



FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 24th July 2024

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Anti-Social Behaviour in Parks

**1) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone)
From Councillor Viddy Persaud**

Could the Cabinet Member please outline what steps are being taken to tackle anti-social behaviour, drug use, and littering in our parks?

Answer

Thank you for your question Councillor Persaud,

We are very proud of the parks in Havering, 16 of which have received and recently retained National Green Flag Awards for excellence. Our parks are there for the pleasure and enjoyment of all our residents and visitors to the Borough. But sadly on occasions this enjoyment is spoilt by unacceptable antisocial behaviour involving drug use and littering.

The council has 2 Parks Police who work on shifts and regularly patrol all of the Council's parks. The Parks Police Team is supported across the borough by a small number of council enforcement officer. They prioritise which parks they focus on based on the number of calls or complaints of anti-social behaviour they have received, which can be from a number of different sources. The Parks Police team will also change their shift patterns to accommodate the times complainants are reporting anti-social behaviour.

Complaints of anti-social behaviour such as drug use, scrambler bikes and nuisance gatherings that may require a multi-agency response are discussed at a bi monthly meeting of the Joint Enforcement Tasking Group which is attended by the Parks Police Team as well as the Council housing, youth service, public protect and licencing teams . Parks that have previously been experiencing high levels of antisocial behaviour have had additional resources allocated to them including increased patrols by the Police and the council's Enforcement Team.

I would encourage anyone, Councillor or residents who witness antisocial behaviour taking place in any of our parks to report it. Details of how to report antisocial behaviour can be found on the Council's webpage.

A supplementary question asked how many rough sleepers had been removed from Romford parks in the previous six months. The Cabinet Member responded that he would look into the numbers but any issues should be raised to him by ward Councillors.

Car Park Shutters at New Green

2) To the Cabinet Member for Housing & Property (Councillor Paul McGeary) From Councillor Matt Stanton

What arrangements are proposed to address the difficulties imposed on New Green Residents by the poor design and placement of 4 parking spaces in the area adjoining the shutters at the point of access and egress to the car park which impedes residents from travelling in and out of the car park when those spaces are being used?

Answer

The car park design was undertaken as per the planning approval, however we are aware of the issues occurring on site.

The proposal is to remove from use the four external car parking spaces. Initially the car park marking on the ground will be removed and a temporary barrier will be installed to prevent the spaces being used.

Given this action will be an amendment to the approved planning permission, an application to vary the permission will need to be made to the LPA to remove the 4 spaces. Discussions have taken place with the Planning Officers and an application is in the process of being drafted.

A supplementary question asked if the temporary barrier would be placed to not recreate the issue of cars parking in those spaces. The Cabinet Member responded that the barrier would be in place until the planning application has approval.

Response time for Planning Enquiries

3) To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration (Councillor Graham Williamson) From Councillor Martin Goode

Could the cabinet member please explain why responses to queries raised by Ward councillors and residents, requesting an update to an application (P0685.23) that went to the planning committee in February, still remains unanswered or being addressed adequately within the 15 days SLA despite numerous chasers to the case officers?

Answer

It is acknowledged that this application is sensitive and has given rise to significant interest from local residents and elected representatives. However, the Council is not aware of any significant delays in responding to queries raised by either ward councillors and residents with regard to this planning application. The application was subject of a Planning Committee site visit on 21 March. The most recent member correspondence on this case was from Councillor Wise on 24 June, to which a response was issued on 9 July. The most recent correspondence from a resident was received on 17 June and responded to on 9 July.

Council, 24th July 2024

The case is also subject to a planning enforcement complaint. The planning enforcement team is dealing with a high volume of cases, which does have some impact on response times, but they confirm that updates have been given to both residents and ward councillors.

Staff are committed to providing timely responses to all enquiries raised by both ward councillors and residents and use best endeavours to respond to these within published timescales.

A supplementary question asked if the timeframe of submitting questions and having responses was unacceptable. The Cabinet Member responded that he could not comment on the acceptability of the timeframe but due to a lack of funding and resources there may be a delay in processes.

Payment Options for PCNs

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

Can the Cabinet Member for Environment please explain why the payment plan option is not extended to PCN recipients at the discounted rate if intention is made to pay within this discounted period?

Answer

The Councils main objective for parking and moving traffic enforcement is to ensure parking controls and traffic restrictions are observed. This helps maintain safety, secure parking space availability and the efficient operation of the road network by deterring motorists from breaking restrictions.

The risk of receiving a Penalty Charge Notice is designed to act as a deterrent and encourage compliance. In London the PCN level is set by London Councils and it has not increased since 2011. There is a mandatory 50% discount to the PCN value if it is paid within 14 days.

The true value of the PCN is therefore the full value. Payment plans allow the payee an extended period to settle the Penalty Charge. Customers can choose to pay half the discount immediately on receipt of the Penalty and pay the balance before the end of the 14 days. If a customer requires more than 14 days to make payment, then the full charge of the Penalty must be applied.

The Council currently has no plans to offer a payment plan at the discounted rate. If such an offer was made it is likely the deterrence would be reduced.

A supplementary question asked if Cabinet would consider reducing the discount to more than half the value of the PCN. The Cabinet Member responded that all options would be considered.

Air Quality Action Plan

**5) To the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Housing Need (Councillor Natasha Summers)
From Councillor Keith Darvill**

When will the Administration publish its revised Air Quality Action Plan?

Answer

The Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) is currently under internal review by Environmental Health Officers, this is expected to be completed by 31st August 2024.

Once the draft has been finalised and briefed to Lead Members, the Greater London Authority (GLA) must review the document. The GLA Review is expected to take approximately 6 weeks.

After the GLA review and any changes, a Public Consultation can then take place. The Public Consultation Period is required to run for 12 weeks.

Any responses or recommendations from the Public Consultation will need to be incorporated into the AQAP as appropriate.

Approval of the final AQAP will then be finalised by our Democratic Process and published.

With the above time scales and no unforeseen circumstances which could cause delay, it is expected the report would be adopted no later than the end of March 2025.

A supplementary question asked if assurance could be given that Cabinet would not continue to delay to avoid the risk of being non-compliant. The Cabinet Member responded that officers would be consulted and a response would be given following the meeting.

Library Consultation Meetings

**6) To the Cabinet Member for Digital, Transformation & Customer Services (Councillor Paul Middleton)
From Councillor Martin Goode**

Would the Cabinet member, please explain why this council is advising the public and Library users, that they must apply on line to book an event ticket to attend the scheduled Library Closure consultation meetings and why the number of tickets are limited to 20 in some instances (as stated in *Living in Havering, Friday 5th July*).

Answer

For these meetings we are using Eventbrite so that we can make sure the space allocated is sufficient to meet the demand. This was used for the most recent Budget Consultation and was very successful. We have ticketed seats at each meeting but

Council, 24th July 2024

also standing room and we do not anticipate turning anyone away who wants to ask about the consultation. In the three consultations to date, attendance has been high from both ticketed and walk-ins.

Later on in the consultations we move to the bigger libraries which have larger capacity. There is over 500 places available to book across all of the events involved in the consultation and not including the capacity for walk ins.

The attendance at each event so far has been as follows

9th July - Town Hall – 37

11th July – Gidea Park – 35

12th July – Collier Row - 22

18th July – Elm Park - 25

19th July – Harold Wood – St Peter’s Church - 39

19th July – South Hornchurch 14

We have listened to feedback and made it clearer there is walk in space and the website and Eventbrite have been updated.

Around 3,000 people have already responded to the consultation, which is one of the highest responses to a consultation we have published. Residents can continue to add their views to the consultation until it closes on 2 August

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member would agree the information was false. The Cabinet Member denied the information was false but accepted it was not of a good enough standard and it had been updated.

Highway Weed Spraying Contract

7) To the Cabinet Member for Environment Councillor Barry Mugglestone) From Councillor Tim Ryan

Will the Administration accept that the delivery of the annual weed spraying programme has proved ineffective at best, and commit to action to hold the contractor to account for their apparent failure to meet their obligations?

Answer

The current contract specifies three sprays per year, which officers are monitoring. These take place during March to October, on a cyclical basis around the borough.

The product used continues to be a clean label product, which is heavily diluted. Whilst the product is effective in killing off the weeds, it does not persist in soil and therefore does not prevent regrowth, which given the amount of rain experienced this year, is considerable. Officers are working with the contractor to identify alternative treatments and provide the cost impacts, with consideration being given to more bespoke treatments based on land use, rather than the current “one size fits all” approach.

A supplementary question asked when was the last time the weeds in Rush Green had been cut. The Cabinet Member responded that he was not aware when they had last been cut but any issues should be reported to him by ward Councillors.

Flood Risk at Brookside School

- 8) **To the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People (Councillor Oscar Ford)**
From Councillor Keith Darvill

Will the Lead Member report on progress of the proposed flood alleviation proposals in respect of Brookside School?

Answer

The council has no current proposals to carry out any flood alleviation works at this site.

As Brookside School is an Academy, any additional flood risk reduction measures would have to be carried out by the Department for Education (DfE) as part of their building relocation project.

DfE cannot give any further update on this, other than assuring that discussions are active and hope that there will be progress soon.

The Council will continue to work with partner agencies and support the school and academy trust in relation to current risk management arrangements, and in the negotiations with the DfE to relocate the school buildings.

A supplementary question asked if the proposals could be brought forward. The Cabinet Member responded that Cabinet would continue to work with partners on the issue.

Romford Market Management

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

Would the Cabinet Member for Regeneration please explain why it is necessary to employ three market managers at a time of significant financial strain at the same time that they have chosen to reduce the operating days of Romford Market?

Answer

The Market team comprises one Manager and two other personnel, responsible for physical operation of the market, including oversight of daily set up and dismantling, plus a variety of administrative tasks including management of licences, trader liaison and financial matters.

Council, 24th July 2024

The headcount of the team has been reduced in recent years, and contrary to what the question might imply, was not increased when Sundays were added to the trading days in 2020. Reverting to a three-day market has however enabled the elimination of overtime and in conjunction with other changes should enable the Market to operate without a deficit for the first time in many years.

Resourcing within the service, as in all services, will continue to be monitored such that further operating efficiencies can be made when appropriate.

A supplementary question asked if the need for 3 staff in the team could be justified. The Cabinet member responded that there were 5 members of staff in 2019 and he had seen their work schedule and would keep the staff numbers under review.

Criminal Activity on Council Regeneration Sites

10) To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration (Councillor Graham Williamson) From Councillor Jane Keane

Will the Cabinet Member advise the steps that the Council is taking to prevent buildings on its regeneration sites from being used for criminal purposes?

Answer

Where the Council is in the process of acquiring sites for regeneration purposes, it engages external property agents to manage the current premises pending demolition for subsequent redevelopment.

Premises occupied by existing businesses that continue to trade in the interim are subject to periodic, but less frequent inspection on the basis that ongoing occupation tends to ensure that the premises remain more secure and accordingly lower risk. Nonetheless, inspections by managing agents are required to ensure that there is no serious breach of covenant by the current lessee(s). Any substantive breach of lease covenant will be referred to solicitors for legal action.

A supplementary question asked if security would be reviewed following the incident. The Cabinet Member responded that nothing had been found at the site so no raid could have been conducted.

Road Traffic Accident, junction of Wennington Road and New Road

11) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone) From Councillor Jackie McArdle

Following the fatal RTC at the Wennington Road/New Road junction last April, can the Administration confirm that it is now in receipt of a Met Police report on suggested traffic calming measures and outline a timeline for the implementation of the recommendations contained therein?

Answer

It is unfortunately the case that road traffic collisions can lead to devastating consequences and life changing injuries. The Mayor of London's "Vision Zero" target is that there will be no one killed or seriously injured on London's roads by 2041. The council is aligned with this target and is using funding from TfL to try and achieve this.

The process following a fatality includes an officer site visit with specialist police officers, reviewing accident reports, assessment of data, development of a scheme and securing funding. As part of this process a consideration of scheme impact (benefits and any disbenefits) including consultation and other consequences, takes place.

In this case the Council has received recommendations and feedback from the police. The Council is in the process of procuring further detailed collision data for the area and will use this and other analysis to develop possible safety measures.

The Council has secured funding from TfL to complete a study and potential design this year. If a viable scheme is identified a further bid for funding next year (for implementation) will be made.

A supplementary question asked if it was possible to see the report. The Cabinet Member responded that he would have to consult officers as there could be confidential information contained within the report.

Car Park Shutters at New Green

**12) To the Cabinet Member for Housing & Property (Councillor Paul McGeary)
From Councillor Matt Stanton**

What arrangements are proposed to address the difficulties imposed on New Green Residents by the failure of allocated Push Button Fobs and the inadequate replacement of such Fobs to residents?

Answer

All users of the car park have been issued with new fobs to operate the roller shutters which should overcome the issue.

The control systems and fob creator equipment is located in the estate management suite at New Green. The Council have purchased additional blank fobs which can, if required, be reprogrammed on site and given to residents.

A supplementary question asked if the fobs could operate the entrance and exits. The Cabinet Member responded that he would confirm the position with officers.

Locking of Park Gates

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

Following the cancellation of the contract with National Enforcement Solutions, for litter enforcement and the locking of our parks, can the Cabinet Member please confirm what steps will be taken to ensure that Romford's parks are locked at night?

Answer

Parks Locking activity is an expensive yet non-statutory function and was therefore stopped in 2022 as part of financial savings suggested and accepted to assist with the current and future financial position of the council.

The activity was restarted at no cost to the Council under a wider Enforcement Pilot. This contract, which was delivered by National Enforcement Solutions (NES) started in May 2023 and ceased on 31st May 2024.

Benchmarking carried out with other London boroughs reveals that most Councils approached have scaled down or stopped parks locking.

Currently, Officers are assessing whether there is a pressing and justifiable need to recommence parks locking and unlocking. An update on potential options is due in September this year, when my Cabinet colleagues and I will consider any recommendations.

(No supplementary question asked)

Parking in Park Lane, Hornchurch

14) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone) From Councillor Judith Holt

Following an email from the relevant Director, on 22nd March, which confirmed free parking on Park Lane, can the Cabinet Member please confirm why the free parking period has now been removed?

Answer

Thank you Councillor Holt for your question.

All parking controls are supported by a legal order. When prices for parking change it is necessary to advertise a statutory notice. This is usually done through a bulk order update following Council approval of new charges.

Unfortunately, when the notice for 24/25 was published it was not presented in the correct order in the press. This caused confusion and following publication it was also noted that Park Lane and Kyme Road were included in the wrong section, which was an administrative error.

Council, 24th July 2024

A new Notice was written and published to correct the error, stating that current paid parking arrangements will continue and that 30 minutes free parking does not apply to these roads.

The Administration has committed to reviewing this after the first 6 months of the financial year.

A supplementary question asked why other roads in the surrounding area had retained the free parking period. The Cabinet Member responded that there had never been free parking on the roads in question.

Grass Cutting in Cemeteries

**15) To the Cabinet Member for Digital, Transformation & Customer Services
(Councillor Paul Middleton)
From Councillor Judith Holt**

Given that Upminster cemetery appears to have been looking neglected as of late, can the Cabinet Member confirm the mowing schedules for the public Cemeteries across Havering.

Answer

The London Borough of Havering manages four cemeteries, Upminster, Romford, Hornchurch and Rainham. The total acreage of the combined sites is approximately 80 acres.

The operations team consists of two Supervisors, four Bereavement Service Operatives and seven Gardeners. The team aim to cut to the grass 12 times in the growing season. This means the gardening team will have a turnaround timetable of three/four weeks for the ride on mowers and seven weeks for the strimming.

This year the weather in March and April was unusually wet which meant it delayed the team being able to use the ride on mowers. The impact of this was a 6 week delay to the start of cutting season on the larger accessible areas.

Over the last five years, there has also been an increase in weed and grass growth, primarily because of the extended growing season due to climate change . This has resulted in additional pressure on the gardening team being able to stay on top of the grounds maintenance. Historically the growing season was between April and September but the service is now actively cutting and weeding between March and October.

Staff are working hard to restore and maintain the grounds to the high standards customers expect while battling adverse weather patterns.

Upminster Cemetery is a working cemetery which has burial provision for a further 23 years. The operations team are committed to delivering an excellent service,

Council, 24th July 2024

testament to this is the 'Gold Standard' award in London in Bloom which the team won last year.

A supplementary question asked if Councillor Holt could meet with the gardeners of the cemeteries. The Cabinet Member responded that he would be happy to introduce the Councillor to the team.