



MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Appendix 1

Winter Fuel Allowance

1) **To the Cabinet Member for Adults & Wellbeing (Councillor Gillian Ford)**
From Councillor Judith Holt

What plans does the Council have to support those who will lose out following the Government's cutting of the Winter Fuel Allowances?

Answer

People who are in receipt of Pension Credits will continue to receive the Winter Fuel Allowance (WFA). Therefore, as part of our normal winter help and support, the Household Support Fund (HSF) is funding an officer (through our partner the CAB) to specifically target and encourage people to sign up for pension credits. Furthermore, the Emergency Assistance Scheme (EAS) has always been able to help residents pay for fuel bills. As part of the winter marketing plan we will be targeting those households affected by the loss of the winter fuel allowance to apply for financial help through the EAS. Residents can apply for help through the EAS repeatedly, whereas the WFA is a one off payment. The EAS is also made up of other pots of money so anyone applying will automatically be applying for multiple sources of help, through one application.

At a wider level we have written a marketing strategy, in conjunction with the NHS' 'Winter Wellness' campaign, which will target any household who needs help. We have built on the work we started last year.

A supplementary question asked how information on the help available would be communicated to residents. The Cabinet Member replied that the information was included in the Living newsletter and would also be shown within a booklet on healthy living that was currently being produced.

Housing Repairs Covered by Warranty

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

Will the Cabinet Member for Housing confirm what proportion of repair requests made at New Green have been found to be defects under warranty?

Answer

Thank you for your question.

There is, of course, a difference between a contractual defect and a repair.

Every new building will have some defects. These are usually addressed, as they become apparent, by the contractor in the contract defects liability period.

New Green is still within its defects liability period.

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We have asked the Employers Agent to confirm the number of defects that have been reported to date.

Prior to the end of the defects liability period, New Green will be subject to a final defects inspection, the findings of which will be presented in a report to the contractor for attention, as appropriate.

A supplementary question asked what were the Cabinet Member's expectations regarding the percentage of faults at completion. The Cabinet Member responded that there were some issues with door locks that were currently being addressed. A written response on the condition at time of completion would be provided.

Development on Council Owned Parks

3) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone) From Councillor John Tyler

Do the Administration have any current plans (whether published or not) to sell, otherwise dispose of, or build homes or commercial buildings, on land within any council owned public parks, gardens or similar?

Answer

There are no current plans to dispose or develop upon any park land. However, we would consider opportunities to maximise the use and income for existing facilities.

Local authorities are required to review their assets frequently and the recent Capitalisation Order to mitigate the Council's financial position serves to raise expectations that such reviews are taking place.

A supplementary question asked why the Cabinet Member had recently stated to representatives of local bowls clubs that the Council may have to consider selling Havering's parks for housing. The Cabinet Member denied ever making such a remark.

Chippenham Road and Kings Lynn Drive Development

4) To the Cabinet Member for Housing & Property (Councillor Paul McGeary) From Councillor Nisha Patel

In the light of plans being submitted for 138 new affordable homes on land off Chippenham Road and Kings Lynn Drive in Harold Hill, can the Cabinet Member for Housing & Property provide their assurance that, should planning permission be granted, it is Havering residents who will be given priority to get onto the housing ladder?

Answer

Thank you for your question.

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The Council has adopted a Housing Allocations Scheme, and lettings will be made in this context.

I am working with officers, in accordance with this Scheme, to develop the details of a local lettings policy in relation to the proposed development in terms of helping to create a more sustainable community and improving tenancy sustainment.

In any event, and has been the case in relation to other Council regeneration schemes, eligible residents who were relocated away from the site to enable the proposed new development at Chippenham Road, will have a right to return, once the development has been completed.

A supplementary question asked if surplus housing stock would be offered first to Havering residents and what was the timescale for affordable housing. The Cabinet Member confirmed that residents would have the right of return once the development was completed. The timescale for completion of this development could be shared.

Protocol for Recording Text Messages

5) To the Cabinet Member for Housing & Property (Councillor Paul McGeary) From Councillor Jane Keane

Will the Cabinet Member for Housing prepare a protocol to be followed by housing officers for keeping records of text messages within the Housing Department including such messages received from tenants and leaseholders?

Answer

The Council already has a Mobile Device Policy as well as policies concerning Freedom of Information and Access to Information. Those documents, when read together, do oblige staff to properly record and store relevant information. However, when looking at the mobile devices policy I note that it is due for a review in September 2025 and it may be the case that it could be improved and updated.

This is however, something that affects the whole Council, rather than just the Housing Department.

Given this, the appropriate course of action would be to refer this to the Deputy Director Legal/Monitoring Officer, for consideration with my support.

In a supplementary question, the Councillor confirmed that she supported the referral of this matter to the Monitoring Officer.

Community Infrastructure Levy

**6) To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration (Councillor Graham Williamson)
From Councillor John Tyler**

What is the current breakdown of allocated and unallocated Community Infrastructure Levy money, which has been paid, or is due to be paid regarding developments already under construction?

Answer

Since Havering CIL was introduced in 2019, a total of £8.205 million has been collected. Of this, £1.146 million has been spent, £3.513 million has been allocated to projects and £3.076 million is currently unallocated.

It is not possible to accurately forecast CIL which is due to be paid because the trigger point for payment is 90 days from commencement on site. Commencement can take place up to three years after planning permission is granted. However, I can advise that CIL to the value of £485,846.06 is now due for payment at this time.

A supplementary question asked how much CIL funding was currently available to spend in Cranham. The Cabinet Member responded that, whilst the CIL was borough-wide, some ward priorities could also be funded and he would investigate this.

Romford Town Centre

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

Could the Cabinet Member for the Environment please give an explanation as to why Romford Town Centre continues to be blighted by fly tipping, overflowing bins, graffiti and street beggars/bedding contributing to an overall impression of deliberate neglect on the part of the Administration?

Answer

FCC have staff permanently stationed in Romford Town Centre 7 days a week. Their performance on fly-tip reports shows that over 99% are being removed on time. In Romford Town Centre, depending on the location, the targets are as little as 2 hours.

Where fly-tipping, overflowing bins or graffiti are found they can also be reported via the My Havering webpage to assist the Council in addressing them promptly.

We are aware of the impact that littering and fly-tipping has on our communities and the overall cleanliness of our borough. This is why we have recently launched our new campaign *Where We Live*. It aims to empower communities to take pride in their neighbourhoods by actively taking part in community clean-ups, litter picks, reporting fly-tipping and helping us to make Havering a cleaner and safer place to be.

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Homelessness and begging are national problems and are not exclusive to Romford.

A number of rough sleeping referrals are made to Street link every month however, many rough sleepers also have complex needs or do not always want to take up an offer of accommodation. Therefore, getting them into stable, permanent accommodation and supporting them to stay there isn't straightforward.

The Council is also publishing regular communications around the work we are doing to help rough sleepers off the street, advice on how residents can give as an alternative to begging and how they can inform us of rough sleepers they see on our streets.

Where people carry out anti-social behaviour in the Town Centre (including rough sleepers), a stepped enforcement approach is taken against them. This includes the use of Community Protection Warnings and Notices which can also have positive requirements to engage with housing offers.

Discarded bedding is frequently removed but is easily replaced with packaging from local businesses and so can be a challenge to keep clear.

A supplementary question asked why the Council could not keep other parts of the Town Centre to the standards of cleanliness seen in the Liberty, Mercury and Brewery.

Botulism at Harrow Lodge Park

8) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone) From Councillor Trevor McKeever

Will the Cabinet Member for the Environment report to Full Council on the work that is being undertaken to prevent the deaths of water birds in Harrow Lodge Park from botulism?

Answer

The Council completed an improvement project in 2022 on the lake, removing significant volumes of silt which contains the botulism bacteria. Given the nature of the watercourse, there will always be silt present however, this is now much lower. Therefore, it is likely that there will continue to be incidents where wildfowl unfortunately contract botulism, although this will be in much smaller numbers than before the improvements.

The lake also currently has two aeration units to improve the oxygen levels which aids the overall quality of the water. We are currently in the process of procuring

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additional splash fountains, which also assist aeration, using external funding. These are expected to be installed by the spring of next year.

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member could confirm when the two aeration pumps in Harrow Lodge Park would be repaired. The Cabinet Member replied that he would check on this and advise the Member separately.

Warm Spaces

**9) To the Cabinet Member for Adults & Wellbeing (Councillor Gillian Ford)
From Councillor David Taylor**

Can the Administration please outline what plans are in place for the provision of warm spaces over winter, recognising their invaluable role in supporting our most vulnerable residents?

Answer

The Havering Based Partnership Ageing Well fund has provided a £80k grant to continue the Warm Places from 1st June 2024 – 31st March 2025. There are currently 10 funded Warm Places in place within the Harold Hill, Harold Wood, Rainham, Sth. Hornchurch, Elm Park, Upminster and Romford areas. Each Warm Place is managed by a voluntary or faith organisation, providing at each location hot refreshments, a range of activities/talks/demonstrations/information and advice stations; free lunch or breakfast is provided at some venues. The list of venues has been placed on the Council's website. <https://www.havering.gov.uk/warmspaces>

Our libraries are also still providing a Warm Place for people to go into.

Warm Places is just one initiative as part of our wider Havering Helps cost of living offer – which also includes – financial help for food, fuel bills and white goods through the Emergency Assistance Scheme; School Holiday Meal scheme; Energy Doctors and budgeting advice. Our full offer of support can be found online at: www.havering.gov.uk/haveringhelps

The Leader and Deputy Leader have also recently enjoyed a useful visit to one of Havering's Warm Places.

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member would commit to producing a social value report on warm spaces. The Cabinet Member agreed to look at this with officers.

Public Services in Noak Hill

**10) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Barry Mugglestone)
From Councillor Pat Brown**

Will the Cabinet Member for the Environment explain why the relevant Council Services relating to the request for traffic calming measures and condition of kerbs and green verges which is attracting fly-tipping in Noak Hill, were not addressed when requested to do so following a meeting with residents on 7th October 2022, a meeting with senior officers on 23rd June 2023, a further meeting with residents on 15th September 2023 and numerous follow up emails?

Answer

Officers have attended several resident meetings to provide advice relating to the issues described in the question. Subsequently a Validation form was submitted to the Council and assessed by Officers. The assessment investigations carried out included both speed and collision surveys to ascertain the extent of issues and determine a suitable course of action. It should be noted that this request did not ask Officers to investigate the issues relating to fly tipping.

The surveys indicated that speeds were generally within the posted speed limit and that although some collisions had occurred the relative numbers were not high in context with other sites around the borough. Officers have still explored whether or not a capital bid may be successful but unfortunately due to the evidence gathered – we can now confirm that this would not meet the trigger levels required for funding prioritisation.

With regards to Highway Maintenance issues Officers did advise residents and members how to report these at the residents' meetings.

I can further advise that four repair orders have been carried out in the area in the last year in response to requests raised. Additionally Chequers Road was resurfaced this year and Church Road was resurfaced in 2018/19 as part of the Council's resurfacing programme.

I encourage all members to report flytipping via the Council's online reporting form so appropriate action can be taken.

A supplementary question asked if all the information given by the Cabinet Member could be sent to Councillor Brown.

New Homes

**11) To the Cabinet Member for Housing & Property (Councillor Paul McGeary)
From Councillor Joshua Chapman**

Could the Cabinet Member for Housing & Property please confirm how many new homes the Council is planning to deliver over the next financial year?

Answer

Between now and 2025/2026 delivery may include the following:

- 7 homes recently acquired from Notting Hill/Genesis in Rainham/Beam Park
- 47 new homes on the Quarles development in Harold Hill (in two phases, the first in late 2025)
- 50 new units in the Rainham/Beam Park area
- 18 modular units at Waterloo/Queen Street
- 74 units at the Family Welcome Centre in Harold Hill,
- 50 homes acquired by the purchase of street properties (ad-hoc buy backs)

This suggests that approximately 246 units should be delivered between now and 2026.

A supplementary question asked what were the current void turnaround times. The Cabinet Member responded that this was monitored but did vary and this would be provided in writing.

Bus Route 347

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

What lobbying has the Cabinet Member for the Environment undertaken with regards to the withdrawal of the 347-bus route since the most recent announcement by the Mayor of London?

Answer

The Council made its position very clear when Transport for London (TfL) first proposed the withdrawal of the 347 route last year, that we strongly object to the route being withdrawn given the significant impact it would have on local residents, particularly in the Upminster Park Estate, St Mary's Lane and Clay Tye Road.

We've also made it clear to TfL that it does not represent the improved connectivity that the Mayor publicly promised for an outer London Borough such as Havering.

Since the Council was made aware of the Mayor's decision, my officers have continued to push for mitigation measures to be put in place prior to the service being withdrawn, so that residents are able to safely access alternative bus services nearby.

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We've made it clear that this should include improved connectivity between the Cathedrals Estate and Front Lane and that access to alternative bus stops needs to be improved.

The Council has made it clear that given the service withdrawal is a Mayoral decision, we fully expect TfL to pay for measures that minimise the impact, and not Havering. I and my Officers will continue to make the case for this.

A supplementary question asked what meetings the Cabinet Member had held with Transport for London, the Mayor of London or the Deputy Mayor for Transport. The Cabinet Member responded that, with the Leader, he had met with the TfL Director of Buses and the local TfL representative. An extension of the Superloop route into Havering was also being pursued and the Cabinet Member asked for the Assembly Member's assistance with this.

Rainham Marshes

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

Could the Administration please explain why residents' reports of illegal encampments, the regular dumping of rubbish and highly obstructive parking in and around the Rainham Marshes Nature Reserve continues to be ignored by the responsible departments within Havering Council?

Answer

The Enforcement Team has no record of illegal traveller encampments at this location. All illegal encampments, as defined by the borough wide Injunction that the Council successfully secured, have been moved on within 24 - 48hours in the last three or so years.

There have been reports of rough sleepers in tents, which the Park Rangers and the Enforcement Team have attended. The teams have applied a stepped approach to this, which involves initially engaging with the rough sleepers and liaising with the homeless outreach team.

Officers are also unaware of any allegations involving obstructive parking at this location. If Councillor McArdle is able to share further details with me of her concerns, I would be happy to pick this up with Officers further.

A supplementary question asked if enforcement officers would attend in Rainham and Wennington more regularly and how many enforcement fines had been levied in that area. The Cabinet Member responded that the enforcement team prioritised the areas in which they would operate.