

COUNCIL MEETING

2nd DECEMBER 2013

ORAL QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(1) From Angela Wilkins to the Portfolio Holder for Resources

How many people in Bromley have been made homeless (or are subject to notice of eviction) as a result of the implementation of the “bedroom tax”, how many have been moved out of Borough and how much of the Discretionary Housing Payments budget has been spent on any household for whom it is inappropriate to move to smaller accommodation?

Reply:

As we are not a stock holding authority we would not have specific data on actions taken by housing associations in respect of their tenants affected by the bedroom size criteria. We do however have a number of joint working protocols around providing advice and assistance to those households affected by the bedroom size criteria aimed at preventing potential homelessness. In addition the majority of housing associations have dedicated officers supporting such households with a range of options including gaining employment and seeking smaller accommodation. In addition discretionary housing payments can also be arranged to assist whilst households are actively pursuing these options. To date, housing associations have reported that more than 60 households have already moved to smaller accommodation either through direct transfers, mutual exchanges or Bromley Homeseekers. There have not been any reported moves out of borough at this stage. As at 23rd November £159,616 has been awarded in discretionary housing payments to either assist those unable to move to smaller accommodation or assist in the period prior to the claimant moving – this sum has been made up of 315 awards.

Supplementary question:

Given that this DHP budget was more than tripled last year and given the hardships we are confident are happening as a consequence of the bedroom tax, what the Council is able to do to make sure that the housing associations are making tenants affected by this aware that they are eligible for this money.

Reply:

The vast amount of work that we do in terms of preventing homelessness in the first place is worth paying tribute to. We have housing officers who work closely with the housing associations. They make it very clear to their tenants and they have written to all their tenants in advance of the spare room subsidy coming in to advise them of how they may be implicated with that charge and what action they can take. By working closely in harmony, at the moment we are not aware of anybody that has been declared homeless as a result.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(1) From Hazel Howes to the Portfolio Holder for Environment

Why does the Council not clean the alleyway linking Jasmine Grove to Minden Road in Anerley?

Reply:

The alleyway in question is already being cleaned on an ad hoc basis.

In light of your expressed concern, inspections will be made over coming weeks to determine whether the regularity of these cleansings need to be increased.

(2) From Colin Willetts, Secretary, Longbury Residents Association, to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

Following the Cotmandene Centre report/recommendations 13/11/12 could the Portfolio Holder give us a further update to include any potential threats of closure for this most important & well used facility which is the hub of the local community in St Paul's Cray?

Reply:

The Cotmandene Community Resource Centre will continue to operate as normal for the foreseeable future, there are no plans to close the facility at the present time.

(3) From Colin Willetts, Secretary, Longbury Residents Association, to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

We have received several enquiries as to the lack of construction work on the new cinema over the past 3 months or so, (i) has this site ran into financial difficulties hence the delay in construction? (ii) if not when do you expect the date for its completion?

Reply:

The proposed cinema is being developed by a private company on land in its ownership. The Council's role in the scheme is in its capacity as Local Planning Authority in dealing with the planning application and as an adjoining land owner in agreeing to some details relating to land ownership. The Council has dealt with the developer's planning application and has granted planning permission for the scheme. We have also dealt with the land ownership details at the developer's request. The Council will now only be involved in dealing with any planning requirements to approve details under the planning permission as development proceeds. The developer has advised that discussions with potential retailers are on-going and they hope to

be able to provide an update on the Development Programme after Christmas.

(4) From Rebecca Rowland to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Safety

Will the council provide an update on the waste4fuel site in Cornwall Drive? What steps have been taken towards its immediate closure, in light of another fire at the site on Tuesday 26th November?

Reply:

On 11 November 2013 the EA attended the High Court and successfully gained a Final Order for an Injunction against Waste4Fuel Ltd and their Director, Bryan Hughes to remove all combustible waste from the site in Cornwall Drive by 1 May 2014.

The Order included the following conditions, to:

- See a reduction in the weekly tonnage (currently 200 tonnes) of waste input to 150 tonnes (from 25 November 2013) and then to 75 tonnes from 1 January 2014
- Ensure that the storage of any new waste is in a new segregated area
- That there are monthly site inspections, with photographic evidence
- That weekly reports are compiled, stating the tonnage of waste accepted and removed from the site during that week.
- That 24 hour site security is in place to reduce the risk of any further fires at the site

If any of these conditions are not met, the company or the Director can be held in contempt of court and may be liable to a fine or imprisonment.

The High Court did not implement any measures for the closure of the site and the Environment Agency (EA) have no plans at present to return to the High Court as a result of the fire on site on Tuesday 26th November .

However, should the Company and Director, Mr Hughes, fail to meet the requirements of the Court Order, then the EA may then return to Court.

(5) From Richard Williams to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

For many years the future of Anerley Town Hall (ATH) has been a constant source of concern for its local residents who fear the loss of our local library and community services. I am pleased that building work is currently taking place and money is being spent on the upkeep, however, what guarantee can the Council give that ATH will continue to facilitate our library and the community services that are vital to our area?

Reply:

Thank you for your question with regard to Anerley Town Hall. It was pleasing to note that you positively acknowledge that the Council is currently tackling a number of significant structural issues that have arisen. In doing so the Council has been working in conjunction with the tenant, the Crystal Palace Community Development Trust, to ensure that the works can be undertaken with the minimum of disruption to both users of the community areas as well as the business tenants who occupy the building.

In terms of the Library, it has been a long standing objective of this Council to create a new large library offer in the locality and I am pleased to inform you that work is progressing on the development proposals for a major new library at 46 Green Lane, Penge. Whilst, this will ultimately mean that the existing Anerley Library will cease to operate, probably from late May 2014, it is our intention to retain some form of library offer in Anerley Town Hall. It is likely that this offer will be electronic and based on the principle of self-serve. It will though be fully linked into the Council's broader library network.

Having visited the building on a number of occasions, I have always been impressed by the range of community activities on offer and we will be continuing to discuss with the Trust, options for taking the long term management of the building forward.