



## MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

### Havering Volunteer Centre

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

In the last 8 years Havering Volunteer Centre have: (a) Supported LBH directly with over £5.8 million of volunteer hours saved across 11 service areas. (b) Supported the entire borough of Havering with £66.1 million in volunteering hours – saved across the VCSE & Statutory Partners.

What is this Administration doing to save this important service to our borough?

#### **Answer**

This Administration recognises the significant contribution the Havering Volunteer Centre and volunteers bring to the borough and I am sure all of you who join me in thanking all of Havering's Volunteers and the Centre for the work they undertake. The Council is in active conversation with HVC looking at ways to reduce costs and the £56k for the next financial year is still under discussion with no decisions having been made.

Over many years a member of the Council's Community Engagement and Participation team has worked with the HVC to help secure external grants. These grants over the last three years (22-24) have amounted to £58,031.

Unsuccessful external grants applications amounted to £53k.

On an average, over three years, an officer from the Community Engagement and Participation team works with the HVC for 20 hours per month. This time is given to ensure the long-term sustainability and capacity building for the HVC and the wider voluntary sector which interact with Council programmes of the Council.

We are always searching for new funding opportunities for the HVC and work closely with them on a number of areas. This has included in recent years volunteers for covid, Afghan Appeal, Ukrainian Refugee appeal and the Wennington Fire. Recently, they have been at the forefront of the Community Emergency Resilience Programme working closely with the Council.

You will have heard that the Integrated Care Board has got to reduce funding by 50%, which is on top of the recent 20% reductions. This is another challenge for Havering, but this Administration is doing all it can to maintain this important service for the Borough and to secure long-term funding and fairer funding for Havering, which is exceptionally challenging in the current economic climate.

## **Council, 26 March 2025**

A supplementary question asked if the Havering Volunteer Centre had to close, how many other voluntary organisations may have to cease trading. In response, the Cabinet Member emphasised that there were no plans for the Volunteer Centre to close and she could not therefore speculate on any other organisations that may close.

### **Complaints to the Housing Ombudsman**

#### **2) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon) From Councillor Keith Darvill**

Can the Cabinet Member indicate how many decisions by the Housing Ombudsman have been fully implemented by the Council in the last 12 months?

#### **Answer**

In the last 12 months, we have received a total of 11 decisions from the Ombudsman, categorized as follows:

Outcomes:

- Not upheld: 4
- Upheld: 7

All 7 upheld cases are closed, and the Housing Ombudsman has confirmed that compliance has been met and the correct actions have been taken.

A supplementary question asked what steps were being taken to reduce the 38% of complaints considered by the Ombudsman that had involved maladministration. The Leader of the Council emphasised that further training was being given to staff on these areas.

### **Closure of Gallows Corner**

#### **3) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon) From Councillor Darren Wise**

What actions are the Council undertaking to alleviate traffic congestion in Harold Wood and Harold Hill when the Gallows Corner roundabout and junction closes for the June to September period?

#### **Answer**

The Council is actively engaging with Transport for London (TfL) and their contractor, Costain, to manage disruption caused by the closure of Gallows Corner. Council officers attend regular working group meetings with TfL and Costain, and are pushing for effective mitigation measures and communications to reduce the impact of traffic congestion on local schools, businesses and communities in Harold Wood, Harold Hill, and other affected areas.

## **Council, 26 March 2025**

TfL has assured the Council that a detailed mitigation plan has been developed and modelled. Although officers have not yet seen the final version, it is expected imminently. The plan is understood to include a package of signal optimisations and signed diversions, which will be adapted based on ongoing monitoring of traffic conditions, noise, and air quality as the works progress. Officers will continue to work with TfL on further measures once the plan is received.

A bus and emergency vehicle-only route will be maintained through the construction zone, and officers are working to secure its use by Havering service vehicles to reduce impacts on public services. The Council will also introduce additional enforcement and traffic management measures, in partnership with TfL, to address congestion and reduce poor driving behaviour in affected areas.

We have put an embargo in place between June and September to avoid any other road or lane closures being in place around the area by utility companies. As things stand there are no planned works for this period around Harold Wood and Harold Hill. There is always the risk of emergency works taking place, which are beyond our control.

We have been lobbying for improvements for many years and we are pleased that there are now plans to refurbish the flyover.

Let's not sugar coat it - this is going to be a huge pain and cause massive disruptions to traffic across the area for months.

But when completed, we hope that this investment will see improved journey times for all.

However, we will continue to lobby for further improvements to the roundabout below the flyover as currently it is very difficult to navigate and for many it feels unsafe. TfL are listening to us, and whilst we welcome plans for new pedestrian crossings facilities, we look forward to seeing if there will be additional changes.

A supplementary question asked if the Leader of the Council felt that the traffic problems would disadvantage Harold Wood residents trying to seek alternative library provision. The Leader of the Council accepted that there would be a large impact, particularly during the closure period of June – September. He felt however that most residents who used Harold Wood library would be unlikely to use Gallows Corner to reach alternative provision.

### **Complaints**

#### **4) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon) From Councillor Robert Benham**

Can the Administration please confirm the number of, and topic of, complaints made by residents, compared year on year to the last 3 years?

## **Answer**

### **Background**

Prior to the restructure in December 2023, complaints were managed by four distinct teams: Housing Complaints, Social Care Complaints, Neighbourhoods Complaints, and Corporate Complaints. Each team recorded complaints separately using area-specific systems or Excel spreadsheets.

### **Challenges**

Collating data from the past three years presents significant challenges due to the decentralized recording methods and potential gaps in data accessibility across all areas. The manual effort required to compile this data is substantial. We propose prioritizing our efforts on enhancing service quality and response times, rather than allocating resources to retrospective data collation.

### **Current Structure**

Since the formation of the new Corporate Complaints Team in December 2023, along with the implementation of a new policy, we have streamlined the complaints handling process. This restructure has enabled us to provide more comprehensive and centralized data.

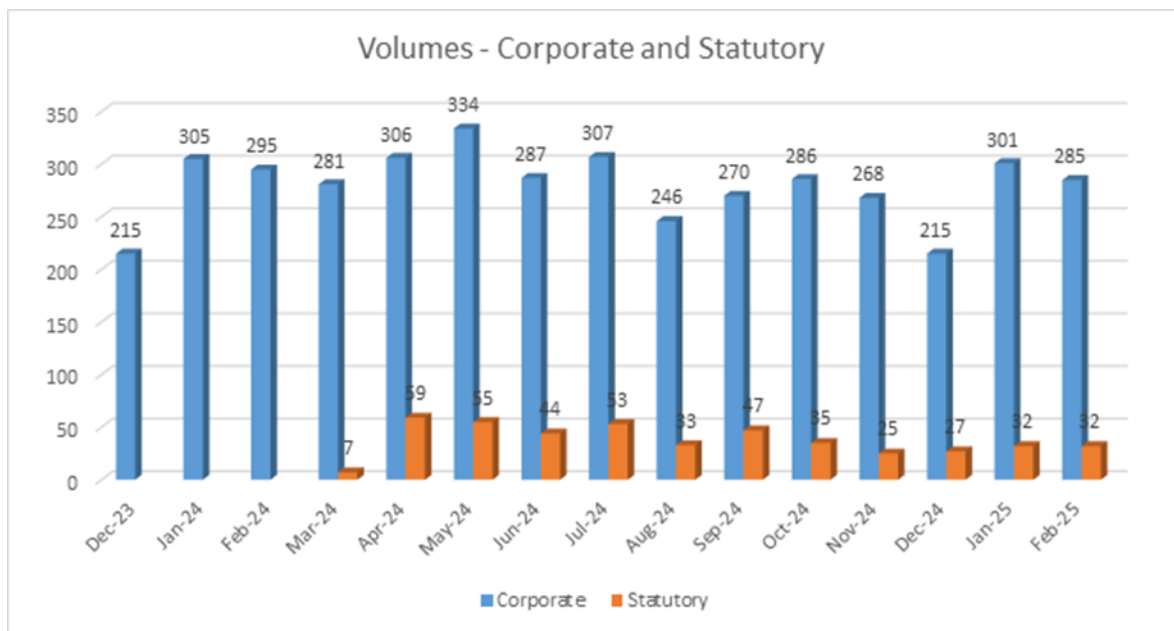
### **Statutory Social Complaints were not brought onto the new system until April 2024.**

The restructure has significantly improved our ability to manage and report on complaints. While historical data compilation remains a challenge, the new system ensures more efficient and accurate tracking moving forward.

### **Available Data**

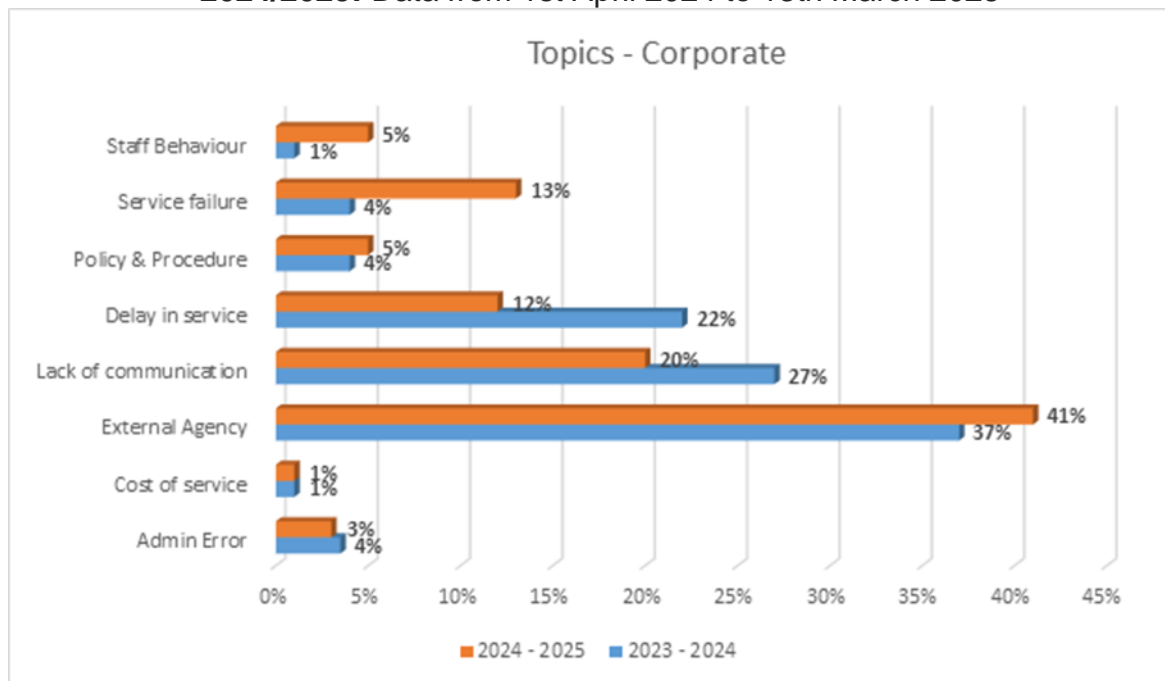
The new Corporate Complaints Team has been able to provide the following data since the restructure:

**Council, 26 March 2025**



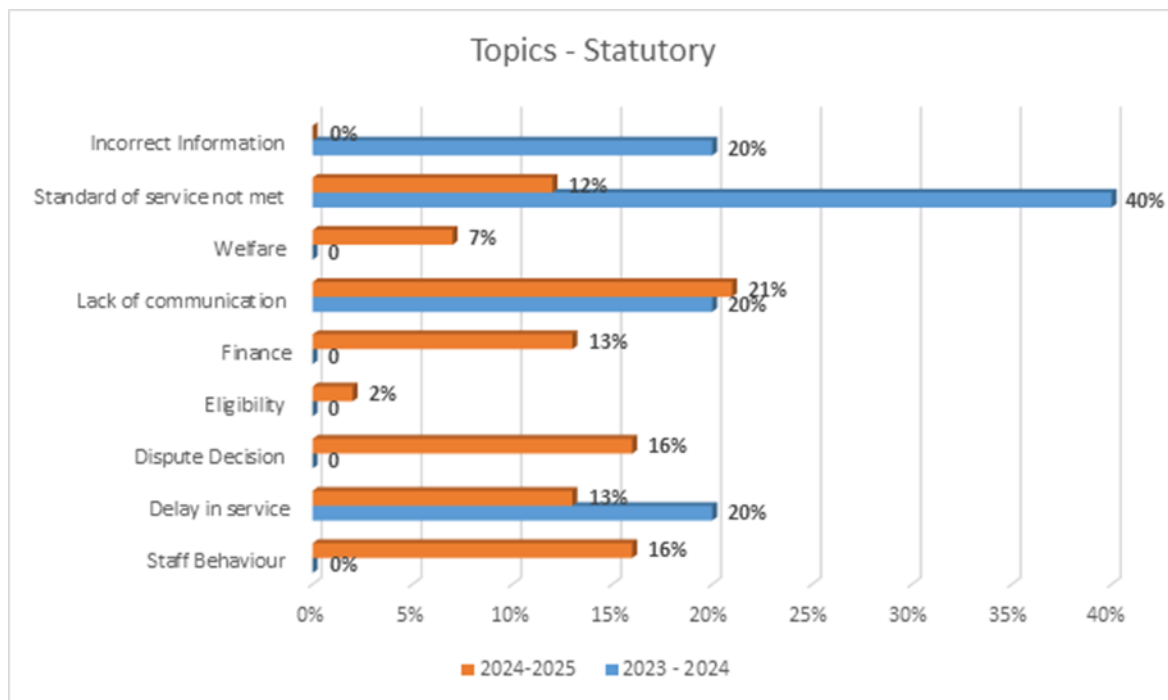
**Topics** - As the data presented spans from one quarter in 2023/2024 to a full year in 2024/2025, it has been broken down into percentages to provide a more accurate trend analysis.

- **2023/2024:** Data from 1st December 2023 to 31st March 2024
- **2024/2025:** Data from 1st April 2024 to 13th March 2025



- **2023/2024:** Data from 1st March to 31st March 2024
- **2024/2025:** Data from 1st April 2024 to 13th March 2025

**Council, 26 March 2025**



A supplementary question asked why the number of complaints were increasing in almost every area. The Leader of the Council responded that work was in progress on a new complaints team and processes and that he was focussed on improving customer service.

**Meanwhile Use of Libraries**

**5) To the Cabinet Member for Adults & Wellbeing (Councillor Gillian Ford)  
From Councillor Keith Darvill**

Given that the library savings in the budget will only be achieved by arranging meanwhile uses, as per the report agreed by Cabinet, what progress has the Cabinet Member made towards this in advance of their closure on 31st March?

**Answer**

By way of context, 'meanwhile uses' are short term arrangements that serve to mitigate any temporary holding costs pending the re-purposing of the three former library sites.

Given that the Cabinet decision to close three libraries was only made last month, there has been limited time to confirm meanwhile uses at each location.

## **Council, 26 March 2025**

It is proposed that the Gidea Park library building will be temporarily occupied by Galliford Try, the contractor selected by Cabinet in late 2024 for construction of the new SEND school facility on the Balgores Field, immediately to the rear. In addition to alleviating holding costs, this proposal should also result in reduced preliminary costs within the school construction contract.

Potential meanwhile uses for Harold Wood and South Hornchurch library buildings are being explored and are yet to be confirmed. The library service needs up to 6 weeks to clear the buildings of stock, equipment, fixtures and fittings, so the opportunity for meanwhile use is unlikely to be available before mid-May, by which time the options for meanwhile use should be clearer. Only yesterday I received proposals from a group re library provision in Harold Wood. This is currently being considered by officers.

A supplementary question asked if Ward Members could be kept informed of developments re local libraries and the Cabinet Member agreed to do this.

### **Recycling in Harold Wood Ward**

#### **6) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon) From Councillor Martin Goode**

As Harold Wood library is due for closure at the end of March, can the Cabinet Member please advise which locations within Harold Wood can residents obtain recycling sacks if they have run out?

#### **Answer**

The following libraries will still be available to collect orange sacks. A quarterly delivery is also carried out to all households in the borough. Officers would be open to engaging with any community centres or local businesses that might be interested in becoming a new distribution point, assuming there are adequate controls in place regarding the number of rolls being given out.

Collier Row – 45, Collier Row Road, RM5 3NR  
Elm Park Library - St Nicholas Avenue, Elm Park, RM12 4PT  
Harold Hill Library - 19a Farnham Road, Harold Hill, RM3 8ED  
Hornchurch Library - 44, North Street, Hornchurch, RM11 1TB  
Rainham Library - 6, Celtic Farm Road, Rainham, RM13 9GP  
Romford Library - St Edwards Way, Romford, RM1 3AR  
Upminster Library - 26, Corbets Tey Road, Upminster, RM14 2BB

<https://libraries.havering.gov.uk/digital-content/libraries/find-a-library>

**Council, 26 March 2025**

A supplementary question asked if the Leader of the Council agreed that, with the imminent closure of Harold Wood library, local residents needed to know where they could get recycling sacks from. The Leader responded that not many people needed to get sacks from libraries as most residents had sufficient numbers delivered to them. The Council was however looking at other potential collection points.

**Damp & Mould in Housing Stock**

**7) To the Cabinet Member for Housing & Property (Councillor Paul McGeary)  
From Councillor Michael White**

Can the Cabinet Member please confirm the total number of properties reporting damp and mould to Havering Council over the last year, and the average time for remediation?

**Answer**

Our council housing includes a large number of homes constructed in and around the 1960's.

Buildings constructed during this period were not subject to current building regulations and lack the thermal values of modern construction, making some of our properties more prone to condensation.

The majority of damp & mould complaints are seasonal, directly linked to the external temperature between November and April. Given this, we have implemented a damp & mould MOT approach to fully support our residents over this period.

We have also introduced specialist codes within our housing management system that now allows us to fully track damp & mould cases and performance. This was introduced in October 2024. Data prior to this period is imprecise.

636 properties were recorded as reporting report damp & mould between 1/10/2024 & 13/03/2025.

At present, we have two targets for damp and mould works, depending on the works that are needed:

- DAMOULD 60 - is a 60 day improvement works order for thermal boarding/ upgrading extractor fans and so forth.
- DAMOULD 120 - is our damp & mould MOT works order where we will visit every month over a 4 month period.

To date, 130 of these cases have been completed within the target timescale. This leaves 506 cases which we are progressing and we expect will also be completed within the target timescale.



**Council, 26 March 2025**

The Council takes the incidence of damp & mould seriously and undertakes prevention and treatment works, as appropriate.

A supplementary question asked what the Cabinet Member was doing to ensure the Council was offering a safe repairs and maintenance service and if targets would be amended given the introduction of Awaab's Law. The Cabinet Member responded that Havering's targets were better than those for many other Local Authorities. Awaab's Law was due to be introduced in October 2025 and a target of 14 days from report to investigate damp and mould issues had been suggested. Guidance from Central Government was currently awaited.

**Deer Management Strategy**

**8) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon)  
From Councillor Pat Brown**

Can the Cabinet Member provide clarity on when the Deer Management Strategy, first promised in 2023, will be decided on by Cabinet?

**Answer**

The Cabinet are supportive of the need to manage the herd.

The management of the herd has not been addressed for many years, so any plans we are making now will need to be robust and effective.

The management plan will take time as it needs to be complete and thoroughly thought through with all options looked at.

We have undertaken a deer census that will allow us to get a relatively accurate count of the heard and where they are.

This is being used to update and complete the report which will then have more detailed information on how the herd should be managed.

I expect this now to be finalised in the second half of this year and then a decision will be made on how to progress any proposals.

(No supplementary question).

## **Pension Fund**

**9) To the Cabinet Member for Finance (Councillor Chris Wilkins)  
From Councillor David Taylor**

Can the Cabinet Member please confirm the total amounts paid into the Council's pension fund over the last 3 years?

### **Answer**

The employer contribution rates are set every three years during a "valuation" process by the funds appointed actuary, in line with the Local Government Pension Scheme 2013 (LGPS) regulations. The main purpose of the valuation is to estimate on-going employer liabilities (benefits paid and due), evaluate this against the Funds' assets and calculate the funding position. This is then used to set future employer contribution rates. All employers must by law, have arrangements to contribute towards their employee's pension fund.

Based on the contribution rates set by the Fund's actuary, the total amount paid to the Pension Fund by Havering Council over the last three years (includes LEA schools and Housing Revenue Account) is as follows:

- **2021/22 - £34.65m**
- **2022/23 - £36.16m** (included an additional voluntary contribution of £1.7m, which has now ceased due to budget savings)
- **2023/24 – £32.91m**

Regulations only permit the Actuary to set or amend the amount due to the Pension Fund. The Funding position as at 2022 valuation was 80% funded, an increase on the 2019 level of 70%. Based on the current forecast, the Pension Fund position has improved and the funding position will be confirmed when the next triennial valuation process is completed, which will be based on data as at 31 March 2025. This will determine employer contribution rates for 2026/27, 2027/28 & 2028/29.

(No supplementary question).

## **Parking in Globe Road/Francombe Gardens**

**10) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon)  
From Councillor Jane Keane**

Could the Cabinet Member please advise what substantive changes have been made, consulted on, or are planned, to deal with the dangerous and unlawful parking outside in Globe Road and environs and in Francombe Gardens?

### **Answer**

Like many schools in the borough, and elsewhere, the roads around Hylands Primary suffer from morning and afternoon congestion and in some cases inconsiderate parking and dangerous driving.

## **Council, 26 March 2025**

The Council works closely with many of Havering's schools providing education, training and improved infrastructure to alleviate these behaviours and encourage other transport modes which are more sustainable methods of travel. This includes walking, cycling and public transport which have proven benefits to health, safety and the environment.

The street closest to the school is a school street scheme.

Parking enforcement outside schools takes place regularly.

The Cabinet Member for Environment recently attended a site meeting in Globe Road with the school, the assembly member, Cllr Keane and senior council officers and all agreed actions from the meeting are underway. Members know that, when appropriate, the Cabinet Member is happy to meet on site and discuss issues in your ward.

A formal consultation has recently been launched for some additional parking controls at Claremont Road and an investigation will be carried out to ascertain if an existing uncontrolled crossing can be converted into a zebra crossing.

The Council's parking enforcement team will continue with regular visits to Francombe Gardens.

A supplementary question asked if timescales could be given for this work. The Leader of the Council responded that he would speak to the Cabinet Member about moving actions forward on this as soon as possible.

### **Safety in Parks**

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

Following this Chamber's commitment to producing a report and action plan on parks safety, can the Cabinet Member please give an update on the progress made, in producing the report, and a target date for presenting that to Council?

#### **Answer**

The report and action plan is being actively discussed by Officers. It is the intention to bring it to Council at the first available opportunity after Annual Council in May.

A supplementary question asked if the Leader of the Council would be prepared to meet Councillor Ryan and colleagues on site in Romford to discuss the safety of parks at night. The Leader responded that he and the relevant Cabinet Member would be happy to do this.

## **Reducing Household Waste**

**12) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ray Morgon)  
From Councillor Matt Stanton**

Given that nine London Boroughs are in the twenty local authorities that generate the least household waste per head of population, and twenty local authorities including three London Boroughs and the City of London managed to reduce their household waste per head of population by at least ten per cent on latest figures, what does the Cabinet Member intend to do to learn from other local authorities to reduce our household waste per head of population, outside of the pending food waste collections?

### **Answer**

Thank you for your question. Havering has been running a number of waste reduction initiatives over many years, focusing on the following areas:

Love Food Hate Waste demonstrations / cookery workshops  
Home Composting workshops and compost bin discounts  
Real Nappies promotions and free starter packs  
Repair workshops

Havering works closely with the East London Waste Authority who deliver an annual waste prevention programme, supporting the borough in providing workshops and information to local residents, as well as delivering activities in local schools. Havering officers regularly engage with the other ELWA boroughs, as well as other authorities to learn best practice and ensure that national campaigns are promoted.

There is a need to encourage customers to help themselves, through smart shopping, appropriate storage of food items, use of leftovers etc. Havering officers continue to engage in meaningful conversations with residents at the regular events delivered throughout the year to help develop positive consumer behaviours.

(No supplementary question).

## **Bin Provision at Romford Station**

**13) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Barry Mugglestone)  
From Councillor David Taylor**

Can the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the promised bins being delivered outside Romford Station?

### **Answer**

A litter bin has been earmarked to be installed outside Romford station, as part of a small replacement programme. The bins have just arrived in Havering, and the team is finalising the schedule of works with FCC, the Councils waste and recycling contractor. It is envisaged that all bins will be installed by end of April.

**Council, 26 March 2025**

We are also going to be trialling a cigarette butt ballot bin – which we're hoping to install near Romford station in the coming weeks.

(No supplementary question).