



Havering

LONDON BOROUGH

FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 22 July 2026

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Launders Lane

**1) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Keith Prince)
From Councillor Sue Ospreay**

The HRA Administration triggered legal proceedings in relation to Launders Lane, which the Leader acknowledged in a recent eLiving. We ask the Leader to explain how he will “get the site cleared” as stated in a recent media article (The Havering Daily on the 13th May).

Answer

Once a site has been determined as “contaminated land”, it must be remediated. ie. the contamination must be stopped or significantly reduced. In this case, the specific pathway to be stopped or significantly reduced is the smoke from fires on the land.

Following the determination of the Arnold's Field site as “contaminated land” in October 2025, the landowner rejected the opportunity for a pragmatic solution by refusing permission in March 2026 for the Council to fund and deliver the recommended, reasonable and cost-effective remedial works that would have stopped or reduced the harmful fires and smoke from that site.

In May 2026, the landowner then rejected a further opportunity for a pragmatic solution by failing to provide the level of detail necessary to qualify for financial support from public funds for his alternative works proposal.

Consequently, work continues to prepare a Remediation Notice as the relevant statutory action to oblige those named by the notice to carry out the necessary works to the relevant areas of the site to stop or reduce the fires - at their own cost. The details of this notice are currently being finalised with legal specialists as expert advice is required.

Meanwhile, to avoid formal action being pursued, the landowner could, at his own cost, still choose to put a lawful solution in place to stop the harm from his own land.

We totally understand the anger and concern this continues to cause to local residents. Rest assured – the gloves are off and we will bring the full force of our enforcement powers to the landowner's door to stop the fires and the harm and disruption to people's lives.

A supplementary question asked how the council will afford the cost to clear the site. The Leader agreed the cost would be high and explained that he would meet with the

local MP, the EA and DEFRA to sure the landowner mitigates the harm from the smoke and fires.

Planning applications for additional bedrooms

2) To the Cabinet Member for Planning & Public Protection (Councillor Terry Brown)

From Councillor Martin Goode

Would the Cabinet member agree with me that all planning applications received, that entail internal alterations to an existing property by installing multiple Bedrooms, should be considered jointly with Licencing, in order to establish the full intentions of residency and the possible requirement for a class of use change?

Answer

The Planning and Licensing regimes are distinct statutory frameworks with different legal objectives. They are required to operate independently, and it would not be legitimate or lawful for the Council to seek to withhold planning permission if it is required, unless other, non-planning, legislative requirements have been met first.

National guidance and legislation is clear that decision making on planning applications should be approached positively, with decisions made as quickly as possible and in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

While responsibility for ensuring all necessary legislative requirements are met rests with a developer, where sites come to the attention of either the Planning or Private Sector Housing Teams, they engage with each other to ensure the Council is delivering an appropriately joined up response. Where unauthorised changes of use take place, the Council will consider the expediency of progressing enforcement action.

In any event, it should be noted that internal alterations, in their own right, are not controlled under planning legislation, meaning that planning permission is not required to make them. What can require consent under planning controls is the associated change of use of a property, for example to form a separate dwelling.

A supplementary question asked if there should be better awareness and due diligence. The Cabinet Member agreed and explained a new article 4 directive would simplify the process.

VAWG

3) To the Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection (Councillor Terry Brown)

From Councillor Trevor McKeever

Given what we know about the uneven distribution of domestic abuse and wider VAWG risk across Havering, can the Cabinet Member set out how the Council is

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using local data to target support and preventative interventions, and how this aligns with new pan-London funding streams and services coming online?

Answer

The Havering Community Safety Partnership uses detailed local data from its strategic assessment and partner intelligence to target both support and preventative activity. This shows a clear uneven distribution of domestic abuse and wider VAWG risk, with wards such as Heaton and Gooshays experiencing significantly higher levels of harm, while others see comparatively low levels.

In response, the Council takes a place-based, risk-led approach, drawing on Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference data, otherwise known the MARAC, police referrals and multi-agency insight to identify high-risk victims, repeat cases and priority locations. Weekly MARAC ensures coordinated support for those at highest risk, supported by Independent Domestic Violence Advisor provision and specialist services.

Alongside this, targeted prevention activity is delivered in higher-risk areas, including community engagement, awareness campaigns, perpetrator programmes and workforce training, under a borough-wide VAWG action plan.

This approach is aligned with emerging pan-London funding and services, including Violence Reduction Unit place-based programmes and London Councils' VAWG grants, which support prevention, refuge provision and specialist support across boroughs.

Together, this ensures Havering is directing resources to where need is greatest while maximising London-wide investment to strengthen outcomes for victims and communities.

A supplementary question asked how the Council would ensure the funding is targeted. The Cabinet Member replied that he would consult with Community Safety leads to provide a more detailed answer.

Romford Masterplan

4) To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration (Councillor Robert Whitton)

From Councillor Stephanie Nunn

Now the Administration has "scrapped" the Romford Masterplan "it's gone" (The Havering Daily on the 13th May), what alternative plans does the Cabinet Member have to regenerate Romford and its historic market?

Answer

You will know that the Romford Masterplan is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which was adopted by the Council in March 2025. It supports the Council's Local Plan.

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The SPD provides a policy framework to ensure Romford's future growth is sustainable through the provision of high-quality services, housing and development, building on Romford's unique character and history.

This Administration will introduce a new Romford Masterplan which will build upon the current Romford Masterplan. It will be introduced alongside a new Local Plan.

This Administration is committed to the regeneration of Romford and has placed a priority on delivering some of the key areas identified in the Masterplan – this includes the revitalisation of Romford Market and adjacent sites. The Council has a wide range of levers to deliver regeneration and is engaging with its strategic partners and landowners to bring these initiatives forward in the town centre.

A supplementary question asked how much money will be spent on delivering the new plan above the cost of the current Masterplan. The Cabinet Member advised that, due to the new plan being in its early stages, no exact costings could be given.

Essex Water & TFL Meetings

5) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Keith Prince) From Councillor Darren Wise

Could the council leader please outline the discussions and meetings they've held with Essex Water and TFL to resolve these lengthy delays to the full reopening? Have they received an explanation of why the reopening date from June to mid-October has been changed?

Answer

I understand the question relates to Gallows Corner and provide this answer accordingly.

The Council has maintained regular engagement with both Transport for London (TfL) and Essex & Suffolk Water (ESW) throughout this project and has consistently pressed both organisations for greater certainty on delivery timescales and clearer communication with residents and stakeholders.

As Council Leader and London Assembly Member, I have raised with the Mayor of London the unacceptable situation at Gallows Corner and the poor levels of information to the Council and residents being provided. The Mayor has agreed that TfL will now provide weekly updates directly to me, every Friday. Of course, I will ensure any updates are shared, as appropriate. Officers will continue to attend weekly meetings with TfL to monitor progress against the programme.

Most recently, along with the Lead Member for Highways, on 3 July 2026 I met senior TfL and ESW officers on site to discuss the latest delay and hold both organisations to account.

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By way of explanation ESW advised me that testing of the new water main (that serves 500,000 people) failed and damage needs to be repaired, re-tested and commissioned before it's brought into use. The reasons for the failures are being investigated.

Unfortunately, TfL and ESW are still unable to provide a firm completion date, and based on their updates, it looks unlikely that the junction will be fully reopened before October. I know how disappointing and frustrating this is to residents and businesses.

A supplementary question asked if a small stream that runs under Gallows Corner was a possible cause of the delays. The Leader announced that it had not been raised as an issue.

Parcel Theft

6) To the Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection (Councillor Terry Brown) From Councillor Matthew Stanton

Will the Cabinet Member convene and attend a meeting with Cllr McKeever, myself and relevant officers at the earliest opportunity to review parcel theft issues at New Green and identify what options are available to address these concerns, including the potential use of parcel lockers within existing policy and estate management frameworks?

Answer

The Council Community Safety Service have not been made aware of any increase in parcel thefts within the New Green Area.

Parcel theft across London is not uncommon and communal post areas of residential buildings are particularly popular amongst thieves.

If residents are living in a shared block, they should be mindful of who they are letting through the door and into the building when entering. Thieves will often tailgate residents to gain access and carry out thefts.

In addition to managing the access to buildings, making a few simple changes to how items are sent can help reduce the risk of losing items to opportunistic thieves.

Residents can protect themselves from parcel theft by:

- Tracking parcel delivery status
- Booking a delivery slot for a time when someone will be at home
- Having items sent to a secure drop-off location – some local shops provide this service
- Using Amazon lockers for Amazon parcel
- Enlisting a trusted neighbour's help to pick parcels up as soon as they arrive.

If residents have ordered a delivery which has not arrived, they should first contact the delivery company. If they think a parcel has been stolen or notice anyone acting suspicious, they can make a report online at www.met.police.uk or by calling 101.

I am happy to meet with Councillors Stanton and McKeever to discuss this issue.

A supplementary question asked if the Council would pursue parcel lockers as a possible additional income revenue. The Cabinet Member agreed with the idea and to discuss it with the Leader and Cabinet.

Property purchases

7) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Keith Prince) From Councillor Gillian Ford

The Leader of the Council recently suggested “We know we urgently need homes for people here in Havering. Homes, not high storey tower blocks. It must also be homes for people in our borough and reduce the number of properties going to other boroughs.” (The Havering Daily on the 13th May). We ask the Leader to confirm how he will stop other boroughs purchasing properties in Havering?

Answer

The statement I made reflects a clear ambition: new homes built in Havering should meet the needs of Havering residents. However, I want to be equally clear that the Council has no legal power to prevent other local authorities, housing associations or private organisations from purchasing homes on the open market in our borough.

That does not mean we are powerless. We are taking every available step to reduce the impact of out-of-borough demand on Havering's housing market. We are increasing the supply of homes through Council-led development and regeneration programmes, working with partners to deliver more affordable housing, and seeking local lettings arrangements wherever possible so that Havering residents have greater access to new homes built in the borough.

We are also robustly challenging the growing practice of London boroughs relying on accommodation outside their own boundaries.

Havering has consistently raised concerns about the impact that out-of-borough placements have on local services, schools, health provision and community cohesion. We will continue to press London Councils, the Mayor of London and Government for reforms that place greater responsibility on boroughs to meet their own housing needs.

So, whilst I cannot legally stop another borough from purchasing properties in Havering, I can and will continue to use every lever available to ensure that more homes in Havering benefit Havering residents first.

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A supplementary question asked how many Havering residents were being placed out of borough. The Leader agreed for the figures to be circulated to Cllr Ford after the meeting.

Council Debt and Overspend

8) To the Cabinet Member for Finance (Councillor Sue Benjamins) From Councillor Martin Goode

Would the Cabinet member please outline what measures will be put in place in order to manage and control the increasing amount of debt and overspend this Council is facing?

Answer

We fully recognise the Council's financial difficulties, including the £77m Exceptional Financial Support requested to balance the budget in 2026/27.

Strong spending controls will remain in place, and significant progress in 2025/26 has reduced the Exceptional Financial Support requirement on a mid-case basis to £37.7m by year end.

This administration is fully committed to undertaking detailed reviews of the Council's finances to streamline services and reduce costs. The Council's medium-term financial strategy will be updated to reflect the ongoing benefit of the improved 2025/26 outturn position.

We will continue to lobby the Government to make clear our financial situation, deliver further efficiencies, and support proposals that will help the Council become financially sustainable in the medium to long term.

A supplementary question asked what confidence there is in protecting the frontline services. The Cabinet Member agreed that generating income from regeneration schemes would support the repayment of the EFS and the Administration have confidence in protecting the frontline.

Closed Libraries Reopening

9) To the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health Care (Councillor Graham Day) From Councillor Kimberley Gould

The public were told by the Administration that libraries closed under the previous Administration would be reopened. We invite the Cabinet Member to provide details as to his re-opening plans.

Answer

This Administration has always been clear that it values Havering's library service and the important role libraries play in supporting literacy, digital inclusion, learning and community wellbeing.

Since taking office, our priority has been to stabilise and strengthen the borough's library offer, ensuring that existing services remain sustainable and continue to meet the needs of residents. As part of this work, we are reviewing how library services are delivered across the borough and considering opportunities to expand access through a range of models, including co-location with other community services, community hubs and the use of library spaces for a wider range of community activities.

With regard to libraries closed under the previous Administration, there are currently no approved plans or allocated capital funding to reopen any specific library buildings. However, we remain committed to exploring all viable opportunities to improve access to library services where there is demonstrable community need and where proposals are financially sustainable.

Any proposal to reopen a library would need to be supported by a robust business case, consideration of ongoing revenue costs, building suitability, staffing requirements and the wider financial position of the Council.

As part of our review, we are also considering the changing role of libraries within modern communities. In addition to lending books, libraries increasingly support digital inclusion, access to online resources and community engagement. Services such as e-books, audiobooks, digital newspapers and other online library resources form an important part of what a library offers residents. We are also exploring how library spaces can support activities such as children's clubs, learning opportunities, community groups, cultural events and access to information about local services.

Our focus remains on delivering a modern, sustainable and accessible library service for all residents. Where opportunities arise to extend provision or bring library services closer to communities, they will be fully evaluated and considered as part of the Council's ongoing service improvement programme.

Christmas Plans

10) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Keith Prince) From Councillor Jonh Tyler

The HRA Administration secured sponsorship for Christmas Trees and Lights for Town Centres and ask the Leader to confirm what support his administration will be giving to ensure Christmas takes place in Havering?

Answer

In 2023/4 as part of corporate savings measures under the HRA administration, the budget for Christmas festivities including lights, trees and events was removed to help the Council close the budget gap.

This meant £108,025.77 was deleted that funded Christmas activities including Christmas trees and lights borough-wide.

However, you decided to reverse this and last year the team leading on this secured £40,000 in sponsorship to supplement £50,000 funding and introduced sponsors to local town centres so all areas could light-up for Christmas.

As the new Administration, we are committed to making sure that once again lights and trees are up for Christmas. Officers have already been in touch with town centre groups across Havering this year to see what their plans are along with potential sponsors for Christmas trees and lights.

Increased Temporary Housing

11) To the Cabinet Member for Housing Allocations (Councillor Martin Lardner) From Councillor Lesley Tyler

We invite the Cabinet Member for homelessness to outline how he intends to deliver increased temporary housing.

Answer

Our new administration has already agreed a comprehensive Temporary Accommodation and Homelessness Reduction Programme to increase the supply of suitable, affordable temporary accommodation and reduce our reliance on expensive nightly-paid provision.

Our approach is based on a number of strands. First, we are acquiring and leasing additional self-contained properties within and close to the borough to provide better-quality accommodation for homeless households. Secondly, we are working with housing association and private sector partners to secure additional units and bring forward schemes that can be used as temporary accommodation. Thirdly, we are making best use of existing council assets, including opportunities to convert or repurpose suitable buildings where this is financially viable and delivers value for money.

Alongside increasing supply, we are focusing on prevention. Through earlier intervention, strengthened housing advice, landlord engagement and targeted support for residents at risk of homelessness, we aim to reduce the number of households requiring temporary accommodation in the first place.

We are also continuing to increase the delivery of new affordable housing through our development and regeneration programmes, helping more residents move into settled accommodation and reducing long-term pressure on temporary housing.

Taken together, these measures will increase available temporary accommodation, improve outcomes for residents and reduce the significant financial pressures associated with homelessness services.

Impact of the Buy-to-let Market on Homelessness

12) To the Cabinet Member for Housing Allocations (Councillor Martin Lardner) From Councillor Gillian Ford

It is suggested that thousands of private landlords are exiting the buy-to-let market and invite the Cabinet Member to explain the impact this is having on homelessness here in Havering.

Answer

The failure of the private rented market has increased homelessness demand and reduced the supply of affordable temporary accommodation. This has driven up rent levels in the private rented sector.

As landlords have moved out of the market and sold their properties, they have evicted their tenants, some who have been tenants for many years. As those tenants look to find alternative places to rent, they are unable to find affordable homes, so turn to the council for assistance. Between 2021 and 2025, the number of people made homeless as a result of their landlord evicting them, doubled.

Many of the landlords who previously leased their properties to the council have also decided to sell up – and the number of leased properties has reduced from approximately 800 in 2021 to less than 400 in 2026.

The council has a duty to prevent homelessness and the reduction in supply and increase in demand has made this more difficult to achieve. In 2021 we were able to prevent the homelessness of 46% of households applying as homeless and in 2026 we were only able to prevent the homelessness of 23% of households.

As a result, the council has been forced to increase the use of expensive hotels and nightly let accommodation.

Fly-tipping

13) To the Cabinet Member for Public Realm (Councillor Martynas Cekavicius) From Councillor Barry Mugglestone

The Administration recently publicised they would clamp down on fly-tipping and invite the Cabinet Member to detail how.

Answer

The Member will be well aware of the Council's ongoing programme to clamp down on fly-tipping, which is delivered through a combination of proactive enforcement, investigation and community engagement. The Environmental Enforcement Team responds to reports of fly-tipped waste, carrying out inspections to identify evidence that may link offences to individuals or businesses. The team also serves statutory

notices requiring householders and businesses to manage and dispose of waste correctly. Where offences are suspected, Council officers conduct investigations and, where appropriate, issue warnings, Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) or pursue prosecutions. The team works closely with partners, including the CCTV team, to deploy re-deployable cameras at fly-tipping hotspots to identify offenders. To date, five vehicles have been seized in connection with fly-tipping offences. Proactive stop-and-check operations and public awareness campaigns further support efforts to prevent fly-tipping and encourage responsible waste disposal.

This Administration has adopted a very clear zero-tolerance approach to fly-tipping and is committed to strengthening the Council's action against those who commit these offences. We are working closely with Council officers to identify fly-tipping hotspots across the Borough and increase CCTV coverage in those locations to deter offenders and support enforcement action. We are also exploring opportunities to make full use of the enforcement powers available to the Council, including increasing the use of Fixed Penalty Notices where appropriate and where legislation permits. This will send a clear message that fly-tipping will not be tolerated and that those responsible will face robust enforcement action. This Administration is committed to keeping our Borough clean by taking a robust, zero-tolerance approach to tackling fly-tipping and ensuring that those responsible face appropriate consequences for their actions.

Experts at Hand offer

14) To the Cabinet Member for Children (Councillor Kevin Gill) From Councillor Oscar Ford

We invite the Cabinet Member to outline how the Council is responding to the Government's Experts at Hand offer, in particular what the proposed governance and accountability arrangements will be.

Answer

The Havering SEND Reform Plan sets out and strengthens the "experts at hand" offer by ensuring families, schools and settings can access specialist advice earlier, closer to need, and through clearer, more coordinated pathways. Key actions include improving the visibility of available expertise across education and health (OT, SALT), building mainstream confidence through targeted training and consultation, and using multi-disciplinary input to support earlier identification and inclusive practice.

Governance and accountability arrangements are central to this approach. The plan sets clear expectations on how specialist advice will be coordinated, monitored and used to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Regular reporting through the SEND governance structures in particular the SEND and AP board will enable leaders to track progress, identify gaps in specialist capacity, and monitor the timeliness, quality and impact of expert input.

Accountability will be strengthened through the agreed new roles and responsibilities set out in the plan, with escalation routes, performance measures and routine reviews of how the offer is supporting earlier intervention and reducing reliance on statutory assessment where appropriate. This will help ensure that expert support is accessible, consistently delivered, evaluated and improved across the local partnership area.

Implementing New Powers Against Landlords

15) To the Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection (Councillor Terry Brown)

From Councillor Michael Fisher

On the 22nd June 2026, Councils across England were given new powers to fine landlords up to £7,000 for failing to tackle serious hazards in privately rented homes, including damp, mould, fire risks, faulty electrics and unsafe living conditions. We ask the Cabinet Member to confirm how Havering will be implementing this new power.

Answer

The Administration welcomes the introduction of these new powers, which provide an additional enforcement tool to help protect tenants living in unsafe private rented accommodation as part of the Renter Rights Act.

The Council already takes robust action where serious hazards are identified, including damp and mould, fire safety risks, electrical hazards and other threats to residents' health and safety. The new penalty regime will enable the Council to take quicker and more proportionate action against landlords who fail to address serious hazards, without always needing to pursue prosecution through the courts.

To support implementation, Havering has updated its enforcement policies to ensure they reflect the new legislative framework. The Council is also investing in additional staffing capacity within its Private Sector Housing service and introducing a new financial penalty calculator to streamline decision-making, improve consistency and ensure penalties are applied fairly and transparently.

Officer training has focused on the Housing Act 2004 and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), together with training on condensation, damp and mould. Training also reflects the requirements and expectations arising from the Renters' Rights Act, including the strengthening of tenants' rights and landlord responsibilities, and the principles underpinning Awaab's Law, which seeks to ensure that hazards such as damp and mould are identified and addressed promptly. This will ensure officers are equipped to identify risks, undertake appropriate enforcement action and protect residents living in privately rented accommodation

We will continue to take a risk-based approach, prioritising the most serious cases and targeting landlords who fail to meet their legal responsibilities. These new

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powers will strengthen our ability to drive up standards in the private rented sector and help ensure our residents have access to safe and decent homes.