

COUNCIL MEETING

1st JULY 2013

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

For Oral reply:

1. From Jan Watkins of the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Safety

Does the Council think that it is right that for the past 3 years the local residents and schools have been subject to excessive trauma caused by Waste4fuel with the pollution in the atmosphere, stench of rubbish, rubbish carried by the wind, the threat of fires with disruption to traffic and danger to drivers using the A20, a residential street having a constant flow of heavy articulated lorries constantly rumbling past their homes and the constant beeping of Waste4fuel vehicles?

Reply:

Whilst the Council may agree that it is unjust that residents have been putting up with difficult conditions arising from the activities of the Waste4fuel site, the Council is not in a position to take any action to prevent this.

The site is licensed by the Environment Agency and they are the organisation which has the authority to take enforcement action against the owners of the site for breach of conditions and the specific activities mentioned in your question.

I understand that the Environment Agency is currently considering enforcement action against the company, which may include prosecution, but I am unable to confirm this at present.

I can also tell you that the Suspension Notice deadline ended on 10th June by which time the pile of waste was due to be removed. The Environment Agency inspected the site with the London Fire Brigade and noted that progress had been made. However, only about a third to a half of the material has been removed and the site is not fully compliant with the Notice requirements. Hence they are in breach of the Notice.

The Environment Agency is confident that the site has been complying with the in/out volume requirements but that the site has failed by under-estimating the amount of material it has in situ. The Suspension Notice is still in force and the permit is still suspended. The Environment agency state that Waste4fuel are making progress and that the fire risk is reducing. The London

Fire Brigade are still not happy as the fire risk remains and they want the waste removed as quickly as possible. All enforcement options are open to the Environment Agency but they have not yet decided if enforcement action will be instigated. They will be monitoring to ensure that the site continues to progress through removal of all waste materials and if they haven't done then that's the time they will consider what options are available to them.

Supplementary Question:

Ms Watkins asked, should the site fail yet again to meet the deadlines, at what point in time will the Council say "enough is enough" and exercise its duty of care for the local residents of St Paul's Cray under the realms of protection of public health and use its best offices to seek to use every possible leverage to encourage the Environment Agency to close it down.

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder repeated that this was a privately owned site and was nothing to do with the Council. The Environment Agency were taking the lead on this, they had given it a license and they had decided that they would leave it until the end of August in the hope that this was a reasonable deadline. It was up to the Environment Agency to make the decision at that point as to what they wished to do - there was nothing the Council could do.

For Written reply:

2. From Tim Fisher of the Portfolio Holder for Care Services

As a result of recent changes to housing benefits, has the London Borough of Bromley (LBB) relocated or offered to relocate LBB residents to less expensive parts of the country? If so, how many persons have been moved and how many have been offered a move?

Reply:

We have developed an options toolkit which aims to provide advice and assistance to those affected by the benefit changes to consider a range of options to mitigate the impact of the caps. This may include for example assistance to access employment to become exempt from the cap or accessing alternative more affordable accommodation. For some this may, indeed, mean choosing to move to areas with cheaper rents. So far we have moved about five families - this has been where they have family connections or work opportunities in areas where there is a greater supply of more affordable accommodation. We have about a further 19 households who have currently expressed an interest in this option. Where we do assist in moving to less expensive areas advice and assistance is offered for relocation and to access appropriate services in the area.