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COUNCIL

Monday 17 July 2023

4 QUESTIONS (Pages 3 - 10)

The replies to questions submitted for written reply are attached.

Copies of the documents referred to above can be obtained from
<http://cds.bromley.gov.uk/>

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Council

17 July 2023

Questions from Members of the Public for Written Reply

1. From Janet Worth to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Enforcement

What is the Council doing to enforce TPO 2888?

Reply:

The Council's strategic response to the apparent breach of TPO 2888 comprises three strands. The first is the injunction which has been granted by the court, pending a second hearing on 6th July. The purpose of the injunction is to provide an even greater deterrent to further unauthorised tree felling. The second is the process of enforcing replanting of the felled area. There is a lot of preparatory work preceding any actual physical action on-site, which we expect to be taken when the planting season commences in autumn. The third strand is the investigation into the apparent breach of TPO that could potentially lead to prosecution of those responsible if legal tests are passed. This process commenced on 12th June when we began gathering evidence. We are currently processing the evidence received so far. Once we have a clear understanding of all the evidence any suspects will be interviewed under caution. Finally, an expediency assessment will be undertaken to determine what if any further action should be taken, one of the options being prosecution.

2. From Dermot McKibbin to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management

What is happening regarding the installation of solar panels on the spa and pavilion leisure centres, when will they be fully operational and how much savings will be generated. Will the Council roll out these win-win projects throughout the borough?

Reply:

The solar panel scheme is still in its early stages with discussions on going between Mytime and the Council as to the installation and lease terms. At this time a planning application has been progressed for the Spa but not yet for the Pavilion. Officers will update Cllrs once there is further news. The process will determine the viability of taking similar schemes forward on other buildings. Officers in the Environment and Public Protection Department are working with the Property team to identify energy efficiency projects on Council buildings as part of initiative 2 in the Council's Carbon Net Zero Action Plan.

3. From Kyle Sewell to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management

Does the Council agree that, in solidarity with LGBTQ+ people who have faced a rising number of homophobic attacks and discrimination, the Council should have celebrated Pride in June by raising the rainbow flag?

Reply:

No, the Council does not agree. Although it is true that the number of hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales has risen year on year, in their latest data release Home Office statisticians note that “due to significant improvements in police recorded crime made in recent years, it is uncertain to what degree the increase in police recorded hate crime is a genuine rise, or due to continued recording improvements and more victims having the confidence to report these crimes to the police” (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022>). As for the claim regarding discrimination, it is not clear why this would be the case, considering that the British public’s acceptance of homosexuality has increased dramatically since the 1980s (e.g. see graph on page 129 of a recent British Social Attitudes report: https://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39363/bsa_36.pdf).

It is Bromley Council’s policy to fly only the Union Flag and on occasion the Cross of St George. These flags represent the unity of the people of Bromley both as part of England and the United Kingdom. The only exception to this is the Armed Forces Day Flag. We have no intention of changing this policy. Bromley Council fully supports the right of private organisations and individuals to fly flags of their choice from their buildings or residences, or wear and display them about their person, in full exercise of their rights to freedom of speech.

As an employer the London Borough of Bromley complies with all its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and all related legislation with respect to LGBTQ+ people.

4. From Gary Kent to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

Will the Council urgently consider greater flexibility in car parking payments by, for instance, allowing scratch cards to ease difficulties for residents?

Reply:

At this current time there are no plans to introduce a voucher system for car parking. To implement such systems would be expensive and these costs would need to be passed back to the customer. Officers are holding 2 future drop-in sessions in Beckenham and Orpington Library where they will be happy to help motorists with any queries they have using the RingGo system.

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Council

17 July 2023

Questions from Members of the Council for Written Reply

1. From Cllr Kathy Bance MBE to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Enforcement

Can we be assured that officers will do all they can to prosecute those responsible for cutting down trees with TPOs?

Reply:

Yes. As with any crime, we will look to take forward a prosecution where the evidence exists.

2. From Cllr Simon Jeal to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Does the Council have figures for how many looked after children, born between September 2002 and January 2011, received Government funds into their Child Trust Funds (CTFs) and as Corporate Parents did Bromley Council contribute money into their CTFs?

Reply:

We do have records for these children. We can also confirm that all of these children will have received payments into their individual Children's Trust Funds. As a Council we have historically not added in any additional funds directly into CTF. However, all of our young people do instead receive savings as soon as they come into care.

3. From Cllr Simon Jeal to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

What action has the Council taken to ensure care leavers and looked after young people who received Child Trust Funds and have turned 18, or will do soon, are aware of and can access the money within their CTF?

Reply:

At age 18 we write to all of our young people and let them know the details of how they can access their funds.

4. From Cllr Graeme Casey to the Leader of the Council

Will the Council commit to demanding an explanation from Royal Mail as to why some areas are receiving such a poor service from the Royal Mail? We have had reports of some residents having to wait 10 days or more for their post.

Reply:

I can do better than that for you. Having written to the CEO of the Royal Mail on two occasions myself as long ago as January 2021, only to be completely ignored, enquiries of this nature for Bromley & Chislehurst residents were streamlined and are being pursued directly by Sir Bob Neill and his team at Westminster.

Sir Bob is in regular correspondence with Royal Mail as delays are reported, has visited Sherman Road sorting office and held talks on site there with senior Royal Mail Managers, as well as meeting local postmen and women and Trade Union representatives, explaining directly the impacts that these delays have on local residents and businesses.

With that in mind, you might find it helpful to steer any of your constituents who approach you complaining of delays directly to his office.

5. From Cllr Graeme Casey to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces

Can the Portfolio Holder please confirm the replacement rate for newly planted trees across the borough? The street where I live previously had six trees replaced due to vandalism and is due to have three of those replaced once again for the same reason. Is this an issue across the borough? Of the trees planted in public areas, how many of those have died within 12 months of being planted, and how many have been replaced?

Reply:

Although it can take up to three years for newly planted trees to establish, we can report that the estimated mortality rate for trees planted in 2021/22 is 7% (88 trees).

Unfortunately, vandalism of newly planted trees accounted for the death of 1% of trees planted in 2021/22 (14 trees). Of those planted in 2022/23, the mortality rate is at <1% (16 trees) but these are all due to vandalism.

Vandalism does occur across the borough, although there are hotspots where repeated acts of vandalism are a particular risk.

The Council aims to replace all trees which fail to establish, and under our Tree Management Strategy are committed to replacing any trees which need to be removed. Officers will usually attempt to replace trees in the same locations up to twice if the site remains viable, after which an alternative site may be located.

6. From Cllr Sam Webber to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Enforcement

There has been much discussion of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) in the media recently and their impact on homeowners and landlords. However is the Council aware of how EPCs now affect commercial properties?

As of April 2023, it is illegal to let or continue to let any building with an EPC rating lower than 'E' (on a scale of A-G) under the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (or MEES) rules. The minimum standards level is expected to rise over the coming years to 'C' in 2027 and 'B' in 2030. As the ultimate enforcer for these measures, I understand the Council has the power to issue fines ranging between £5,000-£150,000.

How will Officers work to enforce these standards, to ensure that commercial property stock locally is improved and made more energy efficient? Is this something our Enforcement team is already working on alongside other agencies? Do Officers anticipate any extra income for the Council as a result of non-compliant commercial properties?

Reply:

Trading Standards are the regulatory body for overseeing commercial premises and their EPC status under these new duties. Presently there is no national funding grants for this increased demand. Therefore, this is not a current enforcement priority when compared to other demands on the service.

7. From Cllr Tony McPartlan to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing, for written reply

Please detail how much money was initially awarded to schemes as part of the local parades improvement initiative, and please detail how much of this has yet to be spent. Please split this out by ward.

Reply:

There was a total of £250k allocated to the local parades initiatives in 2017 and ward members were invited to apply for funding for specific initiatives in 2018. The initiatives that could be applied for were where capital monies could be utilised to enhance a local parade in conjunction with local businesses, and had to be supported by local ward members. However, as with all capital monies the funding cannot be utilised for revenue costs often associated with maintenance. To date £106k has been expended the breakdown of which is provided in the table below.

Ward	Parade	Approved Funding	Actual Spend (Year end 2022/23)	Funds allocated for items unable to be progressed
Penge & Cator	Kent House Parade	£8,150.00	£4,742.06	
	Newlands Park Parade	£19,587.00	£11,782.94	£1,710
	Parish Lane	£1,887.96	£297.22	£1,280
Biggin Hill	Roundway Biggin Hill	£8,825.30	£8,023.00	
	Rosehill, Biggin Hill	£21,725.00	£1,112.00	£13,920
	The Pantiles, Biggin Hill	£4,600.00	£742.00	£300
Chislehurst	Royal Parade	£24,942.50	£17,504.59	
	Old Hill Chislehurst	£8,453.50	£353.46	
	Belmont Parade	£21,466.50	£10,019.00	£3,000
Chelsfield	Green Street Green	£10,677.70	£9,149.82	
Clock House	Clock House Parade	£9,546.94	£7,531.93	
	Upper Elmers End/Marlow Rd	£7,875.00	£375.00	£4,910
Crystal Palace & Anerley	Anerley Hill/Crystal Palace Park	£21,373.00	£6,168.33	£4,920
Bromley Common & Holwood	Chatterton Road	£10,780.00	£4,280.00	
Bromley Common & Keston	Keston	£486.76	£442.16	
Shortlands & Park Langley	Park Langley - 1 item	£221.76	£221.76	
Kelsey & Eden Park	Eden Park Parade - Upper Elmers End Road	£19,885.00	£16,098.85	
Bromley Common & Keston	Keston	£486.76	£442.16	
West Wickham	Red Lodge Road	£17,921.20	£2,355.80	
Plaistow	Burnt Ash Lane	£21,843.06	£4,392.11	£14,015
Mottingham	Mottingham Village	£25,000.00		
Total:		£265,734.94	£106,034.19	£44,055.00

8. From Cllr Julie Ireland to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

When will the Council be undertaking a review of progress against the objectives set out in the 2019 LIP "Bromley's Transport for the Future"?

Reply:

The Council reviews progress against targets set out in the 2019 LIP on a regular basis.

9. From Cllr Julie Ireland to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

In the 2019 LIP "Bromley's Transport for the Future" the then Portfolio Holder promised "the development of a new public transport infrastructure in the Borough to provide new connectivity to other parts of London and Kent". What progress has been made towards this objective in the 4 years since the report was published?

Reply:

The Council is currently developing a scheme to provide bus priority measures through the installation of bus lanes on Anerley Hill between Crystal Palace Parade and just to the south-east of Seymour Villas. The project is planned to be implemented during the 2024/25 financial year. Also, TfL will shortly be deploying state of the art electric buses on Service 358 and as this is one of the main services that uses Anerley Hill it will complement the measures soon to be provided. TfL recently announced plans to introduce a network of limited stop/express orbital bus routes, called 'Superloop', intended to provide new travel opportunities, and quicker, and for Bromley will potentially provide new links to Canary Wharf, West Croydon and Bexleyheath. The details are still to be confirmed and are currently subject to discussion with ourselves and other London Boroughs.

10. From Cllr Chloe-Jane Ross to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces

Residents have reported concern about recent sewage discharge into the River Ravensbourne and River Beck, how does Bromley Council work with Thames Water to ensure our rivers are clean and what reporting does Thames Water provide to the Council when such discharge occurs?

Reply:

Bromley Council's work with Thames Water involves ensuring illegal connections from private properties into natural systems of drainage are rectified to reconnect appropriately with the main sewers. Permits to discharge effluent into local waterways by Thames Water are regulated by the Environment Agency, which is the lead authority for the quality and health of rivers. Therefore, any data reporting is between TW and EA.

If there is a specific local concern, Bromley Council will engage with both parties to rectify the matter. Any large pollution incidents are reported to LB Bromley's Emergency Planning team who would move into action.

11. From Cllr Chloe-Jane Ross to the Chairman of General Purposes and Licensing Committee

Will Bromley Council ensure that reminders about Voter ID are put into the upcoming Environment Matters Newsletter and any other publication going out to all households in the borough before the next Mayoral and General Elections?

Reply:

We have an extensive, wide-ranging communications and engagement plan, which is already underway and builds upon work undertaken as part of the pilot scheme that the Council was part of previously. Details of the new measures, including Voter ID, are already published on the Council website -

www.bromley.gov.uk/ElectionsAct2022

and specifically Voter ID - www.bromley.gov.uk/VoterID

Other communications activity will include sending direct communications to all residents/electors/households via various Council publications, including with all Canvass communications. Posters will be published on digital screens but also distributed in places like libraries, with messaging also placed on the Council's social media channels and news releases also published.

This activity is already underway and will gradually increase over the coming months and will build up to the next scheduled election in Bromley which is the GLA election on 2 May 2024.