

Havering Annual Report 2023/24



The Havering you want to be part of

Introduction

We are pleased to be presenting our second annual report, and what a year it has been. During 2023/24 we implemented our new Target Operating Model, streamlining our services and bringing together teams that will make the work we deliver more efficient. We appointed new Strategic Directors who oversaw the alignment of services under our three new directorates 'People, Place and Resources' and have been working with their teams to develop plans for delivering our overall vision: The Havering you want to be part of.

Looking back over the last year our main focus, alongside embedding our new structure and ways of working, has been closely scrutinising our spending and doing all we can to manage our controllable cost pressures. We spend around £182 million each year providing statutory and discretionary services, all of which are highly valued by our residents (a number of these are highlighted in this report), but the inadequacy of the government's annual finance settlement, is clearly unable to meet the rapidly rising costs of delivering services that we must do by law. There were also unwelcome decreases in grants such as the Household Support Fund, which affects those suffering from the cost of living pressures. The Council has already made over £160m of savings since Austerity began in 2010 and has sold off over £160m of assets to minimise borrowing to invest in much needed community facilities and infrastructure.

We have been very transparent in the fact that we were unable to set a legally balanced budget and would need the assistance of a Capitalisation Direction (borrowing to finance our day to day expenditure) or we would have to issue a Section 114 report (which means we do not have enough income to fund our expenditure), due to systemic underfunding. At the end of February we received confirmation that our £53.7m loan had been approved allowing us to close our £32.5 million budget gap, which was due to rise to £81.9 million over the next four years. The Capitalisation Direction is only a temporary measure and unless the Government changes the Local Government Funding Formula to reflect the demographic changes seen in Havering, it is likely the Council will require additional financial support and another Capitalisation Direction in future years.

An increasing amount of the Council's revenue spend goes on funding statutory Adult's and Children's social care which is provided to a small proportion of the Council's most vulnerable residents, many of whom with very complex needs requiring extensive support. However, it is becoming more difficult to deliver universal services with the remaining budget left and harder to find the savings required to deliver a balanced budget each year as demand for our services increase significantly greater than the funding we receive and can generate through council tax/other fees and charges income, we still continue to deliver some great services for our residents.

This is why the annual setting of the budget was one of the most difficult in the Council's history. However, in our 12 week budget consultation for 2024/25, we once again asked for residents' views on the spending proposals for the coming financial year, to help us make sure we deliver the right services to residents that need them the most. We received 3,723 individual responses, and after carefully considering these, it was agreed that we would unfortunately be increasing Council Tax. Other savings being taken forward include dimming the street lights by 30 percent on main roads, increasing market pitch fees and increasing events in parks, all of which will help save money or generate income for the council. The full results were [published ahead of our Cabinet meeting](#) in March and can be found in our [Havering Budget Consultation 2024 video](#).

Following the adoption of our first Corporate Plan back in November 2022, and alongside the financial situation we found ourselves in, we made the hard decision that we needed to revisit our plan to streamline and refocus on what can be achieved within our budget for the next two financial years. The resulting, refreshed [Corporate Plan](#) was launched in April 2024 and one of the commitments it sets out is our intention to strongly lobby all the main political parties for a more sustainable way of funding local councils, ensuring we do not need to see further reductions to non-statutory services in the future. As part of this, we will start reporting on the cumulative amount of underfunding the Council suffers.

Following an inspection of our Children's Services last December, the regulator Ofsted has judged services to be "Inadequate", which is a fall from a previously "Good" rating when Ofsted last visited in 2018. Whilst the inspection found our thresholds and partnership working are effective. Inspectors found that social workers have complex and higher than average caseloads resulting in too many children and young people who waited too long for the support

they needed, due to the growth in demand for services. This, coupled with poor management oversight and supervision of the social work teams, meant that there was “widespread drift and delay for too many children”.

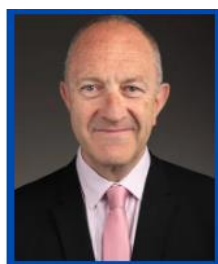
We accept the findings and we are sorry that we have not been able to deliver our ambitions. The judgement is disappointing for us as a Council, but we know that our borough is changing, with an increase in people (especially children) living in Havering, and we are determined to provide a service that our residents can rely on, so we have produced a detailed and robustly costed improvement plan to ensure we do that. Ofsted recognised that the “Chief Executive and Political leaders have a clear line of sight regarding the challenges facing the service”. Despite investment in Children’s Services to date, Ofsted recognised that “further significant financial investment is needed to deliver core statutory services”.

As councillors, we are all ultimately here to serve our communities. Sadly, last year, we lost several of our well respected former colleagues: Councillor Linda Hawthorn, who represented Upminster Ward from 1990 until she sadly passed away in May 2023; Councillor Paul Rochford, who represented Emerson Park Ward from 1998 to 2014; Councillor Barbara Matthews, who represented Hacton Ward from 1986 to 2014; Councillor Nic Dodin who also represented Hacton Ward from 2010 to 2018; and Councillor Frederick Thompson, who represented Romford Town Ward from 2002 to 2018. They each played a major role in representing their residents and their respective local communities and I had the pleasure of working alongside them all at different points over the years. I admired their commitment to the borough and their genuine care and desire to improve the lives of Havering residents.

There has also been cause to celebrate last year, including the second Havering Small Business Awards, which took place in May 2023. Seven local businesses were awarded in ten sponsored categories, including small business of the year, won by ‘Best Sellers’ in Hornchurch. The Council received over 4,200 nominations throughout the two week nomination period with more than 430 individual small businesses put forward for awards. This was a community-led event, and gave residents the chance to show their support and appreciation to the small and independent businesses across the borough that serve our communities.

The Council is proud to have a dedicated workforce who are committed to improving the delivery of public services, and in this, our second annual report, we have set out just some of the ways we have all come together to deliver on our original corporate plan commitments, and how we are continuing to deliver our Vision, “The Havering you want to be part of”.

Councillor Ray Morgan
Leader of the Council



Andrew Blake-Herbert
Chief Executive



A year in figures



90.2% of older people (65 and over) still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services



2,287 pupils across ten secondary schools took part in our Youth Wellbeing Census



84.8% of people with a learning disability living at home or with family

51.1% of children in care living with in-house foster carers



89.9% of Havering parents received an offer of their first preference primary school

76.08% of Havering parents received an offer of their first preference secondary school



2 Leisure centres and **10** libraries, formed part of the additional **22** community warm spaces we opened over the winter for use by anyone struggling to heat their home.



98% of pupils attend a Good or Outstanding school



958 trees were donated to the Council by Thames Chase to improve biodiversity at Upminster Cemetery



12% more recycling was collected in October to December, thanks to our new waste contract



1978 households out of the **2971** applicants were prevented from becoming homeless



2,500 households signed up to the 'Podback' coffee pod scheme



197 new affordable homes delivered from the regeneration programme, with **14** affordable homes to rent, **18** shared ownership and four homes for direct sale delivered as part of St Georges Park



£90,000 of investment in Community and Voluntary sector organisations in the borough through our Community Chest funding



96.28% of Council Tax collected



98.39% of Business rates collected



3723 responses received on the budget consultation



423 children responses to our first children's budget consultation 'Shout about the money'



Over £3.5m in grant income brought in, as part of work towards our Net Zero target



75 measures installed into **51** properties under the warmer homes programme



44 Community Climate Change Champions trained to support communities to take action on climate change

People – “Things that are important to our residents”

Our Trading standards team have been busy this year, making sure fair trading is carried out in Havering for the benefits of consumers, local traders and businesses. The team have undertaken in depth investigations, worked alongside Havering police and have taken dangerous cigarettes, vapes as well as illegal skin lightening products off the borough's streets. These are just a few examples of the excellent partnership work between our trading standards team and the police.

In the Summer term 2023, we undertook our most comprehensive piece of research with Havering's young people in a number of years, as part of our commitment to hearing more from young people in the borough. [The Havering Youth Wellbeing Census](#) used a survey developed as part of an initiative in Greater Manchester called the #BeeWell programme. We worked with UCL Partners, (experts in the field of adolescent mental health), to adapt the survey to meet our local needs, voiced by our young people and the local services that support them. The results are available on our [data intelligence hub](#), helping us, our schools and our partners to understand the state of wellbeing in young people and consider the actions we can take to support their mental wellbeing.



Havering Education Service (HES) has once again been shortlisted in the ‘Supplier of the Year – not for profit’ category, in the Education Resources Awards (ERA). The awards highlight the quality and diversity of educational products, resources, excellent educational establishments and the most dedicated members of the teaching profession and supplier industry, showcasing how they work together to encourage the very best in education. Although we didn't secure the win this year, we are incredibly proud to have been recognised alongside other trusted suppliers.

A new responsibility for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) is assessing how local authorities meet their Care Act duties. In preparation for this, our Strategic Director of People invited the Association of Directors of Adults Social Services (ADASS) to Havering, in March 2024, to undertake an invaluable light ‘peer review’ of our Adult Social Care services. The review was undertaken over three days and a team of colleagues from other local authorities met with staff, partners (including the NHS) carers and those who use our services. The review confirmed some areas where we need to improve, which we are developing a plan for, as well as a number of strengths, including the commitment of our workforce to doing the best for our residents.

NHS and Local Authority Commissioners and providers, along with the community and voluntary sector have come together in Havering to form the Place Based Partnership with the aim of joining up services to agree how we can best work together to ensure residents get the best care, stay well for longer and that we deliver better value for money. The Partnership oversaw circa £90,000 of investment in Community and Voluntary sector organisations in the borough through our Community Chest funding. 15 projects were awarded funding, and a total of 941 residents benefitted from the various groups and activities. The Partnership also jointly undertook a refresh of the ‘strategy for informal and unpaid carers’, to ensure that we deliver improved experiences and outcomes in the Borough. The strategy, developed with local carers, sets out how partners will oversee delivery of the action plan, as well as how additional funding, aimed at reducing health inequalities, will be used to commission additional capacity for one to one assessments for Carers.

In February 2024, the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA) conducted an inspection of South Essex Crematorium. The inspectors are there to ensure high standards of service delivery to local communities and ensure compliance with the code of cremation practice. South Essex Crematorium scored above average in every one of the seven areas inspected receiving a 97% compliance rating. The crematorium staff provide an excellent service, and the inspection just highlights their dedication and commitment and the professional and sensitive service offered by all who work there.



Over the autumn and winter of 2023/24 our libraries delivered our ‘Warm Coats initiative’ where anyone could pick up a warm coat for free. Once again our residents gave generously and we received many donations of warm, undamaged and clean adults and children's coats, which were collected by 1761 residents.

Key Challenges 2024/ 25

Demand continues to be relentless in the People Services. Social care services and our housing demand team, who work with our residents and families who are homeless, are dealing with increasing levels of complexity. Our children's population has grown significantly over the past 13 years, including children with disabilities, and we have the second highest proportion of older adults over 65 in London. We are continuing to see more people including families finding themselves homeless, most through no fault of their own, as the cost of living crisis continues to bite both tenants and landlords alike.

The outcome of our Ofsted inspection earlier this year, means we are investing millions into children's social care to ensure we are able to improve services for our most vulnerable younger residents. Due to the numbers of Children with an EHCP who attend mainstream school, but are in need of specialist SEND provision, over 500 new places in SEND units or special schools have been delivered in the last two years or planned within the next three years to meet the demand.

Place – “A great place to live, work and enjoy”

Our new waste and recycling contract with Urbaser Ltd started on 23rd October 2023, and we have received some really positive feedback. Havering residents are now able to recycle more items such as plastic pots, tubs and trays as well as glass and coffee pods. Other new additions to the waste service include the collection of small electrical items, batteries and clothes, making it easier than ever for us all to do our bit for the environment. The new contract came with a new fleet of electric vehicles, which measure the carbon output, enabling us to review if there is a positive impact on the environment. Urbaser have also committed to a number of initiatives and funding opportunities to support local environmental activities.

We opened our Park Rise Retirement Village in February 2024. This is a collection of 175 one and two bedroom high quality apartments, which includes two communal lounges residents can enjoy, electric vehicle charging points, mobility scooter storage as well as a landscaped communal garden. The high-quality apartments alongside Harrow Lodge Park have been designed and built exclusively for over 55s to live independent lives whilst being part of a wider community.



As part of the annual International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in November, our Community Safety team raised awareness by leading and supporting workshop sessions on VAWG and all gender-based violence in secondary schools and colleges. The team worked alongside Havering Police in walk and talk sessions, provided crucial information on how to report or get help regarding domestic violence as well as how to call out disrespectful behaviour that makes others uncomfortable.

We worked in collaboration with Havering Changing, FUSE (the Local Cultural Education Partnership),



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Communicating Havering and Creative Health Havering to submit the 'Havering London' bid to become a borough of culture. The submission highlighted our plans to build a greater sense of place, champion a rich heritage, and firmly put Havering on the London map. Although we were not successful in our bid, we are still working with external funders to further a cultural programme that will build on the application to create new opportunities for every part of our borough and transform Havering to become a beacon of culture.

Havering Council teamed up with Age UK to deliver our free Energy Doctors service. The service was available for all Havering residents, enabling professionals to provide advice, some changes or repairs to homes to make them more energy efficient, and save money. Age UK visited **145** Havering homes under this scheme. The Council developed the service further by appointing our Housing contractors MEERS to provide the service to our empty properties before these are offered out to tenants. As at the end of March 2024 MEERS had visited **220** empty properties.

Havering and Brentwood Bereavement Services (HBBS) Counselling contract was due to come to an end in March 2024 but has been extended thanks to the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM), who provided a £14k donation from the cremation service in February 2024 from the metal recycling scheme. The scheme, with the permission of next of kin, takes hard metals such as medical implants following cremation and recycles them to make other things such as road signs. All the money received is donated back into the borough and this £14k donation is just one donation from the £127k received back into the borough since the scheme launched in 2015.



Havering was acknowledged 18 times for our great work on our [Serious Violence strategy](#) in the Greater London Authority (GLA) analysis of serious violence Strategic Needs Assessments.

The use of cash has reduced significantly over the years, so Havering Council has been replacing old parking ticket machines, which take cash, with modern terminals that accept contactless payments, making it easier and safer for residents to park.

Key Challenges for 2024/25

As well as the challenging financial situation faced by the council, the services provided within the Place Directorates are working to respond and deal with many challenges shared with our wider communities. The challenging financial situation for us all of rising costs of goods and services along with higher interest rates mean that major contractors and smaller local firms are facing severe financial pressures. This means there is more risk in delivery of contracts and successful procurement as suppliers are generally more risk adverse as they respond to global drivers such as fuel and labour pricing, this risk can increase overall costs.

Rising construction costs mean that the viability of housing developments is reduced. In addition, extra costs from new Building Safety requirements means new homes are delayed and with the potential for reduced amounts of affordable housing being delivered. New regulatory regimes such as the Building Safety Act and the Social Housing Regulation regime are placing additional qualification requirements for staff, increasing our costs or making it difficult to find properly qualified staff. Our income targets are being squeezed. Fewer developments and house sales mean that our Planning application, building control and land searches incomes are reduced and the overall cost of living crisis could impact negatively on other income such as housing rents and car parking. We know that the built environment and public realm are areas of concern for local people who expect to see clean streets, safe roads and pavements, well maintained parks and open spaces and efficient refuse collection and disposal. Pressure on overall council budgets inevitably mean less money to spend on the more visible public services the council provide with potential reduced satisfaction from residents as a result.

A particular challenge over the next couple of years will be the tendering and introduction of the new waste food collection service. Waste reform is moving at pace with simpler recycling, statutory food waste services and building on the producer pays principle. However, there is uncertainty on the level of funding that will be provided by Government to support these initiatives.

Resources – “A well run Council that delivers for People and Place”

Over the last year, as part of our commitment to engage more with our community, we undertook 92 separate consultations, with 14,262 individual responses. These consultations covered a full range of topics including services from Education to Parking, Social Care to Community Safety and the Council’s budget setting process for 2024/25. Once again we have provided analysis of the outcomes from the consultations on our Consultation Hub, under the [“we asked, you said, we did”](#) page. One of the consultations we undertook was our first ever children’s budget consultation: ‘Shout about the money’. This was launched so that children and young people could give their views on how the Council could improve their

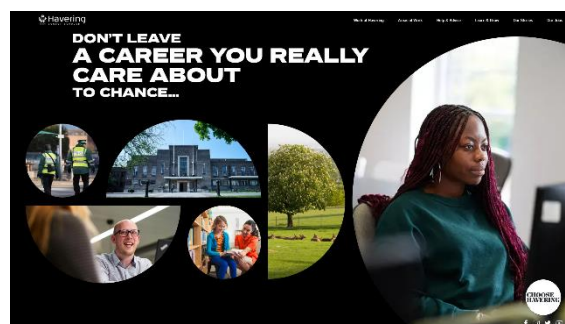


financial situation. 423 responses were received to the online consultation and a [short video](#) has been produced and shared with schools to thank children for their involvement and explain how they influenced our budget.

As part of our climate pledge to become carbon neutral by 2040, the Council applied for and was awarded a grant of £342k by the Greater London Authority. The money has been used towards establishing a retrofit visitors centre, located in the Park Lodge at Raphaels Park. The centre will be an exhibition space showcasing retrofit measures to inform residents, students and businesses about how homes can be retrofitted to reduce energy use and costs and improve comfort. The retrofit centre will be run in partnership with the Havering Volunteer Centre and will become a demonstrable asset for the Council, being used much more intensively than it is currently but with running costs significantly reduced. Plans are coming along nicely, with lots of interested suppliers wanting to showcase their products, and we are on track for opening the doors to the public in Autumn 2024.

The Council has a zero tolerance stance on any forms of discrimination and has a rich programme of Diversity events including Black History Month, which is an annual celebration of the history, achievements and contributions of Black people in the UK, which the Council celebrates every year. We began our celebrations in October with a flag raising ceremony at the Town Hall, followed by a minute's silence to reflect on past and present racism encountered by Black and Minority Ethnic people across Britain. Libraries hosted a London based poet and rapper, Triple O, for performances and showcased themed book displays, whilst African artist Olu Eche exhibited her works which combine lines, contrasts and flowers, depicting positive reflections of everyday life.

We have continued to focus on developing and building our workforce, and being an employer of choice. In August 2023 we launched our brand new Career Website (www.haveringjobs.co.uk). This will enable us to reduce our future recruitment costs, work towards being seen as an "employer of choice", and attract new talent to help us shape a brighter future for everyone.



Havering's Communications team have been shortlisted as a finalist in this year's [Local Government Chronicle \(LGC\) Awards](#) in the Campaign of the Year category for their Havering Characters. The LGC awards are one of the biggest awards in local government and the winners will be announced in June. Our Communications team have already won three awards for the 'Havering characters' which were launched to make our new shared work spaces work for everyone and improve the service we provide to residents.



Key Challenges for 2024/25

As a result of years of underfunding, we have been forced to scale back on our ambitions which makes longer term planning more challenging.

Our data is regarded as a valuable resource which is used every day to run our services, and in a proactive manner to inform early intervention and demand management. The Council already has a project in motion to move the currently aging infrastructure to a modern and secure environment, which will add much-needed security and resilience while helping safeguard the information we hold and reduce the threat of a successful cyber-attack. We must continue to improve and innovate in technology to enable us to keep up with the pace of change surrounding us which will require investment to deliver; an investment against the many other competing demands on the limited funding envelope we're already struggling to contain our expenditure within.

And finally...

Looking to the year ahead, we will continue to face the battle of delivering the services that matter most to our residents, within the limited budget we have, through lobbying activities. We will build upon the good work achieved throughout the last year by supporting our residents to stay safe and well, enabling a resident-focused and resilient council and ensuring Havering continues to be a great place to live, work and enjoy.