

COUNCIL MEETING

24th February 2014

ORAL QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

1. From Councillor Russell Mellor of the Leader of the Council

Can you advise me if you are aware of the recent High Court and Appeal Court case of St Albans Council – v – Hunston Properties Limited?

Reply:

Yes I am aware of the case.

Supplementary Question:

The High Court overturned an appeal against St Albans Council for lack of a local plan. Can the Leader assure me that our Plan will proceed with utmost urgency in order that we are not in the same situation?

Reply:

Yes, we will do everything we can to proceed in an orderly and speedy manner.

2. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP to the Resources Portfolio Holder

If he will set out in table and graph format the following information:

- i. the annual increase in council tax for each financial year since 1999-2000;
- ii. the amount taken from the reserves to limit the increase in council tax in each year;
- iii. the increase in the years 1999-2000, 2000-2001, and 2001-2002;
- iv. the increase in the years 2002-3 to 2014-15;
- v. the party or parties in control of the Council at the time of the increases and if he will arrange for the answer to this question to be provided on the council website?

Reply:

I have circulated the answer (appendix 1). There are highlights such as the use of reserves to supplement revenue. This stopped in 2007/08. We have preserved and increased reserves since that time.

Supplementary Question:

In the three years 1998 to 2001 the Council Tax went up by an average of 10.53% per year, since then it has gone up by an average of 3.8%. What conclusions does he draw from those figures?

Reply:

The conclusions are fairly obvious – it is about careful husbandry of our resources and running our Council in a proficient manner. If you take the last four years of Council Tax increases, the total is 0.4% - if you compare that with the three year period where it exceeded 10% each year you get a good idea of the swing round in the way we handle our resources.

Additional Supplementary Question:

Councillor Reg Adams asked the Portfolio Holder if he agreed that given the real impact of the increase in Council Tax – ie discounting for the real rate of inflation at the time – the question was rather “over-egging the pudding.”

Reply:

Would he expect me to do so?

Additional Supplementary Question:

Can he explain if the rises were so terribly high can he explain why he continued to take that amount of money from 2002 onwards and indeed increase the Council tax further?

Reply:

It would have been possible, where we had taken the money erroneously, to give the money back, but you had already spent it.

3. From Councillor Michael Tickner to the Leader of the Council

What action has been taken by the Council in the past four years to promote environmentally sustainable policies in the administration of the council’s premises and services in order to ensure that Bromley remains a ‘green and clean’ borough?

Reply:

The Environment Portfolio Plan sets out how the Council continues to deliver excellent environmental services and keeps Bromley ‘clean and green’. The public is kept informed through ‘Environment Matters’.

Premises: environmental sustainability activity focusses on the Council’s Carbon Management Programme, which aims to reduce environmental impacts and costs associated with how we operate (e.g. energy efficiency, recycling and staff travel).

- The first five-year programme (which finished at the end of 2012/13) showed a reduction in the Council’s carbon emissions of 5,275t CO₂ equivalent – a reduction of 14% since the Programme’s 2006/07 baseline.
- Since 2006/07, by taking action on energy use at the Civic Centre and our Street Lighting, the Council has avoided almost 11.5 million kWh of energy consumption, and avoided unnecessary revenue spend of £580k.

- Action through the Council's Carbon Management Fund (Salix) will have avoided more than £700k in unnecessary energy costs since 2008/09

Services provided through the Environment Portfolio affect our daily lives and many services compare favourably with those provided by other councils.

- Our household waste recycling rate has risen to over 50%, the second highest in London
- The amount of waste we landfill continues to fall: now only 24% of total waste
- There are nearly 13,000 customers for the Green Garden Waste Collection Scheme
- Resident satisfaction with our Street Cleaning is high.
- The street lighting 'invest to save' project (replacing 8,000 lamp columns and 4,000 lanterns by April 2015) will significantly reduce energy use and costs.

I could go on but clearly a lot has been done in this area.

Supplementary Question:

Councillor Tickner welcomed the virtual disappearance of graffiti from the Borough's streets, but not from railway property which residents saw as threatening and suggesting lawlessness, and asked whether the Leader would be willing to raise this with Railtrack.

Reply:

This is exactly what we are trying to do. We are meeting resistance from the train operating companies but we will continue to do so as it is an important part of making the borough look cleaner and feel safer.

4. From Councillor Richard Scoates to the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio Holder

What action has been taken in the past four years to encourage business and employment in the Borough?

Reply:

We have done many things in the last four years to try to assist businesses, but having said that, my own philosophy is that the market is the best organiser of business. Our duty is to provide the correct infrastructure and not to get in the way – in other words to reduce bureaucratic barriers. Amongst the things we have done, we have organised a number of "Boost your Business" events which have provided small and medium sized businesses with opportunities to meet suppliers, we have published very regularly the Bromley Business Guide which lists about three and a half thousand local businesses, we maintain an online commercial property database for businesses to find properties more easily, we publish a bi-monthly business e-bulletin to over three thousand local businesses, we coordinate the Bromley Economic Partnership which coordinates views and tries to establish the problems

facing businesses so we can put these right, we have done a lot of work in the town centres to help local retailers to perform better, we have devised an emergency grants scheme to assist people hurt by the riots in 2011, we have developed an initiative for local parades which has already helped ten parades with a further five pending, we have developed the Business Improvement District (BID) in Orpington and we are looking at something similar for Bromley, we have developed the future jobs fund which saw in excess of a hundred young people placed into long term employment and more recently the Star Project aimed at putting people 18-24 year olds into employment, the outcome of which is that forty two people are now in apprenticeships in a six month period.

(There was no supplementary question, but the Mayor suggested that Cllr Morgan send the full text of his answer to Cllr Scoates.)

Full Written Reply Text:

- *Organised and hosted multi-agency one day Boost Your Business events in Bromley town centre in 2009, 2010 and 2011. These were a specific response to the economic downturn and provided small and medium sized businesses and start ups with the opportunity to talk to a range of business support agencies and relevant suppliers and attend inspirational and instructive business seminars all under one roof.*
- *Hosted smaller local versions of Boost Your Business in Bromley North Village and Orpington in 2010, and Social Enterprise Network events in partnership with Community Links Bromley.*
- *Published, distributed and promoted Bromley Business Guide in 2011/12 and 2013/14 - with an online and CD Rom directory of around 3500 local businesses – businesses based in the borough can be included in the directory free of charge and this assists them with their own marketing and encourages local business to business trade.*
- *Maintained an online commercial property database which enables businesses looking for premises in the borough to search and obtain details free of charge.*
- *Maintain a business section on the Council website – signposting businesses to both online and offline assistance both from the Council and from partner organisations.*
- *Since 2009 we have published and distributed a bi-monthly business e-bulletin to over 3000 local businesses – containing news, support and events of relevance to them.*
- *Coordinate the Bromley Economic Partnership – established in 2009 and incorporating representatives of various business sectors and public sector organisations involved in employment and business support. The Partnership enables regular sharing of information and opportunities for joint action between the various stakeholders.*

- *Work with partner organisations to develop and deliver support for the owners of small and medium enterprises including a varied range of seminars / workshops and one to one mentoring programmes, many of which are free or subsidised for businesses.*
- *Maintain up to date information about other business support on offer (for example the Start Up Loan scheme and Growth Accelerator) and provide signposting via telephone, email and web based enquiry services to appropriate support.*
- *Successfully bid for external funding to from Outer London Fund rounds 1 and 2 – and coordinated a programme of major town centre physical regeneration projects and events to encourage additional footfall and spend in town centres. Major events included the 2012 visit of Her Majesty the Queen and the HRH Duke of Edinburgh to Bromley in May 2012, the Bromley Summer Festival, the High Street Garden project 2013 (with artificial grass on High Street and Churchill Piazza) and a number of highly successful Christmas lights events across the borough.*
- *Devised and delivered an emergency grant scheme, backed by DCLG, to assist businesses worst hit by the summer 2011 riots - to provide financial assistance to those without sufficient insurance or awaiting an insurance settlement.*
- *Devised and delivered the Council funded Local Parades Improvement Initiative grant – which has been responsible for projects to enhance the local environment and attractiveness to shoppers at 10 local parades and small town centres – with projects in another 5 locations still pending or in progress.*
- *Worked with existing and forming business groups in a number of town centres – to encourage a coordinated approach amongst businesses and other stakeholder to town centre issues. Successfully re-launched the Beckenham Business Association in 2011, and oversaw the renewal of the Petts Wood and West Wickham business associations in 2013. Also assisted with the launch of Town Teams in Chislehurst, Bromley North and Beckenham.*
- *In partnership with the Orpington Business Forum, we developed the borough's first Business Improvement District in Orpington town centre – launched in April 2013 after a successful ballot in February 2013. The Business Improvement District (BID) is a partnership of business rate payers who fund an agreed improvement programme for the town centre through a ring fenced additional levy based on business rateable value. Over its 5 year term, the Orpington BID will deliver projects to enhance the customer offer for the town centre, improve accessibility and safety, increase attractiveness to inward investors and reduce costs for businesses in the BID area.*

In addition the Council has been directly involved in numerous employment initiatives over the last four years such as the Future Jobs Fund, which saw in excess of 100 young people placed into long term employment and more recently, the Star project,

aimed at putting 18 -24 year olds into work, with the outcome that 42 young people in the borough were placed into apprenticeships in a six month period.

5. From Councillor Ruth Bennett to the Care Services Portfolio Holder

What action has been taken in the past four years to ensure the well being of vulnerable elderly people and children?

Reply:

The wellbeing and safety of vulnerable elderly people and children are paramount as far as the Council is concerned. In terms of detail, I could deliver an enormous list but could I just mention the following -

- i. We have established a Re-ablement service to develop and enhance an individual's ability to manage their own care.
- ii. All front line staff have received Safeguarding "alerter" training.
- iii. Introduction of user led Quality Checkers within the LD Day and Supported Living Services.
- iv. Introduction of Telecare equipment to enhance the community alarm service.

All services undertake individual needs-led assessments and where appropriate these are joint assessments with our health partners. Where the assessment indicates a need or FACS eligibility we will work with the resident to develop a support plan to address the needs ensuring the individual is supported and is able to be as independent as possible taking part and contributing to the community.

In essence, we are working towards safe independence for our residents.

Supplementary Question:

Given the changes to Council and health authority responsibilities over the last few years, can the Portfolio Holder give a few words of explanation about the division of funding between the Council and health authorities in joint assessments.

Reply:

We are now working very closely indeed with the health authorities. With many of these assessments there is not a health element and a social services element. We are working closely with them to make sure that both of those parts of the package are dealt with fairly.

6. From Councillor Neil Reddin to the Education Portfolio Holder

What progress has been made to meet the education commitments approved by the Council?

Reply:

(The Mayor asked the Portfolio Holder to summarise his answer and send the full text to Councillor Reddin.)

The Portfolio holder set out some factors particularly pertinent to the Education Commitments established at this time last year.

In particular, with regard to choice in education, we are currently in discussion with the Arch Diocese of Southwark over opportunities for catholic families in the borough to access secondary and more primary catholic education for their children, we are in discussion with Bromley College of Further and Higher Education over the creation of a University Technical College. We support the College's ambition to increase the offer for children interested in following a more vocational curriculum. The opening of a careers college in September 2014 on the Orpington site focussing on catering is one example of this. There are three primary free schools planned to open in September this year, Harris Beckenham, Harris Shortlands and a bi-lingual free school in the central Bromley area. We are currently unable because of legislation to open any more selective schools, however I am pleased to report that Newstead Wood School enlarged its intake this year and we will look again at other opportunities in that regard. We continue to support Bromley College in its application for the University Technical College – this would be particularly to look at health related careers. One phase of Bromley Youth Employment Programme led to the creation of forty two apprenticeships this year and Bromley Education Business Partnership continues to deliver a pre-apprenticeship support programme for 16-18 year olds who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET (Not In Employment, Education or Training) and who want to find an apprenticeship. Currently, youth unemployment in Bromley is down some 40%. In regard to school governors, we are very active in seeking to improve our school governship, and our internal drive to recruit officers to take governorships with a special leave policy has been reviewed. We are continuing to target under-performing schools to ensure that none are below "good" at an Ofsted inspection. We are particularly focussing on tracking and monitoring of children's progress and ensuring that support is brokered into those schools from whatever source can best address the school's individual needs. Individual progress of most able pupils continues to be part of Ofsted's judgements about any school. Forty four of the ninety six Bromley schools (including the Pupil Referral Unit) have converted to academy status by February 2014 – just under 50%. A further ten schools are expected to convert by the end of the 2013/14 academic year, bringing the total to 57%. Thirty three additional schools are actively exploring options for conversion as part of multi-academy trusts and similar partnership arrangements.

Additional supplementary question:

Councillor David McBride asked, with the Administration's stated policy of seeking academy status for all schools and the numbers of centrally held staff cut right back to the bone how long will it be before the post of Portfolio Holder for Education is no longer needed because there will not be any borough schools and there will not be any education staff to preside over.

Reply:

I fully expect to make myself redundant very shortly. In terms of support for schools, both primary and secondary, whether academy or maintained, what we are doing is

ensuring we broker a series of support structures for those schools based around other schools that have expertise that best addresses those needs the school has, and also around the National College. We have the largest number of National Leaders In Education of any borough in the country, that expertise and competence within our teaching staff we are seeking to ensure is spread across our borough in terms of support. There are many very clear examples of this working very well – I would highlight them recent appointment of the former Deputy Head of Newstead Wood to Clare House Primary School.

Additional supplementary question:

Councillor Reg Adams sought the Mayor’s assurance that the full text of the answers to this and earlier questions would be placed in the public domain, and the Mayor responded that they would.

Additional supplementary question:

Councillor Neil Reddin suggested that the area of lifelong learning was sometimes viewed as a “Cinderella” service and asked whether Adult Education would “go to the ball.”

Reply:

Bromley Adult Education College continues to flourish offering a diverse range of courses that include opportunities to improve basic skills in preparation for employment as well as a wide range of learning and leisure based opportunities. In the 2012/13 academic year over 7,500 people, approximately 80% of whom were Bromley residents, accessed over 1,200 courses. Partnership work with a range of community and third sector organisations ensured that residents in some of the most marginal parts of the borough such as Mottingham, the Cray Valley, Crystal Palace and Penge and Cator Wards were able to participate and benefit from local learning opportunities.

(During consideration of this question Councillor Simon Fawthrop declared an interest as his wife worked for Bromley Adult Education College.)

Full Written Reply Text:

EDUCATION COMMITMENTS 2013-14

The Local Authority will:

- 1. Believe in the right of parents (where practicable) to have as much choice of schools as possible including faith schools;
We are currently in conversation with the Archdioces over opportunitis for Catholic families in the Borough as well as Bromley College of Further and Higher Education over the creation of a University Technical College. We support The College’s ambition to increase the offer for children interested in following a more vocational curriculum. The opening of a Careers College in September 2014, on the Orpington site of Bromley College and focussing on catering, is one example of this.*
- 2. Will support and encourage all Bromley LA schools to convert to academy status;*

44 of the 96 Bromley Schools (including the PRU) have converted to academy status by February 2014, just under 50%. A further ten schools are expected to convert by the end of the 2013/14 academic year bringing the total to 57% . 33 schools are actively exploring options for conversion as part of multi-academy trusts or other similar partnership arrangements.

3. *Support the creation of 'Free Schools' and, where appropriate, will encourage local parents to apply for one;
Two primary free schools are planned to open in September: the Bi-lingual Free School and Harris Shortlands. The Council is working to find appropriate temporary accommodation for both schools so that they can offer children the best of opportunities from the very first day of opening.*
4. *Will continue to support the expansion of selective education, including Grammar Schools, particularly in the central and northern part of the Borough; Currently legislation prevents the opening of more selective schools but we continue to actively support our two highly successful grammar schools and want to encourage more children from disadvantaged homes to apply for these schools.*
5. *Will continue to improve the provision of SEN education in the Borough; It is in recognition of our SEN provision that Bromley has been chosen as a pathfinder in developing the new Education, Health and Care plans which will replace statements of special need from September 2014.*
6. *Support the concept of an education voucher system which gives additional support to children with different educational needs, including academically gifted pupils;
The rapidly changing landscape in education has made this approach less relevant. Instead The Council is working hard to ensure that we have a diverse range of schools and academies in the Borough to ensure that all children and young people's needs and aptitudes are met.*
7. *Will continue to encourage all Bromley secondary schools to ensure that all suitable pupils are prepared for the universities which best meet their aspirations;
Bromley outcomes at A level continue to outperform national and there is a strong emphasis in all our schools on getting young people into the very best universities. In addition Bromley College is developing a higher education offer to enable a less traditional route for young people who require a different offer to enable them to gain a degree.*
8. *Support the concept of a University Technical College (UTC) providing high quality technical education for 14-19 year olds;
The LA continues to support Bromley College in their application for a UTC that will prepare students for health related careers.*
9. *Support the creation of 'modern apprenticeships' for a wide variety of skilled trades;
Phase One of the Bromley Youth Employment programme led to the creation*

of 42 Apprenticeships (July 2013 –Jan 2014). Bromley Education Business Partnership continues to deliver a Pre Apprenticeship Support programme for 16- 18 yr olds who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET and who want to find an apprenticeship.

10. *Support the concept of 'lifelong learning' and the important work of adult education;
Bromley Adult Education College continues to flourish, offering a diverse range of courses that include opportunities to improve basic skills in preparation for employment as well as a wide range of learning and leisure based opportunities. In the 2012/2013 academic year over seven and a half thousand people, approximately 80% of which were Bromley residents, accessed just over twelve hundred courses. Partnership work with a range of community and third sector organisations ensured that residents in some of the more marginalised parts of the borough, such as Mottingham, the Cray Valley, Crystal Palace, Penge and Cator wards were able to participate and benefit from local learning opportunities.*
11. *Support schools in ensuring that all teachers and other staff are competent in their role;
Our school improvement and HR teams continue to deliver support to maintained schools, targeting those not making required progress. Forums are held for subject leaders and schools are able to access training to support with assessment and moderation.*
12. *Support schools in maintaining good discipline;
A key development in this area is the decision to move PRU provision to the Bromley Alternative Provision Academy (BAPA) sponsored by Bromley College.*
13. *Work to improve school governance;
There has been an internal drive to recruit officers to take on governorships and in recognition of their commitment the special leave policy has been reviewed to allow them time off to fulfil the role. The school improvement team has commissioned reviews of governing bodies where concerns have been raised. Should governing bodies fail to respond to LA expectations there will be no hesitation in issuing a warning notice or even removing the governing body and replacing it with an interim executive board, as has happened with the PRU.*
14. *Work to improve the chances for underperforming children particularly in the early years and primary years and will work to encourage the continuing development of high quality early year provision in the Borough through existing and new private and voluntary providers;
Support is targeted at all schools and early years settings who are judged to be below good by Ofsted, with a focus on the tracking and monitoring of childrens progress. Specific support is provided to early years settings and schools who provide free places for vulnerable two year olds and providers are supported to increase their two year old places. New providers are able to access support both in terms of Ofsted requirements, and to identify areas where the need is greatest or where suitable opportunities may be available.*

15. *Encourage schools to identify children with exceptional talents or academic ability and ensure that their needs are provided for; The identification and progress of the most able pupils forms part of Ofsted's judgement about a school. Bromley schools are encouraged to provide a broad and diverse curriculum and they are challenged to improve the progress of their most able pupils.*
16. *Support changes to improve the quality and rigour of the exam system; Examinations at all phases are subject to external standardisation and moderation, however where assessment is made at teacher level, for example in the Early Years Foundation Stage, this is subject to a rigorous statutory moderation process, as laid down by the Standards, Testing Agency, and this process is managed by the Local Authority.*
17. *Support measures (including reading through Phonics) to ensure that no child leaves primary school unable to read and write English and without a good competence in basic maths. The Local Authority provides specialist support in English and Mathematics for all schools judged to be below good by Ofsted. The same specialists provide training forums for subject leaders in schools, and a rigorous assessment and moderation process is carried out by the LA on an annual basis, with specific training being provided to schools to support them to make accurate judgements.*

7. From Councillor Pauline Tunnicliffe to the Resources Portfolio Holder

How much is spent on the Freedom Pass and if he will confirm there are no plans to remove it?

Reply:

The budget for 2013-14 is £9,637,960 and for 2014-15 it is £10,412,177 – excluding a small charge for Post Office contract and London Council fees. Freedom Passes are greatly valued by our older residents; there is no intention to remove them. In many years time when Councillor Bennett and I qualify they will still be there for us.

8. From Councillor Peter Fookes to the Environment Portfolio Holder

How will he fund the car park extension at New Beckenham station?

Reply:

Through the TfL LIP budget.

Supplementary Question:

Does this not fly in the face of David Cameron's pledge to lead the greenest government ever?

Reply:

No.

9. From Councillor Russell Mellor to the Public Protection and Safety Portfolio Holder

What progress has been made in reducing crime and anti social behaviour in the Borough since 2010?

Reply:

Since 2010 various initiatives have been funded by the partnership to support a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour across the borough; examples of this include supporting crime reduction through property marking to reduce theft from motor vehicles as well as burglary from homes, gardens and allotments. Alongside this and many other projects there has been particular focus on various youth diversion activities, such as boxing sessions and the Bromley Youth Service Summer Activity Scheme. Each of these schemes helps to reduce anti-social behaviour whilst encouraging good citizenship, active lifestyles and proves an excellent mechanism for the council to engage with residents.

This year the Partnership has been successful in securing funding for the next four years from the Mayor's Office for Policing. Among the schemes being funded are youth mentoring and domestic abuse reduction projects. A fundamental part of this funding will support a four year plan to increase enforcement activity against anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance, whilst also improving the environmental surroundings of some of the borough's most deprived areas.

At the last Safer Bromley Partnership meeting in December 2013 the Police reported that with respect to overall crime targets set by MOPAC, Bromley Police were 8% ahead of target. It was also reported that the number of notifiable offences were down by 6.5% and that anti-social behaviour had fallen between July to September 2013 by 2%.

Supplementary question:

What are the Portfolio Holder's intentions for continuing the improved achievements bearing in mind the appointment of a new borough commander?

Reply:

I will cover this in my speech on the budget later in the meeting.

10. From Councillor Tony Owen to the Public Protection and Safety Portfolio Holder

What membership of the Safer Neighbourhood Board would you envisage as representative of the London Borough of Bromley?

Reply:

The Safer Neighbourhood Board will be truly representative of Bromley, it will not be dominated by Councillors or borough employees. It is there to represent residents and that is what it will do.

Supplementary Question:

Councillor Owen asked the Portfolio Holder to comment on an email from the Borough Commander from 13th December 2013 suggesting that there was a danger of “reinventing yet another stereotypical Bromley forum ie average age 80, white, middle class” and asking her staff to update her on potential representatives to provide a more diverse mix.

Reply:

I have heard these comments and I think they are totally wrong and she does not understand this borough or who we represent in this borough. This Board will not be male dominated or composed of 80 year old white males – it will be a fair representation of the residents of this this borough who we represent, young and old alike.

Full Written Reply Text:

The proposed Safer Neighbourhood Board will be represented by the following:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Representing</i>
<i>Cllr Stevens</i>	<i>Portfolio Holder for Public Protection (Chairman)</i>
<i>Cllr Lymer</i>	<i>Chairman, Public Protection and Safety PDS Committee</i>
<i>Cllr Adams</i>	<i>Lib Dem Cllr</i>
<i>Cllr Fookes</i>	<i>Labour Cllr</i>
<i>Bob Hadley</i>	<i>Federation of Residents Assoc's</i>
<i>Margaret Gubbins</i>	<i>Police Custody Visitation Group</i>
<i>Carron Schusler</i>	<i>Chief Inspector, Safer Neighbourhoods</i>
<i>TBC</i>	<i>Stop and Search Group</i>
<i>TBC</i>	<i>London Probation</i>
<i>Derec Craig</i>	<i>Victim Support</i>
<i>Alf Kennedy</i>	<i>Neighbourhood Watch</i>
<i>Terry Belcher</i>	<i>Safer Neighbourhood Panel rep (Dept Chair)</i>
<i>Ruth Wood</i>	<i>Bromley Youth Rep</i>
<i>Lulu Pearce</i>	<i>Ethnic Communities rep</i>
<i>Colin McClean</i>	<i>Community Links</i>
<i>Sarah Denton</i>	<i>MOPAC</i>
<i>Sarah Armstrong</i>	<i>Independent Advisory Group</i>

11. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP to the Environment Portfolio Holder

What action he has taken since 2010 to promote the improvement in public transport within the Borough?

Reply:

Since 2010, I have :-

- Lobbied extensively with the Leader for the extension of the Docklands Light Railway to the borough in whatever form or hybrid thereof.
- Secured improvements to a number of stations in partnership with Southeastern including -
 - Bromley South and Orpington step-free access;
 - improved access to Ravensbourne, St Mary Cray and Kent House;
 - a commitment to have a deck built at Orpington Station for extra car parking to relieve residents from parking in side roads.
- Worked with London Buses on improved bus services in the Cray Valley following the Chislehurst Bridge rebuild
- Delivered a travel planning programme in schools and workplaces to encourage the use of public transport (and active travel) for those that wish to consider doing so.

Supplementary question:

I fully support the extension of the DLR to Bromley North but that will cost £800m. In the short term will he consider lobbying the Mayor for an overground extension from New Cross to Grove Park and Bromley North which might be considerably cheaper.

Reply:

This borough's priority remains the extension of the DLR to Bromley North at least and ideally Bromley South in that order. There is however a question about funding and we may have to settle for something less to get anything at all. One of the bizarre things that TfL are adamant on is that they have a fascination with driving the Bakerloo Line to Hayes at a cost of £2bn which we do not want, and yet we are told that £800m for the DLR is too much. It does not balance. We cannot forget the extension of Tramlink to Crystal Palace – I have given my assurance before on this and offer it again – I suspect that its star can only be rising with the proposed development at Crystal Palace, because quite clearly some improvement in the transport infrastructure is necessary to make that vision come true.

12. From Councillor Ruth Bennett to the Resources Portfolio Holder

Will the Portfolio Holder advise the impact of the adoption of Local Pay and Conditions from the perspective of both our staff and the taxpayer.

Reply:

Bromley Council is the first London Borough and the first Council nationally since early 1990s to come out of national terms and conditions of service. There are 50 other Councils mainly in the South East/Kent area outside the national collective negotiating framework. Unsurprisingly other Councils including London Boroughs,

are looking to follow Bromley lead, mainly because the national arrangement has failed to respond positively to the pressure for change facing local government or provide the right leadership at a time of unprecedented financial austerity. The national collective negotiating framework is a relic in so many ways -

(i) the assumption that all local authorities irrespective of their size and location are the same is an outdated model

(ii) nationally agreed terms of employment do not reflect geographical variations and local financial and labour market factors

(iii) more importantly it disempowers local people and their elected representatives. This is not right given the size of staff pay bill as a percentage of the total Council controllable budget.

In this year's budget the Council for the first time through its democratically elected Councillors agreed a higher than national pay increase for its staff, except for about 190 senior officers (Management Grade staff). Tonight, full Council will be asked to agree a similar package, resulting once again in over 90% of our staff receiving a higher settlement for the second year running, and on time rather than the lower and delayed pay settlement at the national level. Additionally we have a Merited Reward pot for exceptional performers, thus fulfilling our unequivocal commitment to link pay to performance. We will continue to offer competitive terms to attract and retain the best staff in the organisation. We recognise and appreciate the great work our staff do on our behalf to deliver our promises and priorities to Bromley residents. Nearly 98% of our staff accepted the new contract within the agreed implementation date. They are aware of our financial challenges and the opportunities a localised pay process represents.

To encapsulate, it is supported by 98% of our staff, the pay award will be paid on time on 1st April. The national negotiations have now been put back beyond 1st April when the pay increase was supposed to be implemented – this is quite usual and our staff do not know what their pay increase is past the summer and into the autumn. With our lower paid staff we have the flexibility to use our own determination to assist those at the bottom of the pay structure. Those people so far over the two pay increases this year will have received 3.4%, plus £200, plus merit increase opportunities whereas if they had stuck with the national increase they would have received 1% plus 1% possibly in the summer time. They are infinitely better off because we are taking decisions locally and decisions are taken between the taxpayers who are paying the staff and the staff who earn that pay. We will pay what staff earn and use this as an incentive to reward the excellent staff we have.

Additional Supplementary question:

The Leader of the Council asked whether it was also true that a good number of staff also receive increments each year in addition to the increases we have heard about as part of the terms and conditions that we have promised to secure for a further year or so.

Reply:

This is an excellent point. We have guaranteed pay and conditions for staff when nationally they are talking about taking action against absenteeism etc. That is not a problem in this borough so we are not going to change terms and conditions, and we have given that guarantee. We will also honour contractual pay increases where they trigger pay increases.

Additional supplementary question:

Councillor Peter Fookes asked how many staff had received a merit payment and on what basis, and what the changes to conditions of service will be from April 2015?

Reply:

It was always intended and we made it absolutely clear that we would identify a pot of money, we would identify the people who were qualified for that money and we would match the two. That process is on-going. As of now, that has not clicked in as it was not intended to.

Additional supplementary question:

Councillor John Getgood asked whether the Portfolio Holder agreed that public sector workers had taken a disproportionate impact of the cuts forced on us by the coalition government and that this had had a very detrimental impact on their morale and on the service that they are able to offer our local residents. Can he also say why he is not prepared to introduce the London Living Wage which would have a great benefit to our lowest paid workers?

Reply:

If you look at the answers supplied earlier to Councillor Bennett the reduction in staff have fallen heaviest higher up the scale. That is right - we have been protecting front line jobs at the same time as making efficiency savings at the higher end. Staff morale is something that I am particularly concerned about and all Members should be concerned about. We are going through a time of great change and we need to take our staff with us wherever possible. It was really hoped that we would have discussions with the unions along the way, however the unions said that they did not wish to speak to us and would not consult. That has held us back, although 98% of staff have entered into the new contracts within the timescale.

The London Living Wage is something I have discussed with people over a period of time. My concern is about the structure, the items included in the London Living Wage. This has been discussed at the PDS Committee. I think that there is a fundamental flaw in the way that it is calculated. What is right and proper is that we should move from a nationally set figure to a locally set figure on a case by case basis with our staff. We were asked whether we would sign up to the National Living Wage. There are quotes in the press about our staff being paid £6.35 and there is a worry that some people will think that this is the truth. We need to establish the facts – compared to other local government employers our staff are doing quite well, and

are out-performing staff elsewhere. The budget tonight attempts to give a fair loading to the lowest paid whilst at the same time recognising the excellence of our staff at all levels.

As the time allocated to questions had now expired the mayor announced that the remaining questions (numbers 13 to 17) would receive a written reply.

13. From Councillor Neil Reddin to the Leader of the Council

What progress has been made to improve the efficiency of the Council, including joint working with other local authorities?

Reply:

I thank Cllr Reddin for his question and refer him to my answer to the question from Mr Dunn earlier. However, specifically in joint working to improve efficiency we have a strong shared service with Bexley regarding our Library provision, parking services and we also share a Director of Public Health. There are further opportunities to work with other South London Boroughs as part of the South London Growth Board which is a joint initiative involving Bromley, Merton, Croydon, Wandsworth, Richmond, Sutton, Kingston and the GLA. This initiative will be focussed on economic development in its wider sense. We seek every opportunity to consider a shared service approach where practicable.

14. From Councillor Peter Fookes to the Environment Portfolio Holder

What is the budget available for chewing gum removal?

Reply:

The gum removal budget is a variable component of the graffiti budget. Generally speaking, it sits in the region of £20k, subject to demand.

15. From Councillor Tony Owen to the Environment Portfolio Holder

What action has been considered, or is being considered, to deal with parked cars in Brookside Close and Westholme, Orpington which has resulted in refuse and private delivery vehicles driving along the pavements to reach houses?

Reply:

Possible yellow lining, possible waste collection day only restrictions and possibly nothing at all aimed at preserving the valuable flank fence parking currently available and to thereby minimise any risk of future displacement to other streets in the wider Petts Wood area.

This question will be pursued further with Ward members over coming weeks.

16. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP to the Environment Portfolio Holder

What action has he taken since 2010 to protect and enhance the street environment of the Borough?

Reply:

In recent years, in conjunction with our friends and colleagues in Public Protection the department has been involved in a range of initiatives to improve cleanliness including spring cleanups, deep cleansing, new ashtray/litter bins, recycling bins, chewing gum removal, awareness raising campaigns and a zero tolerance approach to littering.

A new contract for street cleaning has been in place since April 2012 as part of which a thorough review of our approach to street cleaning was carried out, resulting in schedule alterations which now better serve roads affected by weekday issues such as proximity to shops, schools and railway stations by switching them to weekend or evening sweeping rotas.

We have built on our agreements with the police, and our parks contractor for their officers and staff to serve Fixed Penalty Notices for enviro-crime offences. This includes the deployment of on-street enforcement targeting littering and dog-fouling.

Over the past few years we have also had significant success in reducing the incidence of fly-tipping and prosecuting offenders involving CCTV surveillance operations.

The Council offers a service for the removal and disposal of unwanted vehicles free of charge, which has contributed towards fewer dumped vehicles and has also used devolved powers from the DVLA enable us to take enforcement action against untaxed vehicles with 372 abandoned vehicles removed from the highway.

The Council has also recently introduced a free collection service for electrical and battery operated goods which we believe will further assist in the reduction of anti social fly tipping.

17. From Councillor Peter Fookes to the Care Services Portfolio Holder

Why are new referrals to day centres only being allocated a day a week?

Reply:

New referrals to day centres are assessed on the level of need and support offered as appropriate.

If new referrals are receiving one day per week I would expect that is what they have been assessed as needing under FACS. We do not have a policy for one day per

week but it is likely in many cases to be sufficient to address social isolation that may otherwise lead to mental ill health or sufficient to provide a carer break ensuring they are willing and able to continue in their caring role.

In addition to this we are involved in using Vibrance Support Planning which is a pilot to see if dedicated support planning time can succeed in finding suitable alternative day activities. All new referrals are offered to be part of this pilot which has in some cases resulted in the SU identifying an activity away from traditional services and offering them greater choice and control.

If a Service User has been offered a day activity and they do not feel it is sufficient to address their unmet needs, we can consider reviewing their situation on request.