

LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY

MINUTES

**of the proceedings of the Meeting of the
Council of the Borough
held at 7.00 pm on 11 March 2024**

Present:

**The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Mike Botting**

**The Deputy Mayor
Councillor Keith Onslow**

Councillors

Jeremy Adams	Hannah Gray	Alexa Michael
Jonathan Andrews	Dr Sunil Gupta FRCP	Angela Page
Jessica Arnold	FRCPPath	Chris Price
Felicity Bainbridge	Christine Harris	Chloe-Jane Ross
Kathy Bance MBE	Colin Hitchins	Will Rowlands
Yvonne Bear	Alisa Igoe	Shaun Slator
Nicholas Bennett J.P.	Julie Ireland	Colin Smith
Kim Botting FRSA	Mike Jack	Diane Smith
Mark Brock	Simon Jeal	Mark Smith
David Cartwright QFSM	David Jefferys	Alison Stammers
Graeme Casey	Charles Joel	Melanie Stevens
Josh Coldspring-White	Kevin Kennedy-Brooks	Harry Stranger
Will Connolly	Josh King	Ryan Thomson
Aisha Cuthbert	Jonathan Laidlaw	Michael Tickner
Sophie Dunbar	Kate Lymer	Pauline Tunnicliffe
Robert Evans	Tony Owen	Thomas Turrell
Simon Fawthrop	Christopher Marlow	Sam Webber
Kira Gabbert	Ruth McGregor	Rebecca Wiffen
Adam Jude Grant	Tony McPartlan	

The meeting was opened with prayers

In the Chair
The Mayor
Councillor Mike Botting

58 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Dean.

Apologies for lateness were received from Cllr Jonathan Andrews.

59 Declarations of Interest

There were no declaration of interest.

**60 To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on
26 February 2024**

It was noted that Cllr Graeme Casey's name was spelt incorrectly on pages 4 and 5 of the minutes – this would be corrected.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th February 2024 be confirmed.

**61 Petition
Report CSD24029**

A petition asking the Council to install two pedestrian crossings outside the Crofton Schools in Orpington had been received in January 2024. The petition requested the Council to –

“Set up two zebra crossings – one in Crofton Lane near Crofton Infant School and the second in Towncourt Lane near Crofton Junior School in Orpington.”

The lead petitioner, Ms Karina Malka, attended the meeting and addressed Councillors in support of her petition. She urged the Council to speed up the implementation of pedestrian crossings and if necessary to put temporary measures in place.

Cllr Nicholas Bennett, Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety, responded to the petitioner, explaining that the Council was already investigating what the petitioners wanted, and that therefore no additional action was required.

A motion to take no further action on the petition was moved by Councillor Nicholas Bennett, seconded by Cllr Fawthrop and **CARRIED**.

62 Questions

Three questions had been received from members of the public for oral reply. The questions, with the answers given, are set out in Appendix A to these minutes.

One question had been received from a member of the public for written reply. The question, with the answer given, is set out in Appendix B to these minutes.

Nine questions had been received from members of the Council for oral reply. The questions, with the answers given, are set out in Appendix C to these minutes.

Six questions had been received from members of the Council for written reply. The questions, with the answers given, are set out in Appendix D to these minutes.

63 To consider any statements that may be made by the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holders or Chairmen of Committees.

No statements were made.

64 Planning Related Changes to the Local Planning Protocol and the Scheme of Delegation
Report CSD24039

A motion to approve the changes to the Local Planning Protocol and Code of Conduct and the Scheme of Delegation to Officers recommended by Development Control Committee, including further amendments circulated since the Committee's meeting and a suggestion from Cllr Adams about the order of paragraph 16.5 (c) of the Scheme of Delegation, was moved by Councillor Alexa Michael, seconded by Councillor Yvonne Bear and **CARRIED.**

65 To consider Motions of which notice has been given.

(A) Police Base Re-Openings

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Thomas Turrell and seconded by Councillor Hannah Gray -

"The Council thanks the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Mark Rowley, for coming to Bromley last summer to present his 'New Met for London' plan.

This Council broadly welcomes the measures in the plan, especially the commitment to restoring community policing. In line with this, Council calls on the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to provide the necessary funding so the Metropolitan Police can re-open bases in Penge/ Crystal Palace and West Wickham, as well increasing the number of bases it has in the rural parts of the Borough. Council welcomes the reopening of the base at Green Street Green in Chelsfield. This will help to achieve the Commissioner's target of ensuring that no Police officer is more than 20 minutes away from the communities which they serve.

Council also calls on the Metropolitan Police to review the bureaucracy around volunteers covering front desks at the local police bases.

In addition, this Council is concerned that too many of the Borough's Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) are based out of Bromley Police Station. As such, their ability to patrol local neighbourhoods depends on the availability of

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public bus transport. Council calls on MOPAC to ensure all SNTs have access to Police vehicles so they can travel to these neighbourhoods whenever necessary, not when a bus can take them.”

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Alison Stammers and seconded by Councillor Mark Smith -

To add the words “and Chislehurst” as follows -

“The Council thanks the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Mark Rowley, for coming to Bromley last summer to present his ‘New Met for London’ plan. This Council broadly welcomes the measures in the plan, especially the commitment to restoring community policing. In line with this, Council calls on the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to provide the necessary funding so the Metropolitan Police can re-open bases in Penge/Crystal Palace, West Wickham and Chislehurst, as well increasing the number of bases it has in the rural parts of the Borough. Council welcomes the reopening of the base at Green Street Green in Chelsfield. This will help to achieve the Commissioner’s target of ensuring that no Police officer is more than 20 minutes away from the communities which they serve.

Council also calls on the Metropolitan Police to review the bureaucracy around volunteers covering front desks at the local police bases. In addition, this Council is concerned that too many of the Borough’s Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) are based out of Bromley Police Station. As such, their ability to patrol local neighbourhoods depends on the availability of public bus transport. Council calls on MOPAC to ensure all SNTs have access to Police vehicles so they can travel to these neighbourhoods whenever necessary, not when a bus can take them.”

The amendment from Cllr Stammers was put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

A further amendment was moved by Councillor Tony McPartlan and seconded by Councillor Jeremy Adams as follows -

Delete everything after 'community policing' and replace with:

“Council recognises the funding challenges that the Metropolitan Police face and that the proportion of the Met police budget provided by City Hall has now increased from 19 per cent in 2016 to 27 per cent in the proposed budget for 2024-25. It also recognises the additional strain on funding recent extractions are having.

This Council will therefore work with Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley, Chief Superintendent Andy Brittain and Superintendent Luke Baldock to re-open bases in Penge/Crystal Palace and West Wickham, as well increasing the number of bases it has in other parts of the Borough. Bromley Council also calls on the Home Office to provide additional funding if this cannot be achieved within existing budgets.

Council welcomes the reopening of the base at Green Street Green in Chelsfield. This will help to achieve the Commissioner's target of ensuring that no Police officer is more than 20 minutes away from the communities which they serve.

In addition, this Council is concerned that too many of the Borough's Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) are based out of Bromley Police Station. As such, their ability to patrol local neighbourhoods depends on the availability of public bus transport. Council will work with Chief Superintendent Andy Brittain and Superintendent Luke Baldock to ensure all SNTs have access to Police vehicles so they can travel to these neighbourhoods whenever necessary, not when a bus can take them. It will call on the Home Office to provide additional funding if this cannot be achieved within existing budgets."

The amendment from Cllr McPartlan was put to the vote and **LOST**.

On being put to the vote, the motion from Cllr Turrell as amended by Cllr Stammers was **CARRIED**.

(B) ULEZ and the Mayor of London

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Colin Hitchins (with an alteration to remove the word "premature") and seconded by Councillor Josh Coldspring-White -

"This Council believes that the best interests of the people of Bromley have not been served by the extension of ULEZ and profligate spending by the Mayor of London resulting in enormous increases in his precept on council taxpayers."

On being put to the vote, the motion from Cllr Hitchins was **CARRIED**.

(C) Household Support Fund

The motion due to be proposed by Councillor Alisa Igoe and seconded by Councillor Chris Price was withdrawn.

(D) Live Streaming Council Meetings

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Chloe-Jane Ross and seconded by Councillor Sam Webber -

"Council Notes:

(1) Online access to Council meetings improves local democracy by encouraging more residents to engage in council business with convenient access, whilst increasing transparency and accountability in Council decision making.

(2) That an increasing number of local authorities are recording and streaming Council meetings live routinely and maintaining the recordings for public access thereafter.

(3) Bromley Council has successfully live streamed Council meetings during COVID and after.

(4) That most Bromley Council meetings are already hybrid meetings, with attendees in the Council Chamber and Council Officers and Councillors viewing and/or participating online (noting Councillors are not permitted to vote online), and many hybrid meetings are already being recorded for internal purposes.

(5) There are cost and resourcing implications in providing a 5-star live streaming service, however the Council has existing resources to offer basic streaming and to upload recordings of Council meetings online with minimal cost implications.

Therefore, Council moves to:

- (1) Livestream all future Full Council meetings and Committee meetings.
- (2) To maintain recordings of meetings online for an appropriate length of time.
- (3) Continue to investigate affordable enhancements to live streaming and availability of recordings online to improve the service without incurring significant costs.”

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Jessica Arnold and seconded by Cllr Josh King -

“Council notes:

(1) Online access to Council meetings improves local democracy by encouraging more residents to engage in Council business with convenient access, whilst increasing transparency and accountability in Council decision-making. This is particularly important for allowing people with disabilities or reduced mobility, caring responsibilities or evening/shift working patterns to attend Council meetings.

(2) That an increasing number of local authorities are recording and streaming Council meetings live routinely.

(3) Bromley Council has successfully livestreamed Council meetings during COVID and after.

(4) That most Bromley Council meetings are already hybrid meetings, with attendees in the Council Chamber and Council Officers and Councillors viewing and/or participating online.

(5) There are cost and resourcing implications in providing a 5-star livestreaming service; however, the Council has existing resources to offer basic online viewing access and to upload recordings of Council meetings online with minimal cost implications.

Therefore, Council moves to:

(1) Provide online viewing access to Full Council meetings and Committee meetings held in public from no later than three months after the move of these meetings into our new premises at Churchill Court.

(2) To robustly consider what an appropriate length of time should be to keep recordings of meetings available for public access online, recognising the pros and cons of either short or long periods of access, to be considered by the General Purposes and Licensing Committee.

(3) Continue to investigate affordable enhancements to livestreaming and availability of recordings online to improve access without incurring significant costs, and keep our arrangements under review for quality and cost, with future updates coming to the General Purposes and Licensing Committee.”

On being put to the vote, the amendment from Cllr Arnold was **LOST**.

On being put to the vote, the motion from Cllr Ross was **LOST**.

66 The Mayor's announcements and communications.

The Mayor invited Cllr Diane Smith, Portfolio Holder for Adult Care and Health, to make an announcement. Cllr Smith announced that the Council had just won two iESE Ltd awards – the gold award for its work on tackling loneliness, and a silver award for health services for the homeless.

The Mayor reported that the Mayor's Awards evening on 7th March had been a great success, and he urged Members to sign up for the last few spaces on the wine tasting evening on 16th March.

The Meeting ended at 9.58 pm

Mayor

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Questions from Members of the Public for Oral Reply

1. From Kieran Terry to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

In 2021, when I was a Chislehurst Councillor, I put forward some drawings for road safety improvements at Chislehurst War Memorial. In particular, these included the creation of new pedestrian crossings without the related traffic congestion, environmental and road safety issues from previous proposals. Will the Portfolio Holder consider these plans further?

Reply:

I am delighted to inform former Cllr Terry that the proposals he made in 2021 have been developed, funding has been approved and a plan to improve safety at the junction is being presented to the Environment and Community Services PDS Committee on Wednesday. It will not be a perfect solution, but all are agreed that this is the best that can be achieved. I thank former Cllr Terry and the current ward members for their support.

Supplementary Question:

Mr Terry asked whether the proposed new crossing could be phased to the traffic lights at the junction?

Reply:

Cllr Bennett explained that a major concern was the congestion at the junction, and he did not want to further overload it. Therefore, the proposed new crossing would need to be linked to the existing lights at the junction.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Alisa Igoe

Cllr Igoe referred to the previous petitions for something to be done at this location in October 2019 and February 2022. She was pleased that these proposals were being brought forward, but questioned whether a former Councillor had been informed in advance about this?

Reply:

Cllr Bennett was not aware that Mr Terry had any advance notice of the report, only that he been campaigning on the issue for a long time.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Mark Smith:

Cllr Smith was pleased that the issue was coming to committee again, and asked what the consultation arrangements would be?

Reply:

Cllr Bennett responded that he was not sure what consultation would achieve. A range of options had already been investigated, but as, for understandable reasons, the Commons Conservators would not release any additional Common land the opportunities were limited. Cllr Bennett added that, as the houses along the south side Bromley Lane had private drives it would be possible to install double yellow lines there to improve traffic flow.

2. From Ju Owens to the Chairman of the Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee

With regards to your recent request for officers to review Bromley Council's processes, policies and procedures to protect and defend freedom of speech, do you agree that freedom of speech does not equate to freedom from consequences?

Reply:

Can I thank the questioner taking an interest in the very important subject of protecting Free Speech.

The great news is that no one should ever be fearful of free speech, it is something that should be celebrated, and the ethos of free speech should be shared as widely as possible. The only people who fear free speech are despots, dictators, those who can't stand criticism and those who are incapable of making a rational argument in favour of their own proposition.

In this country there are of course legal restrictions on some aspects of free speech, such as that of incitement or defamation. The requirements asked of our officers are to ensure that freedom of speech is protected within the law. This ensures that our employees are protected from legitimate debate and not bullied or prevented from speaking out. It is essential to democracy that these protections are extended to Councillors too. In general terms free speech is not a licence to be rude, disparaging or fall foul of the Nolan principles.

Under free speech particularly those of an enlightened disposition can enjoy the sharing of views and debating them freely, without unintended consequences.

It is worth reminding everyone of what Lord Justice Sedley said in the Free Speech case of *Redmond-Bate v Director of Public Prosecutions* [1999] EWHC Admin 733.

He said that this freedom encompassed "the irritating, the contentious, the eccentric, the heretical, the unwelcome and provocative" – like me. He invoked the classical Greek philosopher Socrates and warned against state attempts to control unofficial ideas. "Freedom only to speak inoffensively is not worth having."

Supplementary Question:

Ms Owens stated that she agreed with the Conservative Party's decision to suspend the whip from Lee Anderson, and asked the Chairman if he would support similar action if a Bromley Councillor expressed similar views.

Reply:

The Council can protect the freedom of speech of employees and Councillors before they speak, but cannot guarantee their freedom after they speak.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Simon Jeal:

Cllr Jeal asked whether Cllr Fawthrop would apologise to the Monitoring Officer for calling her comments disingenuous at the Executive's last meeting? Cllr Colin Smith intervened on a point of order stating that this had already been done.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Shaun Slator

Freedom of speech can mean freedom from government interference, but we are also seeing threats against politicians, including demonstration outside their homes and offices. Should we be concerned about limits to freedom of speech not just from government but from activists and extremists?

Reply:

I agree; intimidation should have no part in our society. Particular issues have been reported to the Chief Executive and action has been taken.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Kevin Kennedy-Brooks:

Quoting from the Spiderman films, Cllr Kennedy-Brooks stated that with great power comes great responsibility. People looked at how councillors behaved, and it was important that councillors led by example – did the Chairman agree?

Reply:

Cllr Fawthrop responded that he was not surprised to hear the Labour party referring to works of fiction. He stated that he always tried to be civilised and lead by example. Language was important, but politicians could sometimes use hyperbole to make their case.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Alisa Igoe:

Cllr Igoe stated that she had previously heard a Member comment that homosexuality was a lifestyle choice and asked the Chairman whether he would find such comments offensive?

Reply:

Cllr Fawthrop stated that there was no right to never be offended; being offended was a choice. Some were more open and tolerant than others, but it was important to understand and challenge ideas.

3. From Ray Nowak to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

How many households have benefited from the Bromley Household Support this past fiscal year and what is the balance remaining in that fund?

Reply:

In the period of 1/4/23 to 31/12/23, a total of 17,789 households benefited from the Household Support Fund. The remaining budget for awards is £67,500 which equates to 338 awards.

Supplementary Question:

Ms Novak asked whether it would be useful to identify those most in need of this remaining money?

Reply:

We have every expectation that the money will be spent on the most vulnerable. Over £3.7m has already been distributed, so what remained was a very small proportion of the funds.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Simon Jeal:

An extension of the Scheme for six months was announced in the budget – has Bromley been informed of the amount it would receive?

Reply:

Cllr Bear responded that she had not been briefed on this yet.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Alisa Igoe:

Cllr Igoe asked whether the new funding could be distributed through the Bromley Foodbank?

Reply:

The Council works with partner organisations to raise awareness of the funds available, and has not had any difficulty in using the money.

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Questions from Members of the Public for Written Reply

1. From Dermot Mckibbin to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

I welcome the partnership between the Council and the London Mayor on tackling empty properties. Will the Council prioritise the 3 large properties in the Beckenham area which have been empty for well over 10 years?

Reply:

An information report was published in January on the Council's approach to Empty Homes. This report can be found here: [Report No \(bromley.gov.uk\)](https://www.bromley.gov.uk/reports-and-accounts/empty-homes-report)
The team is currently collating data to inform the approach to empty homes and prioritisation, particularly given the opportunities of the CHAPs programme. The Beckenham properties will be reviewed as part of this process.

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Questions from Members of the Council for Oral Reply

1. From Councillor Tony McPartlan to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

There is an increasing problem of inconsiderately parked vehicles in areas where pavement parking is permitted. This can lead to the pavements being partially or fully blocked, causing difficulty and danger for pedestrians, especially disabled and elderly people. What can we do to encourage residents who legally park on pavements to do so considerately?

Reply:

The Council addresses these issues, when they arise, on a case-by-case basis, as improvements will vary in nature according to the particular problem and the design of the footway. If Cllr McPartlan can let me know the locations he is concerned about then Officers will be asked to investigate and suggest suitable improvements.

I do share his concern – this inconsiderate behaviour is also causing problems for parents with young children.

Supplementary Question:

Can the Council use its enforcement officers to put warning letters on vehicles that are parked inconsiderately?

Reply:

That is an interesting suggestion – we can look at this and raise it with our contractor.

2. From Councillor Mark Brock to the Portfolio Holder for Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

To ask the Portfolio Holder what was the outcome of the trial of the Pothole Pro machine and whether he has any other plans to review new technology to improve efficiency?

Reply:

I was impressed by the efficiency with which the machine dug the trench saving considerable time and money compared with manual excavation. I am also exploring

the market for machines which repair small areas of road surface. Officers are in discussion with our contractor, and it will also play a part in how we frame our next contract.

3. From Councillor Alexa Michael to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

Will the Executive Member for Transport Highways and Road Safety make a statement as to how the allocation by His Majesty's Government of £455,000 for potholes is to be spent?

Reply:

The use of this capital funding to resurface roads is on the agenda for Wednesday's PDS meeting. In the longer term I am exploring how we can use some of the money to invest in new technology to improve efficiency, effectiveness and economy.

Supplementary question:

It is great to have this additional funding, but we want it spent in the best possible way. For example, when a pothole is filled can the contractor also repair any nearby potholes at the same time?

Reply:

If the contractor spends more time at one location there is a danger that repairs to much worse potholes elsewhere will be delayed. We have to leave it to the contractor.

The additional funding is not revenue – it has to be invested in equipment or upgrading roads rather than on isolated repairs. Cllr Igoe has pressed for College Road in Bromley to be resurfaced – it has been in our programme for three years, but we have not had the funding through from TfL.

The machines we have for resurfacing are not always suitable for smaller rural roads, so we need to look into this.

4. From Councillor Graeme Casey to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

What investigations have been made to consider the potential financial savings that could be made for children's services by investing in a Council run children's home?

Reply:

I can confirm that we are actively exploring a number of options. Given the current budget pressures both nationally and locally it is now absolutely right that we seek to enter this market as a way of reducing costs, as well as potentially being able to place children more locally. I will update the Children's PDS Committee once we have some concrete proposals and costings to share.

Supplementary question:

Do you agree that these investigations should include services for adults?

Reply:

That is not my portfolio, but I understand that these issues are being looked at.

Additional supplementary question from Cllr Simon Fawthrop:

The Government has announced additional funding in the budget – will the Council be applying for this?

Reply:

Yes, we will.

5. From Councillor Chris Price to the Leader of the Council

What plans do the Council have for celebrating Gypsy Roma Traveller Month this year?

Reply:

There are no such plans.

Supplementary question:

The events held last year were very effective, why can't they be repeated?

Reply:

The Chief Executive is here, and, subject to budgets being available, this might be considered.

6. From Councillor Alisa Igoe to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

Reference: Full Council 11 December 2023 - the Portfolio Holder's response to Cllr Bance "that reports should be made to the Council's rough sleeper team, who could then refer to other agencies as appropriate."

On my 16 January 2024 Teams call with the Council's Rough Sleeper Coordinator I was advised to initially report rough sleepers to Streetlink, an outside agency, who the Coordinator said would then report to the Council. Which advice is correct, that given to me, or that given to Cllr Bance?

Reply:

The answer is that both are correct. A councillor may raise an alert about a rough sleeper via the council Rough Sleeper Coordinator, Alexander Olayiwola. The public may raise concerns directly to Streetlink(<https://thestreetlink.org.uk/>). Streetlink will in turn contact ThamesReach's Rapid Response Team and they will make visits to the area of the reported sightings. If anyone is found they will provide verification and refer them to the local authority with whom they have a local connection for a housing support and advice. If they do not locate the person, this information will be

passed over to South East Region Outreach Team (SEROT), who will continue the search.

Alexander's contact numbers are: 02084617500 / 07850921628
Email: alexander.olayiwola@bromley.gov.uk

Supplementary question:

Do we have a shortage of staff in this department?

Reply:

No, but historically, there have been some gaps in staffing.

7. From Councillor Simon Jeal to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

Could you please outline the purpose of the Bromley Homelessness Forum, led by Bromley Council's Housing division?

Reply:

The Bromley Homeless Forum is a partnership meeting which has been set up as a way for the Council's frontline Housing Services to share and update relevant information with partners involved in housing, including representatives from the Local Authority (employees and Cllrs), NHS, Schools, DWP, Thamesreach, Housing Associations, CAB, Bromley Homeless, our Housing Management partners, Bromley Foodbank, BCWA and Living. Whilst policy changes and consultation opportunities may be discussed at the forum it is not the mechanism for introducing policy change. There was an open invitation extended to all Councillors at the Members' Induction inviting them to attend as observers and this invitation remains open. Anyone wishing to attend should contact the Assistant Director for Housing, Lynnette Chamielec, and she will let you have dates and detailed contact information.

Supplementary question:

So, the Forum is primarily for talking?

Reply:

Yes, if anything comes out of the discussions reports can come forward via the PDS Committee.

8. From Councillor Jeremy Adams to the Leader of the Council

Bromley depends on charities and voluntary organisations, but many, especially smaller, local organisations, are facing ever greater financial pressures and reduced income. What measures can or will the Council take to support local charities and voluntary organisations in our borough?

Reply:

I do agree with your broad description – Bromley is fortunate to have such a thriving voluntary sector, led by an outstanding organisation in Community Links Bromley. We are happy to assist them and provide training, but it is no secret that the harsh

reality is that we cannot be as generous as we would like. We may have to help in ways that they may not have wanted to be helped in the past. Some organisations might need to merge to reduce costs, or improve their working practices, and we will encourage this. We will try to stagger rent rises, help them benchmark their services and encourage them to charge them at sustainable rates. We will work together, but we are not in a position to provide lots of funding – the Council will run out of money in three and a half years. This is due to all parties at central level – local government is at the bottom of all their lists. The situation for Council funding is dire, and we will soon have to prioritise statutory services over what we want to do.

Supplementary question:

Cllr Adams stated that while larger charities could scale their costs, this was often not possible for smaller charities. Could the Leader look at the role of smaller charities in particular.

Reply:

In principle, yes, on a case-by-case basis, but the Council could not write cheques. The Leader suggested that Cllr Adams should contact the Head of Children's Services with any suggestions.

Additional supplementary question from Cllr Tony Owen:

What expectations has the Council of the London Councils Grants Committee?

Reply:

There was a meeting of the Committee in a week's time. Leaving London Councils had been suggested, and Bromley's contribution might be better spent locally.

9. From Councillor Simon Jeal to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Since Harris Federation withdraw their application to the Department for Education to open a free school a year ago, has the Council continued working on plans for a secondary school on the Kentwood site?

Reply:

The Kentwood site remains allocated within the Local Plan for educational use. This status could only be changed in the next Local Plan, which is at the early stages of development. As such, future development of the site to provide additional school places is still possible.

There are no current discussions being held between the Education Directorate and the DfE, however Colonel Bob Stewart attempted to ask a question on this matter to the Secretary of State for Education last year in Parliament, but unfortunately wasn't called. And more recently, just last week in fact, the Conservative Candidate for Beckenham & Penge, Cllr Hannah Gray, was at Downing Street where she met the current Secretary of State for Education Gillian Keegan, and where she was able to discuss the issue with her in person.

We remain committed to working with the Government to secure a new school in the North West of the borough.

Supplementary question:

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm that the Department for Education has raised concerns about the viability of the site, so there is no feasibility of a school being established at this site?

Reply:

There were concerns, but there could be imaginative ways to address these.

Additional supplementary question from Cllr Kevin Kennedy-Brooks:

Was it acceptable for a candidate for MP to raise this issue with the Minister without informing ward councillors?

Reply:

This was not a planned meeting on this subject – it was a fortuitous opportunity.

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Questions from Members of the Council for Written Reply

1. From Councillor Tony Owen to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

To ask the Portfolio Holder if he will list all the borough roads with 20 MPH speed limits, the date they were introduced and their rationale and if he will review their utility?

Reply:

A list is being prepared and I will then consider whether the limits are appropriate and any reversion to 30 MPH will be brought to the PDS committee in the first instance.

2. From Councillor Tony Owen to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

To ask the Portfolio Holder if he will list all roads with humps, when they were installed and the rationale for their installation and whether he review their utility.

Reply:

The Council does not hold a definitive list of streets with road humps but I have asked that one be produced. With the exception of the speed table in Loop Road, Chislehurst, and some in two town centres, all road humps have been in place for over 20 years.

I question the utility of street humps as the police, fire brigade, ambulance service and Transport for London have objected to the proliferation of road humps and raised tables because of the increase in attendance times for emergency calls and discomfort and possible injury to their passengers. Road humps and raised tables can also lead to complaints from local residents about increased noise and vibration from traffic.

Once a definitive list has been produced a report will be produced for Member's consideration as to the future of use of humps at each location where they have been installed.

3. From Councillor Will Connolly to the Portfolio Holder for Environment

Since the changes to service for Flats recycling for service improvements, have reports of missed collections risen or reduced in numbers and what measures are being taken to address any ongoing issues at addresses that frequently report missed collections?

Reply:

As part of our ongoing commitment to improve collection service delivery, changes to the communal flats recycling service were introduced from the 16th October 2023.

These changes are part of the Environment and Community Services Portfolio Plan for 2024/25 under priority 2 as listed below -

Reduce the environmental impact caused by the management of waste in Bromley, with a focus on optimising waste collection routes and reducing vehicle and equipment emissions.

There has been a reduction of 63% missed bins reported for the flats paper service and a reduction of 88% missed bins reported for the flats mixed recycling service since the 1st November (first full month of service change) to the 27th February (date of writing.)

With any change to schedules, whilst the collection teams familiarise themselves with new bin store locations (which is particularly relevant to the flats service), repeat missed bins are tracked and identified through our recording systems.

Via the crew's ECHO system (a route, address logistics and recording system) specific addresses, roads, or locations can be highlighted to the collection teams in circumstances that require emphasizing.

The ECHO system will behaviour check for any other missed collection for the same service for the last six collections. If a missed collection has been recorded, the system will create a 'task' for the crew, and highlight the address in question. For repeat missed collections recorded from reports by the public, the address is highlighted blue on the crew's 'in cab' Echo tablet mounted on the dashboard.

There has been a reduction in repeat missed bins of 76% for the flats paper service and a reduction of 75% for the flats mixed recycling service since the 1st of November (first full month of service change) to the 27th of February (date of writing.)

4. From Councillor Alisa Igoe to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

HGVs which service a Plaistow ward supermarket need to reverse into the store's car park, to be able to exit. The Council has provided additional double yellow lines however I am still receiving complaints of the danger to pedestrians and vehicles. Would the Portfolio Holder agree to officers meeting me and the store staff on site to solve this issue?

Reply:

If Cllr Igoe identifies the supermarket to which she is referring, I would, of course, be happy for an officer to meet her and the store management on site. Please contact the Assistant Director for Highways about the precise nature of the concern, so he can ensure the most appropriate officer attends.

5. From Councillor Sam Webber to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

Can the Portfolio Holder help residents of Lownds Court in Bromley hold their new freeholders (The Alaskan Permanent Fund / APF) and managing agents (Prior Estates) to account, given the 3 blocks (comprising 20 flats) was recently sold off by the Council when the remaining 50% of The Glades was sold off to the APF.

Residents who are leaseholders wish to ask about the APF about the possibility of buying the freehold of their properties and wish to hold the agents to account over a lift which has been out of order for months and the sinking fund, to which all leaseholders contribute each year.

Neither organisation is currently being responsive to residents.

Reply:

The Council cannot intervene as we have sold our interest in the property however we can provide the contact details for the professional advisors to The Alaskan Permanent Fund.

6. From Councillor Sam Webber to the Portfolio Holder for Environment

Will the Portfolio Holder ensure that all new trees planted in Council maintained parks by LBB staff or idverde, are properly maintained from now on? Could he confirm if any such planted trees in Queen's Gardens in Bromley have had to be replaced?

Reply:

All newly planted trees in parks or on the streets receive an aftercare programme which includes 50l of water weekly during the summer months.

Officers reported in September 2023 that the overall mortality rate for newly planted trees in 2021/22 and 2022/23 is 10% which is a favourable statistic against the national average for street trees of 30%.

I am aware that there was a tree that had to be removed because of storm damage in January 2024. This will be replaced in the next planting season.

Our records indicate that there are no failed newly planted trees within the past three years at this location. The establishment period for new trees is three years with monitoring undertaken throughout the growing season, next scheduled for early spring 2024.

Any trees which fail to establish during this period will be replaced in the following planting season.