to implement fines) and whether these will apply to dog poo and litter dropping offenders?

Answer

The details requested will be officially released and accessible once they have been finalised by the legal team.

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Once acquired, there will be no cost to the council for the provision of the service, which is expected to be fully self-funded through revenue raised from issuing Fixed Penalty Notices.

The tender will be open to any applicable bidder that can provide the service required.

The intention is that all parks that are lockable will be visited at least twice per day and patrolled at various points throughout the day, with other parks and town centres visited daily.

We expect the provider to have to issue between 5,000 and 10,000 fines per year but we have no comparable data to benchmark with at this time.

To confirm, littering and dog fouling (which are criminal offences & are not by-laws) are two priorities that are in scope to be enforced against.

A supplementary question asked if the previous arrangement of closing park gates at sunset and opening them at sunrise had taken place under a byelaw. The Cabinet Member stated that he would check this and respond to Councillor Eagling outside of the meeting.

Grass Verges

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

Can the Cabinet Member confirm whether they have taken a decision to reduce the frequency of grass verge cutting/maintenance across the Borough?

Answer

An in-year operational decision was taken to reduce seasonal staff undertaking grass cutting and verge maintenance due to current budget pressures. The current wet season will dictate where and when the next cut will take place.

It is hoped that one further cut of grass on the main roads in the borough can take place, weather permitting

It is likely that staffing levels will return to normal next financial year.

A supplementary question asked if grass verges would be included in the new Public Realm contract. The Cabinet Member responded that this would be the case, provided this was suitable for residents and that budgets could be reduced.

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Gritting Supplies

**7) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone)
From Councillor Dilip Patel**

Can the Council confirm that they have adequate supplies of grit / salt to ensure that our roads and pavements will be safe for residents?

Answer

The Council's Winter Service policy and plan is reviewed every year and I can confirm it remains fundamentally the same as under the previous administration.

Winter Service standby arrangements commenced on 1 November and will be in place until at least 31 March 2023.

A team of staff is on call 24/7 to respond to forecasts of winter weather and grit our road network as required. This is in advance of freezing temperatures and during periods of snow, frost and ice.

The Winter Service Policy requires at least 2,000 tonnes of salt (grit) to be in our stores at the start of winter, and I can confirm this is the case.

Last winter the Council used less than 500 tonnes across the entire season. I can also confirm that arrangements are in place to restock salt during the winter as needed.

A supplementary question asked if gritting would continue if there was snowfall in April. The Cabinet Member responded that the Council had a surplus of salt from last year that would cover this eventuality.

Household Waste Containers

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

Should the Administration choose to move to waste containerisation as part of their changes to refuse collection, what methodology will be used to determine the number of containers issued to each household?

Answer

Thank you for the question. Until we have received the feedback from residents through the draft consultation on this item, I am unable to commit to a specific methodology. I am sure you will agree it is important to consider residents' views when looking at this area of service provision.

There is of course never a one size fits all option for these types of operations and were any scheme to be adopted it would be dependent on the results of

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detailed reviews of the boroughs demography in respect of building make up and the results of future Equalities Impact Assessments.

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member would ensure that flatter developments contributed to higher recycling rates. The Cabinet Member agreed that it was important to get residents to recycle and compost more.

East Havering Data Centre

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

With the proposed Data Centre being described as a Joint Venture, can the Administration confirm if it will be providing capital towards the project and, if so, how much over what timescale?

Answer

The data centre proposal report considered by cabinet on the 9th November 2022 does not describe the initiative as a joint venture. This is an inward investment opportunity wholly funded by private finance. Therefore, Havering is not proposing to provide capital towards the project.

A supplementary question asked how many Havering residents would be guaranteed a job in the data centre. The Leader of the Council responded that this was too early to say and depended on the qualifications required. The development would however provide great opportunities for people in Havering.

Staff Working from Home

**10) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon)
From Councillor Judith Holt**

Can the Administration confirm that there are adequate checks and balances in place, to ensure staff working from home are meeting service level agreements?

Answer

The Council's Performance Development Review process is applicable to all employees, including those who work remotely.

This includes conversations throughout the year at regular 1-1s or check-ins. These coaching conversations should:

- set clear expectations, goals and deadlines
- focus on outputs
- acknowledge effort and achievement
- keep lines of communication open
- build relationships based on trust, where employees feel trusted to do the work and trust their manager to support them in return

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Objectives are set for individuals on an annual basis (April/May), however, these are 'live' and should be reviewed regularly and, where appropriate changed to reflect changing circumstances or requirements.

Part of the appraisal conversations, where relevant, will focus on the individual's performance against service and customer objectives and outcomes.

In addition, our ICARE values and behaviours should be discussed throughout the year to ensure our staff are carrying out their roles in line with these. If areas for development are identified, an action plan for development will be agreed and put in place.

Following the agreement of the comprehensive Workforce Strategy and Target Operating Model Policies agreed at Cabinet on 9th November this will inform the future checks and balances.

A supplementary question asked how the outcomes of staff work were measured. The Leader of the Council responded that performance information data was used to inform staff and management about performance and output.

Enforcement in Parks

- 11) **To the Cabinet Member for Corporate, Culture & Leisure Services (Cllr Paul Middleton)**
From Councillor Osman Dervish

Can the Administration confirm if their tender, for locking gates and litter enforcement in parks, is a standalone contract or part of wider a contract for enforcement across the borough?

Answer

Further to the earlier question on this, the Pilot scheme has been planned for some time now and, as seen already in many other local authorities, will involve a private company coming in to support the existing enforcement team in carrying out enforcement activities across the Borough.

It will be part of the contract that the private company fulfil the task of securing the parks that can be locked as part of their patrols. Enforcement activities will not be limited to Havering's Parks and they will patrol borough wide, including the main town centres.

Revenue raised from enforcement activities will pay for the service, and as such it will be delivered at no cost to the council. Any surplus raised can be reinvested in the current enforcement team whilst also tackling ASB and environmental crime which have become key concerns for Councillors and residents alike.

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A supplementary question asked if a cost-benefit analysis of the potential increase in flytipping due to cost savings had been undertaken. The Cabinet Member felt this had no relation to the original question.

Tourism in the Borough

12) To the Cabinet Member for Corporate, Culture & Leisure Services (Cllr Paul Middleton)

From Councillor Damian White

With the completion of the Elizabeth Line, hotels are beginning to open across the Borough, in anticipation of increased tourist numbers.

Can the Council confirm if they will take steps to protect our tourism economy, by preventing the Home Office from block booking rooms?

Answer

As a local authority, once planning permission has been given for a hotel, it is then up to the owner or operator to maximise occupancy and income. We have no powers to prevent an individual owner or operator from negotiating with any person or organisation with regard to individual bookings or block bookings.

When we become aware that sustained block booking is taking place, the Planning and Public Protection Teams will investigate to determine if a change of use has taken place or if there is a need for licence to be sought. Where we do have a role is to work towards encouraging footfall in the borough and taking advantage of being a destination on the Elizabeth line by making us a place people want to visit. To this end, it is essential that we bring forward the plans for the Romford Master Plan as soon as possible to ensure Romford is an attraction for tourists and hotel businesses do not need to negotiate with the likes of the Home Office for block booking contracts. We plan to be bringing the draft RMP to Cabinet for agreement to go out to final public consultation in January.

A supplementary question asked if a report had been received on the block booking of hotels. The Cabinet Member responded that this had not been received as yet but would be forwarded when it was received.

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Housing Waiting Lists and Housing Stock

**13) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Paul McGeary)
From Councillor David Taylor**

Can the Council confirm the total number of residents on housing waiting lists in Havering and the total number of habitable, empty, homes in their stock?

Answer

We have just under 2,000 households on the Housing Register and currently we have 78 voids (across all tenures) in progress. The number of voids does vary between 50 and 90 at any given point depending on seasonal and other factors.

At this point we forecast this year to have circa 500 stock voids this year.

(No supplementary question).

Social Housing Planning

**14) To the Cabinet Member for Development & Regeneration (Councillor Graham Williamson)
From Councillor David Taylor**

How many homes does the council intend to purchase, or complete construction of, over the next 4 years, to operate as social housing?

Answer

The Council aims to complete construction on 416 affordable/social rent homes and a further 269 shared ownership homes in the next four years (calculated to the end of 2026).

The housing department aims to complete up to 77 buy backs in 2022/23, this may increase in future years but funding is yet to be confirmed. 34 have been completed in 2022/23 to date.

There are 76 properties to be purchased for regeneration purposes, which may be used temporarily for social housing, if timescales allow.

A supplementary question asked if any social housing homes had been delayed. The Cabinet Member responded that issues such as Covid, higher construction prices, the Building Safety Act and the lack of a station at Beam Park had led to delays in some projects.

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Community Infrastructure Levy Spend in Romford Town Centre

- 15) **To the Cabinet Member for Development & Regeneration (Councillor Graham Williamson)**
From Councillor Nisha Patel

Can the Administration confirm the total amount of C.I.L money collected in the last 12 months and how much has been spent to improve Romford Town Centre?

Answer

In the last 12 months from November 2021 to November 2022 the Council has received £2.68m in CIL receipts.

In the last 12 months two projects benefiting Romford Town Centre have had CIL funding allocated to them:

- £750,000 has been allocated to part fund a new CCTV control room based in the Central Library, ensuring community safety and upholding technical standards.
- £22,000 has been allocated to fund a delivery study for the Rom Valley Way Active Travel Route.

This study will help enable the Council to secure £M's in developer S106 contributions from forthcoming developments along Rom Valley Way to deliver the active travel route extending from the ring road to Grenfell Park.

The allocated CIL funds will be spent in the upcoming 2023/24 financial year to deliver the projects.

A supplementary question asked if work could be undertaken to clear graffiti along the River Rom. The Cabinet Member agreed to look into this if Councillor Patel could send him details of the specific locations affected.

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