

In view of the number of questions received, each questioner at the meeting received a written reply to all questions.

For questions related to *Bromley Museum – The Priory* and *Extra Care Housing – Lubbock House*, the Portfolio Holders for Renewal and Recreation and Care Services respectively made a statement to the meeting (details below).

The Chairman then invited each questioner to ask a supplementary question if they so wished.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL REPLY

CRYSTAL PALACE PARK

(A) From Councillor Angela Wilkins

We are all aware that the exclusivity period concerning Zhong Rong's proposals for CPP has come to an end.

We are aware too of Cllr Carr's event press release and subsequent comments to the effect that negotiations with Zhong Rong are still progressing.

If, as stated at Executive & Resources PDS on 4th February, there are other organisations or individuals with proposals for the Park, I believe it would be in the wider public interest to now open discussions with these other groups as well.

Mr Ni has had twelve months of exclusivity, effectively excluding all other contenders from discussions. Opening up the matter now does not prohibit him from continuing with his proposals for the site, but it does allow others to come forward and for this council and local residents to have a wider choice of options concerning the future of south London's most impressive and historic park.

1. Will the Leader therefore agree that Zhong Rong should no longer have any exclusivity and that his door is officially open to other interested parties?

Reply

You are correct to state that the Zhongrong Exclusivity Agreement has expired (1st February). Notwithstanding this, Zhongrong has confirmed that they remain committed to progressing the building of a new Crystal Palace and the refurbishment of the Park and have requested an extension to the Exclusivity Agreement.

The Council has subsequently written to Zhongrong giving them 14 calendar days (to 20th February) to agree a number of financial and business planning related conditions, which Zhongrong would need to agree before the Council would be willing to consider renewing the Exclusivity Agreement. It would be for Members to determine whether they are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to enter into

a new Exclusivity Agreement with Zhongrong, or whether other options should be progressed. This will be the subject of a future report to the Executive.

BROMLEY MUSEUM – THE PRIORY

Statement by Cllr Morgan, Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

“It has been decided to postpone consideration of this item for three months approximately. During this period our officers will have further discussions with interested parties. These discussions will be in three parts:

- 1. How best to operate the museum if it is moved to Central Library. How our existing staff in the Local Studies section can contribute and how volunteers can assist both with the educational element of the displays and the setting up of new displays on a twice a year basis. A study of where the many paintings and other art works might be hung in various public building around the Borough.***
- 2. If it is decided to move the museum from The Priory, what uses might be appropriate for the building bearing in mind its importance to the town centre economy and the future upkeep of this very important listed building.***
- 3. We want to produce a study of Orpington town centre bearing in mind all that is happening e.g. the new cinemas, possibly a new hotel, the new Health Centre on the site of the former police station and the public realm improvements in the space between the cinemas and the Health Centre and this study will include a careful look at The Priory to see how that can contribute to the health of the local economy. Again local interest groups will be involved in the preparation of this study.***

Once this further period of study has been completed a further report will be brought to The Executive for a decision on these matters. Hopefully the discussions will answer many of the questions which have been submitted for this evening’s meeting but there will of course be an opportunity for further questions at that future Executive Meeting, probably in June this year. I should say that in terms of saving revenue cost, the moving of the museum to Central Library has been carefully examined and in all likelihood this is what we shall have to do. We are however, open to suggestions about other ways of achieving the same result.”

Democratic Services Note: The replies below relating to Bromley Museum, The Priory, were prepared prior to the meeting and in advance of the decision to postpone the Bromley Museum/Priory item for approximately three months. This development may therefore affect some of the replies provided below.

(B) From Margot Rohan

1. Why has there been no public consultation over the proposal to sell The Priory? It is a key decision and affects residents in more than one ward. What are the options which have been considered and where have the financial assessments been published?

Reply

There has been ongoing consultation on the future of the museum service since 2009. If the museum service is realigned and the exhibitions moved to Central Library, as a consequence the Priory will be surplus to operational requirements. The financial assessments are commercially sensitive information.

2. Why has Bromley Council not considered the possibility of a Community Asset Transfer for The Priory, by way of a long lease, so the Museum can continue there and the premises be used for other community activities? Why has the community been denied this opportunity?

Reply

There has been discussion with community stakeholders about the possibility of them taking over the running of the Priory and museum, however the capital and revenue costs have been considered prohibitive. No community groups have approached the Council regarding a Community Asset Transfer.

Supplementary Question

Margot Rohan offered to contribute in helping determine the future of the Priory and the Museum. Referring to any possibility of the Priory becoming an asset of community value, she hoped that her offer would be taken into account and consultation taken forward.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that Margaret Rohan’s offer would be taken into account and consultation with interested parties would be taken forward.

(C) From Mrs Anne Manning

1. In response to a supplementary question at last week’s meeting of R&R PDS Committee, Cllr Peter Morgan gave an assurance that consideration would be given to allowing another year to reconsider the future of the Museum Service. I ask that the Executive endorse this proposition.

Reply

Due consideration has been given. Given the budget pressures across the whole Council the museum service budget cut will not be delayed by a year. Since 2009, prior to the development of the HLF bid, the future of Bromley Museum at the Priory has been examined and consulted on, therefore significant Council resource has already been spent on considering the options.

Supplementary Question

In view of interested bodies being consulted, Mrs Manning highlighted that when serving on the Council, she had a role as Borough Heritage Champion. In view of her experience, Mrs Manning expressed her willingness to help by way of contribution in the forthcoming three months.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder indicated that he (or officers) would be in touch.

(D) From Pam Temple

1. Will the Council set out the measures to be taken to bring the Museum store up to the current British Standards Institution Specification for Managing Environmental Conditions for Cultural Collections - PAS 198.

Reply

The current museum store will be retained and there are no proposals to alter this existing facility. If it is found that improvements are required for this facility going forward this will be considered separately.

2. The handling of artefacts and their interpretation by staff was the only way for some disabled people to engage with the collection, and was a priority in the consultation for the HLF funded proposal. Can the Council explain how the needs of these disabled groups will be met in future?

Reply

Access to the Priory is very limited, with only one room, the Great Hall, being fully accessible to all. The exhibitions in Central Library will be fully accessible. There is also an accessible toilet at the Library. The handling collection will be retained, except if there are specific handling boxes that are found to be no longer required, in which case they will be offered to other not-for-profit organisations such as schools. It

is intended that volunteers will engage some groups who visit the exhibitions by utilising the handling collection. Additionally access will be improved to the collection by displaying art and artefacts from the collection in mini displays at civic locations across the borough.

3. Can the Council confirm that the collection will be preserved and not split up or disposed of?

Reply

The collection will be rationalised. There are objects within the collection that should not have been acquisitioned as they do not meet the museum's collecting criteria of being relevant to the history of Bromley. There are no plans to split up the collection, however it is anticipated that in the future consideration will need to be given, and consultation undertaken, on some specific areas of the collection and how they are looked after, such as the human remains.

Supplementary Question

Pam Temple enquired of the interested parties that would be consulted in the forthcoming three months, including those with disabilities/disability groups. Those with disabilities would need assistance at any premises for the museum.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder indicated that consideration was not finalised on who would be consulted. He would be glad of volunteers and highlighted that not many rooms were properly accessible at the Priory. In contrast, the Central Library was fully accessible. The Portfolio Holder indicated that officers would include disability groups/organisations in consultation.

(E) From Janet Clayton, Chairman, Orpington and District Archaeological Society

1. Professional expertise is essential for the care of the Borough's artefacts and artworks, but knowledge of local studies/archives will not itself provide this; will the Committee reconsider how to provide such expertise in future, including exploring new ways to access curatorial skills (e.g. sharing a post with another museum)?

Reply

It is anticipated that additional staff and volunteer training will be required, and there is money within the £395k budget for this.

2. At the R&R PDS on 29 January, the Portfolio Holder said the Council would do 'whatever is necessary' to maintain the Priory building once exhibits have been removed. Can the Committee confirm that sufficient resource will be available to ensure this - and to maintain the museum store?

Reply

Yes

3. Officers elsewhere in the Council - Property, Local Studies, Planning - will have to take on responsibilities hitherto performed by the Curator (monitoring the store, monitoring of archaeological sites, liaison with volunteers etc); can the Committee confirm that staffing levels will be adequate to allow this?

Reply

Yes

Supplementary Question

Janet Clayton hoped that ongoing consultation would include curatorial aspects.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder indicated that such aspects would be looked at.

(F) From Michael Meekums, Bromley Museum Volunteer Co-ordinator

1. Will Local Studies and Archives have enough resources to take on the work of monitoring the store of archaeological artifacts and paintings as well as overseeing the new displays and volunteers and deal with enquiries from the public about the collection, in addition to the responsibilities they currently have?

Reply

A system will be developed for managing this work which is achievable. There has been interest from the community in supporting this work, and the Council will work with local interest groups to achieve the aims.

2. Will the committee please confirm that the Council has sufficient staff resources to look after and maintain the Priory building until it is sold?

Reply

Officers in the Council’s Strategic Property Service are liaising with the Council’s Conservation Officer and with specialists at English Heritage to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place and to take all reasonable steps to safeguard the building while it is vacant.

3. Will the committee please confirm that the conservation officer has enough resources to take on the additional responsibility of looking after the borough’s archaeological sites, and dealing with archaeological planning issues as well as his current role?

Reply

If a planning proposal arises in an “archaeological area of significance” the planner will consult Mark Stevenson at English Heritage who will then advise on the necessary planning condition to be attached to a decision. The borough’s archaeological sites in Council ownership will be overseen by the Culture, Libraries and Leisure Division.

Supplementary Question

Mr Meekums enquired whether residents in local roads would be consulted.

Reply

This would be considered and if local residents were to be affected, consultation could be expected.

The Leader also indicated that Ward Councillors would be assisting significantly with local residents.

(G) From Richard Gibbons

1. How has the Council calculated the number of people who may view the proposed heritage displays from the total 200,000 visitors to the Central Library? Comparing visitors to a museum to visitors to a library is irrelevant.

Reply

Up to 19,000 visitors visit the museum each year and access the local history collection by visiting the exhibitions and there are some days when the museum receives no visitors at all. In 2013/14 the Central Library received 468k visitors, due to the proposed central location of the exhibitions within the library, it is a fair assumption that 200k visitors will visit the new exhibitions each year.

2. Will the initial £186k grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund have to be repaid?

Reply

No

3. Has the Council considered the financial impact on Orpington town centre of the proposals? And, if so, what are the estimated figures?

Reply

The visitor footfall to the museum is low, therefore the closure of the museum at the Priory is not expected to have an impact on visitor numbers to the town centre. The sale of the Priory will not be financially led, but will be community benefit led, therefore it is anticipated that the new building use will have a positive impact on the town. A community working group will be set up to feed in to the decision making on the sale, to ensure that it meets community needs and supports the improvement of Orpington.

Supplementary Question

Should the Museum move to the Central Library, Mr Gibbons asked if a more realistic estimate could be provided on the number of visitors that could be expected.

Mr Gibbons also highlighted that the Council had indicated that it was committed to working with the local community in regard to the Priory and indicated that recent proposals came as news to him. As such, he hoped that consultation locally within the forthcoming three months would be authentic.

Reply

In his reply, the Portfolio Holder referred to the number of visitors to the Central Library in 2013/14 (468k). However, it was not possible to accurately calculate the number of visitors that could be expected to the Museum should it move to Central Library.

In regard to consultation, the Portfolio Holder indicated there had been (ongoing) consultation but acknowledged that it did not appear to have reached all parties it should have reached. The Portfolio Holder looked to have a thorough consultation in the next few months.

EXTRA CARE HOUSING – LUBBOCK HOUSE

Statement from Councillor Evans, Portfolio Holder for Care Services

***“As set out in the report to the Executive on this agenda, there have been, and continue to be, a significant number of vacancies in extra care housing. Placements in extra care housing are made following an assessment of individual need. An individual must meet the Council’s Fair Access to Care criteria of substantial and/or critical need to be nominated and agreed for extra care. Extra care housing may not be suitable for everyone who has care needs and so each decision is made in light of an individual’s assessed needs. The eligibility criteria for extra care housing have not changed so the continuing situations with vacancies is not a result of changed criteria.*”**

There are no waiting lists for extra care housing. Extra care housing is already used as a “step down” from hospital where this is appropriate for an individual.

The Care Act does not change the eligibility criteria for care which the Council already applies and so is not expected to change the demand for extra care housing.

The number of staff at Lubbock House at any time is based on being able to meet the assessed needs of the people who live there. Therefore the number of staff required will vary according to the needs of the cohort of people living there.

If Lubbock House is de-commissioned as extra care housing, the Council will discuss the future use of the building/ site with Affinity Sutton. Affinity Sutton have advised the Council that they would carry out a full options appraisal. No proposals have been put to the Council at this stage. The Council does not hold information on restrictions or obligations on the use of the site – that is a matter for Affinity Sutton to establish.

Affinity Sutton has continued to invest in the building to ensure that Lubbock House meets the standards expected for tenants pending any decision on closure.”

(H) From Mrs Lindsey Park

1. With the implementation of the Care Act 2015 and role of local Authority identifying people in care who might have care and support needs that are not being met, could the Council explain why they are closing an extra care unit at a time when beds might be required.

Reply

As set out in the report to the Executive, there have been, and continue to be, a significant number of vacancies in extra care housing. Placements in extra care housing are made following an assessment of individual need. The Care Act does not change the eligibility criteria for care which the Council already applies and so is not expected to change the demand for extra care housing.

2. Could you identify eligibility criteria for entry to extra care beds in this borough? As Bromley have to make financial savings could you inform us if Bromley have raised their eligibility criteria? If this is fact fewer people can use ECH and therefore more units empty.

Reply

Bromley Council has not changed its eligibility criteria for extra care housing. The Council is responsible for the assessment of need for extra care housing. An individual must meet the Council's Fair Access to Care criteria of substantial and/or critical need to be nominated and agreed for extra care. Extra care housing may not be suitable for everyone who has care needs and so each decision is made in light of an individual's assessed needs.

3. Why was extra staff taken on at Lubbock House at the end of 2014 when there were so many empty units? This would appear to be a waste of money and make Lubbock House run at a loss on paper.

Reply

The number of staff at Lubbock House at any time is based on being able to meet the assessed needs of the people who live there. Therefore the number of staff required will vary according to the needs of the cohort of people living there.

Supplementary Question

Referring to a case of a potential extra care housing placement from L B Lewisham, apparently not accepted by L B Bromley, Mrs Park suggested that information had been relayed indicating that L B Bromley had no eligibility criteria, with acceptance made solely on the basis of individual assessment.

Mrs Park maintained that hospital beds were being blocked as a result of elderly people remaining in hospital and she asked why there should be empty units/beds in extra care housing when it was known by the medical profession that more hospital

beds needed to be released. In seeking the release of beds, Mrs Park suggested that the PRUH had requested assistance to come to the hospital.

Mrs Park felt that elderly people were not provided a choice and suggested that extra care beds could help meet targets (for the release of hospital beds). She sought justification for moving Lubbock House residents as she felt they were well cared for at their current location. Mrs Park also sought to understand how the Council was promoting its Extra Care Housing.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder advised that since Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust took over responsibility for the Princess Royal University Hospital (PRUH), there had been only two instances of individuals waiting in hospital for care packages reported as delayed discharges. L B Bromley used its extra care housing facilities for step down procedures from hospital, with standards and eligibility criteria in place by the authority.

The Portfolio Holder did not expect the Care Act to affect numbers eligible for Extra Care Housing. The Council’s focus was on increasing independence and the Council did its best to ensure that elderly people received care outside of hospital as far as possible.

Those meeting the necessary eligibility criteria following a needs assessment by officers would be offered the opportunity of extra care housing at one of the schemes in the borough. It would then be for the individual(s) concerned to indicate whether they would wish to take advantage of the opportunity.

(I) From Debbie Edmunds

1. What will the property be used for if it is not used for Extra care housing.

Reply

If Lubbock House is de-commissioned as extra care housing, the Council will discuss the future use of the building/ site with Affinity Sutton. Affinity Sutton have advised the Council that they would carry out a full options appraisal. No proposals have been put to the Council at this stage.

2. As there are vacancies at Lubbock House (which is unusual as there has always been waiting lists) why can't they offer places to people on an interim basis so that it becomes more cost effective. Many hospitals have people desperate for accommodation.

Reply

There are no waiting lists for extra care housing. Extra care housing is already used as a “step down” from hospital where this is appropriate for the individual.

3. Affinity Sutton have invested heavily in Lubbock House, new boilers, central heating, new carpets, re wiring and re-decorating. Why would they do that and spend all that money if the building was not viable?

Reply

Affinity Sutton has continued to invest in the building to ensure that Lubbock House meets the standards expected for tenants pending any decision on closure.

(J) From Harriet Park

1. How have Bromley Council been advertising/ promoting extra care housing to the general public who may require such care but don't know how to access it/it is available?

Reply

The Council is responsible for the assessment of need for extra care housing. An individual must meet the Council's Fair Access to Care criteria of substantial and/or critical need to be nominated and agreed for extra care. Extra care housing may not be suitable for everyone who has care needs and so each decision is made in light of an individual's assessed needs.

Supplementary Question

Harriet Park explained that she worked in a hospital discharge team. She suggested from her experience that discharges were not taking place as quickly as possible, inferring that beds are being blocked as a result. She maintained that hospitals were currently struggling to refer individuals for care outside of hospital. She also asserted that the extra care facilities helped prevent risks to elderly people such as falls. She further suggested that such facilities were of significant benefit in solving problems concerned with “bed blocking” and having individuals cared for outside of hospital.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder maintained that as far as L B Bromley residents are concerned there is no crisis and the Council want to provide a care package for individuals who desire to leave hospital.

(K) From David Newton

1. Why does Lubbock House need to close?

Reply

The Portfolio Holder for Care Services explained that there were two parallel issues: (i) for the local authority, the number of Extra Care Housing voids borough wide; and (ii) for the landlord of Lubbock House, Affinity Sutton, the extent of investment required in the fabric of the building, rendering it unviable to maintain longer term. If a decision was taken to close Lubbock House, the Council would be responsible for re-housing residents.

2. What is the long term plan to look after the increasing elderly population in the London Borough of Bromley?

Reply

The Portfolio Holder referred to maintaining independence as far as possible and in recent years this had been made possible by the provision of care packages at home. An increase in the number of elderly residents in the borough did not necessarily indicate an increase in the need for Extra Care Housing places.

3. Does Bromley Council intend to gradually dispense with all extra care housing in the Borough?

Reply

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that this was not the Council's intention. Extra Care Housing provided an essential element in the way that elderly people are looked after.

Supplementary Question

Mr Newton indicated that he had visited other Extra Care Housing properties (outside of the borough) and was advised that places had been kept open for L B Bromley residents. Mr Newton suggested there would be increased costs for L B Bromley in housing residents at extra care facilities operated by other authorities (e.g. L B Croydon). There would also be additional care and other costs for L B Bromley should extra care housing be reduced/withdrawn. Mr Newton suggested a figure for

increased costs and proposed that care in the community could cost more in the future. There would also be less power to negotiate prices.

Reply

In reply, the Leader referred to the closure of Denton Court, Petts Wood, and highlighted that residents of Denton Court were particularly satisfied with the outcome provided for them.

YOUTH SERVICE

(K) From Adil Ghani

1. With respect to the Bromley Youth Service what does the service re-design mean, what are the costs of the re-design and where is this break down to be approved and scrutinised?

Reply

A range of options will be presented and considered each with their own particular costs and outcomes. Members will then be able to finalise any decisions based on the options presented.

2. Under the plans for the youth service to be re-structured, there is a statutory obligation for the Council to get the views of their stake holders – Bromley Youth Council being one of the stake holders.... What are the plans for BYC to continue running as it is?

Reply

There are no plans at present for the Youth Council to cease functioning but the changes to be investigated may provide further options which in turn might lead to a reduction in support.

3. Can a reduction and re-design of the youth service be realistic, will it have a costly financial impact as youth crime, anti-social behaviour, teenage pregnancy, school exclusions increase etc... Bromley now recognised as having emerging gangs, is cutting the youth service, detrimental to the Council's budget and the young people?

Reply

Members are very conscious on the various issues presenting themselves to our young people and targeted provision will remain to ensure those most at risk continue to be supported. The various options that will be explored might also see

options that show components of our universal services continuing as we move forward. Again these would be determined by the options appraisal implied through the service review.

Supplementary Question

If there were a range of options to be considered, Mr Ghani enquired why the budget had already been decided. Mr Ghani also sought to understand the meaning of 'targeted youth support'.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder for Education clarified that the final decision on the budget had yet to be taken; a budget outline had been arrived at but had not, as yet, been accepted by Full Council.

Concerning universal youth support, options were being considered and it was necessary for the outcome to have a minimal impact on front line services.

The Portfolio Holder also explained the distinction between targeted and universal support for the Youth Service.

BECKENHAM PUBLIC TOILETS

(L) From Pam Notcutt, Beckenham Society

1. Why, in 2010, did the Council allow a contract with Costa Coffee in Beckenham High Street for alternative toilet facilities for the public, to run on for a further 4 years at a total cost of £4,800 (inc VAT) after it was decided not to close the public toilet in Beckenham?

Reply

The cost has been £4000 not £4800 (VAT is reclaimable)

The scheme was introduced as an early pioneer to assess its success/sustainability within a busier High Street environment, then maintained given the Council's reluctance to potentially lose a Community Toilet Scheme partner, due to the high probability that the arrangement would have to be made permanent over time, due to the further budgetary pressures facing the Council as a result of future Central Government grant reductions.

2. Does the Council realise that, as a result of the absence of any headcounts of use of the Beckenham public toilet and of the additional toilets available to the public in the last 5 years, the alternative toilet facilities offered will not meet the demand displaced by closure of the Beckenham Public Toilet?

Reply

I regret that I do not accept the premise of this assertion as I have previously advised the questioner; there will though be further related news in this regard when the item is discussed later in this evening's agenda.

3. Will the Council, at this late stage, seek alternative ways of using this site to include another business which would generate rental/lease income for the tax payer that would support running the public toilets on a slightly reduced footprint and scale?

Reply

If closure is confirmed later this evening, I can advise you that there is no immediate plan to dispose of the premises.

It therefore remains open to any interested party who might wish to rent or purchase the block to express an interest in doing so either before, or during any disposal process which will likely follow over time.

Supplementary Question

Referring to the Portfolio Holder's reply to her first question, Pam Notcutt suggested that £4k would be sufficient to run the existing toilets at Beckenham, Bromley and West Wickham for some months.

Pam Notcutt asked the Portfolio Holder how it was expected that hygiene and other issues might be satisfied when a number of visitors to the town centres might be unaware of where the Community Toilet facilities are located.

Pam Notcutt also referred to a significant percentage of the Beckenham population being elderly and suggested that local community toilet facilities would be insufficient.

Reply

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for the Environment asked that he and Council officers be informed if it was noticed that any of the Community Toilet Scheme facilities were not open for public use.

(M) From Ruth Fabricant

1. At the ceremony at Thornton's Corner in 2013 , the Town Crier proclaimed them the most beautiful toilets he had ever seen; Bob Stewart then and now M.P. for Beckenham, attended ceremony, and referred to toilets, too, thanking the Council for keeping them open. So why is Bob Stewart not supporting us to keep these toilets open?

Reply

I appreciate that as the Green Party PPC for Beckenham in the impending General Election that you have a parochial interest in trying to embarrass and draw Mr Stewart into a matter he has no mandate to influence, but it is not for me to comment on or attempt to second guess his thoughts on the subject.

2. How could Councillors make a valid decision after admitting a) they were unfamiliar with Beckenham High Street and b) they did not know how many times per day/evening the toilets were used?

Reply

The Council unfortunately has to find £68m from a £205m budget over the course of the next 3 years; many difficult and imperfect decisions are going to have to be made to balance the books, of which this is just one.

Community toilets provide a viable alternative choice, which offer greater choice in more regularly checked, cleaner and safer venues whilst providing support for participating local businesses and saving the Council Tax Payer money.

3. Majority of residents want toilets kept open, within this same building and with the surrounding gardens, which are sponsored by a plumbing firm. So how do Council feel when residents have expressed deep concern/sadness at their closure, and disappointment in the Council, particularly as most voted 'Conservative'?

Reply

I note that you are trying to make further cheap political capital with this ill-informed assertion. Most didn't for your information.

As to how the Council feels, it is extremely unhappy having to make many very difficult decisions to balance the books due to a large reduction in Central Government funding to our budget, as part of their efforts to close the Nation's yawning budget deficit and debt.

Most people I have spoken to understand that, however reluctantly, once the unprecedented nature of the seriousness threats to local government funding and indeed democracy, have been explained to them.

Supplementary Question

Ruth Fabricant indicated there were a large number of elderly residents in the borough. Those over 65 were susceptible to heart disease. At least a third of signatures to a petition against the Beckenham public toilet closure were from individuals over 65. Beckenham also attracted many visitors. Ruth Fabricant had seen a number of visitors use the Beckenham public toilets during the winter months. She felt that elderly people need access to toilet facilities.

Reply

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for the Environment indicated that Community Toilet Schemes had proven to work in many places and was confident the Community Toilet facilities for Beckenham would work well.

QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN REPLY

BROMLEY MUSEUM – THE PRIORY

(N) From Mrs Susan Sulis, Secretary, Community Care Protection Group

1(a) Why has there been no notification of these proposals on the Council’s Website?

Reply

The report, published on the website, is notification of the proposal. Stakeholder groups have been consulted on the future of the museum.

1(b) Why has there been no Public Consultation?

Reply

There has been consultation ongoing since 2009 on the future of the museum.

1(c) What is the Council’s legal duty to consult the public on this issue?

Reply

The Local Authority has relatively few statutory duties to consult. This is not one of those occasions. There has been consultation on the museum service. If the

recommendations in this report are agreed, as a consequence of realigning the service, the building will be surplus to operational requirements.

1(d) Has an (i)Equality or an (ii)Environmental Impact Assessment been carried out?

Reply

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and drafted. This will be published once it has been checked and signed off. An environmental impact assessment would be undertaken by a purchaser as part of the planning process if it is required.

2(a) The Priory and its Gardens were purchased by Orpington Urban District Council after WW2, as a 'living memorial', to commemorate the fallen. How can the Council justify selling off our heritage - the Grade 2 listed house, and part of these historic Memorial Gardens, which are 'Public Open Space'?

Reply

The Priory is not a war memorial. It is proposed that only public space required to give the building a curtilage is sold. This will be considered during the sale process and the community working group will be involved in these discussions.

3(a) The total current budget for the Museum is £152k p.a. What is the current value of Bromley's Reserves, and why cannot they be used to fund this?

Reply

Details of Bromley's reserves are included in Appendix 6 of the 2015/16 Council Tax report on the Executive agenda (pages 76 to 80). During this ongoing period of austerity there is a need to find significant savings to meet the "budget gap" and reserves are utilised to deliver long term savings, enable income opportunities, support economic development and manage financial risks during this unprecedented period of austerity. Reserves are one off monies and it is not financially sustainable to use council reserves as part of the revenue budget to fund ongoing service costs.

3(b) What is the total cost of Councillors' allowances, and how much would be saved overall by reducing Councillor numbers from 60 to 40?

Reply

The budget for Members Allowances in 2014/15 is £1,112.560. Basic allowances for 20 councillors amount to £217,440

(O) From Margaret Vos

1. Given that the Bromley Museum at The Priory is not only a council property but a public, cultural, and heritage site and resource, how does the Council square this proposed sale without proper public consultation from the affected members of the public?

Reply

Consultation has been ongoing since 2009 on the future of the Priory and Bromley Museum.

2. The recent application for Heritage Lottery Funding for the Museum was abandoned by the Council. If the original intention was to sell the property then how does the Council reckon the waste of hundreds of thousands of pounds on a doomed application, when the money would have been better spent on upgrades and upkeep to the property?

Reply

The HLF application was entered in to in the expectation that a revenue neutral solution could be found.

3. To whom would the Museum be sold (ie, who are prospective purchasers), and for what purpose?

Reply

If Members decide that the Priory should be sold it will be advertised on the open market. The sales particulars will contain the following statement:

“In recognition of the national, county and local significance of the Priory and the Library building as a designated heritage asset, the Council is seeking a purchaser who will safeguard the building’s future. Offers will be particularly welcomed from prospective owners who propose future uses which will continue to allow the building to be visited or used by the public, and which will enhance Orpington town centre.

When offers are received Councillors will carefully consider the proposed uses as well as the financial offers in coming to a decision on the selection of a purchaser. A community working group will be set up to feed in to this process.

(P) From Christine Hellicar

1. At the R&R committee Cllr Morgan said, in response to my supplementary question, the Council will look at retaining an accredited museum service for one year and set up a working group to explore ways and means of maintaining a future service for the community. I ask that the Executive endorse this proposition.

Reply

No the budget cut won't be delayed. However I listened to stakeholders during the most recent consultation and at committee last week, and in response to the report feedback a request is being made to the Executive for a small annual amount of money to enable the changing exhibitions and increased public access to the collection. The Council will work with the Bromley Heritage and Arts Forum (Bhaf) and other interested stakeholders to develop and manage these exhibitions.

EXTRA CARE HOUSING – LUBBOCK HOUSE

(Q) From Charles and Christine Young

1. What restrictions and obligations, if any, apply to the use of this site?

Reply

As noted above, If Lubbock House is de-commissioned as extra care housing, the Council will discuss the future use of the building/ site with Affinity Sutton. No proposals have been put forward at this stage. The Council does not hold information on restrictions or obligations on the use of the site.

2. Will it remain residential?

Reply

See above

3. If so what will be the proposed make-up of the development?

Reply

See above

YOUTH SERVICE

(S) From Jane Crockett

1. In the proposal to cut £506,000 from the youth service what projects, services, centres etc will be closed and reduced? If this is not known then what is the process and timescale for identifying it and how this is going to impact this borough...my community...the young people?

Reply

The broad outline of the £506,000 is known, however, there is further work to be done on the full detail and this detail has to be subject to more consideration. I (Cllr Wells) will be leading this work; including engagement with interested parties.

2. Have you consulted the young people and people of the community? If so where is the evidence to show that the young people and community have been consulted regarding these cuts and decisions? If not why?

Reply

The Youth Council responded to our public consultation "Our Budget Your Views" in November last year on behalf of the young people in the Borough. Their response was publicly reported to the Executive in January as part of Appendix 8 to the Draft 2015/2016 Budget report. Further consultation will be undertaken as part of the service redesign.

3. Why, after the youth service has been hit twice by the cuts already, why is it now set to be cut yet again by half its yearly budget? Are the young people of Bromley not important enough?

Reply

Of course they are important, that is why we are protecting our Targeted Youth Service, the service for those most at risk, in the face of the very significant budget reductions we are having to make.

(T) From Caroline Stone

1. If the proposed budget cuts go ahead, how will it affect the voluntary youth sector? Currently a small grant scheme enables c.10k young people to access positive activities and experience new opportunities. The loss of this funding would have a huge impact on the voluntary youth groups in Bromley.

Reply

The proposals include no decisions about some of these smaller grants and will form a component of the consultation.
