

### COUNCIL MEETING

25<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2015

#### QUESTIONS FOR ORAL REPLY FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

##### 1. From Councillor Ian Dunn to the Portfolio Holder for Environment

Can the Portfolio Holder tell me how many residents have been written to demanding a fee of £80 per annum for the disabled space outside their home? How many of them are old age pensioners? Does he think that it is fair that some of the most vulnerable in society are being charged £80 per annum for a parking space which is available to any blue badge holder.

##### Reply

The Council has written to approximately 350 disabled residents.

Whilst I suspect that a significant proportion, and for the sake of debate would accept that a majority, are probably pensioners, the precise number is not immediately known as that information is not retained on file. I have however asked officers to try and recover that data for you from the relevant application forms.

I do have to respectfully suggest however that I believe you are incorrect to possibly conflate all pensioners and disabled people with an inability to pay for this service if indeed that is your suggestion.

As such, I do believe that the proposed charge is fair as provision and enforcement of Disabled Bays are not statutory services and are ones which we can no longer afford without a contribution being made for their upkeep by those who benefit from them.

Also, and perhaps more importantly, and this is where I might be able to persuade you a little, we are currently working on the details of a scheme which should in future hopefully mean that we will be able to dedicate each paid for space solely for the sponsoring householder's benefit.

That said, despite several other London Boroughs already operating similar schemes, we are listening to the expressed concerns surrounding aspects of this policy in non-Controlled Parking Zone areas, and may further nuance the criteria slightly following further consultation with that particular client group.

### **Supplementary Question**

The paper from Committee last autumn stated that consultation will be carried out in advance of this scheme becoming operational with all disability groups and other key stakeholders. Can you please tell the Council what groups were consulted and summarise their responses?

### **Reply**

No, I can't, but I will have the Head of Traffic and Road Safety write to you with that information to be placed on record.

### **Supplementary Question from Councillor Nicholas Bennett**

Councillor Smith will know that I wrote to him about a case in my ward two days ago. He has just mentioned "*not in Controlled Parking Zones*". Can he confirm whether the Equalities Act 2010 would prevent the Council charging disabled residents in a road where there are no parking controls, when everyone else can park for nothing? Has he looked at that aspect?

### **Reply**

That is the cause of much debate. Some lawyers think possibly; others think definitely not. Other authorities are doing it which doesn't necessarily make it right if it is wrong but that it is part of the teasing out in the non-controlled parking zones. It could be that policy will evolve - that people with bays keep them but are not policed, which would mean that people who park in them without a ticket would not be ticketed; it may be that residents outside of controlled parking zones, when they get to realise that it will be policed and a bay is dedicated to them, will be more than happy to pay the fee. These are the sorts of conversations that will be going on in the coming weeks.

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## **2. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett to the Leader of the Council**

*In view of time constraints and the need for the Executive meeting to start at a reasonable time, Cllr Bennett agreed to accept the Leader's reply for the question below in written form.*

What information he has as to the improvement of the local economy since May 2010?

### **Reply**

#### **Unemployment** – claimant numbers and rates

The number of claimants of the main unemployment benefit (Job Seekers Allowance) has reduced from 5,900 in Jan 2010 to 2,600 in Feb 2015. As a proportion of the

working age population the percentage has reduced from 3% to 1.3% in the same period.

### Number of enterprises

Total number of enterprises in the borough has increased from 10,700 to 12,300, an increase of 15%. The majority of this growth was in private sector enterprises of under 10 employees, with some shrinkage of the number of enterprises of 250 and above.

### Number of employee jobs – part time / full time

The number of employee jobs in the borough has remained relatively stable between 2010 and 2013 (latest data available) increasing slightly from 100,300 in 2010 to 101,100 employee jobs. The number of full time jobs has remained virtually static during the period – with the main growth in jobs coming from part time jobs, increasing from 37,600 to 38,600 between 2010 and 2013.

### Median earnings – weekly (full / part time) resident based and workplace based

The median weekly earnings of Bromley residents who are full time workers has increased from £652 in 2010 to £700 in 2014 (7.4% increase). For residents who are part time workers the increase during the period has been over 12%, from £167 to £187.

Median weekly earnings for jobs which are based in the borough (not necessarily held by Bromley residents) have shown a modest increase (3%) from £530 to £550 between 2010 and 2014. However, median earnings for part time workers in the borough are now nearly 13% more, increasing from £142 to £166 per week.

It should be noted that the earnings figures have not been adjusted for inflation.

### Business survival rates

In 2010 the 1-year survival rate for businesses was 88.1%. In 2012 (latest available data) it was 93.1%

### Business start ups

Based on a count of new business accounts started at major high street banks, the number of start-ups in the borough was just over 3,000 during 2010. For the whole of 2014 there were 2,700 businesses starting up (a 10% decline). This may reflect improved economic conditions as the number of employment opportunities has increased since 2010.

### Town Centre vacancies and footfall

These have remained relatively low (in comparison with GB average) for most town centres, with the exception of Orpington.

Beckenham 11.0% (Dec 14) – c.f. 9.1% (June 14)  
Bromley 11.8% (Nov 14) – c.f. 12.8% (May 14)  
Orpington BID area 15.2% (Jan 15) – c.f. 15.2% (Sept 14)  
Penge 8.1% (April 14) – c.f. 7.4% (May 13)

NB GB average 13.2%

Bromley North Village specifically has shown a marked improvement: Vacancy rates before the works in Feb 13 were 8.1%, during the works in Feb 14 were 9.1% and when the works completed the vacancy rates reduced to 6.6%.

Footfall in Bromley North Village has increased 62% on a weekday and 49% on a Saturday (compared to 2011).

Overall Bromley Town Centre footfall figures have also improved: The February 2015 Springboard data shows a 7.3% increase on February 2014, and a year to date increase year on year by 4.8%.

In the other 2 main town centres where footfall is monitored through manual counts the picture is more mixed:

Beckenham  
Feb 2014 = 22,100  
Feb 2015 = 30,300  
37% increase

Orpington  
Feb 2014 = 26,600  
Feb 2015 = 22,600  
15% decrease

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### **3. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett to the Portfolio Holder for Resources**

What was the Council tax money terms and percentage increase in the three years 1999-2002 and in the 13 years since 2002?

#### **Reply**

The Portfolio Holder referred to the table below:

## L B Bromley's Council Tax Band 'D' 1999/00 - 2015/16

Year	Bromley		Preceptors		Headline	
	Band 'D'	Increase	Band 'D'	Increase/ Decrease	Band 'D'	Increase/ Decrease
	£	%	£	%	£	%
1998/99	513.26	2.9%	96.31	17.8%	609.57	5.01%
1999/00	564.95	10.07%	105.01	9.03%	669.96	9.91%
2000/01	612.68	8.45%	122.98	17.11%	735.66	9.81%
2001/02	675.50	10.25%	150.88	22.69%	826.38	12.33%
2002/03	706.23	4.55%	173.88	15.24%	880.11	6.50%
2003/04	748.59	6.00%	224.40	29.05%	972.99	10.55%
2004/05	799.16	6.76%	241.33	7.54%	1,040.49	6.94%
2005/06	838.34	4.90%	254.62	5.51%	1,092.96	5.04%
2006/07	871.67	3.98%	288.61	13.35%	1,160.28	6.16%
2007/08	913.73	4.83%	303.88	5.29%	1,217.61	4.94%
2008/09	953.33	4.33%	309.82	1.95%	1,263.15	3.74%
2009/10	979.16	2.71%	309.82	0.00%	1,288.98	2.04%
2010/11	991.31	1.24%	309.82	0.00%	1,301.13	0.94%
2011/12	991.31	0.00%	309.82	0.00%	1,301.13	0.00%
2012/13	991.31	0.00%	306.72	-1.00%	1,298.03	-0.24%
2013/14	1,010.07	1.89%	303.00	-1.21%	1,313.07	1.16%
2014/15	1,010.07	0.00%	299.00	-1.32%	1,309.07	-0.30%
2015/16	1,030.14	1.99%	295.00	-1.34%	1,325.14	1.23%

The average increase from 1999/00 to 2001/02 in Bromley's element of the Band 'D' Council Tax was 9.6% totalling an average of £54.08 per annum.

The average increase in Preceptors was 16.3% totalling an average of £18.19 per annum.

The total average increase was 10.7% totalling an average of £72.27 per annum.

For the period 2002/03 - 2015/16, the total average increase was 3.5% totalling an average of £35.63 per annum.

Therefore, in summary, the increases since that time were just under a third of the level that they were during that time.

### **Supplementary Question**

In light of the General Election on 7<sup>th</sup> May, what advice would Councillor Arthur give to the residents of Bromley about the attitude of the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats towards taxation?

### **Reply**

I do believe that the figures largely speak for themselves and it will be for the electorate to judge us on our record to say whether they were comfortable with

having increases of 10.7% or whether they would rather have increases of less than a third of that figure.

They would also look at what happened to the reserves during that time when the reserves were sadly depleted during those three years since when we have repaired that damage and returned the reserves to the way they were in the early nineties. We have also brought a degree of ambition into how we are treating those reserves in order that they can give us £4m per annum to shore up front line services.

But it is interesting to reflect – and I was a here at that time – I think there 18 Lib Dems and 14 Labour Members and I think we can say that the electorate has passed judgement as the 18 have disappeared altogether and the 14 have been cut in half. It was an interesting thing at the time to watch in slow motion a car crash effectively where these two disparate groups tried to cobble themselves together and to see the Labour Group desperately trying to get into power by cobbling themselves on to a group with which they had nothing in common at all. It is interesting and I do reflect perhaps that Mr Miliband is doing much the same thing with Alex Salmond perhaps where he is saying that he wishes to cobble himself together with someone else to get in by the back door. So perhaps people ought to learn the lessons from Bromley.

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#### **4. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett to the Portfolio Holder for Education**

*In view of time constraints and the need for the Executive meeting to start at a reasonable time, Cllr Bennett agreed to accept the Portfolio Holder's reply for the question below in written form.*

If he will make a statement on how the expected increase in pupil numbers in the coming years will be met by the provision of new places at both primary and secondary level?

#### **Reply**

Bromley has witnessed a significant increase in demand for primary places over the last five years with the number of children in reception increasing by approximately 600. According to pupil roll projections produced by the Greater London Authority demand will increase further from 3,982 in September 2014 to 4,148 in 2028.

We have ambitious plans to meet this demand. Already Churchfields, Clare House, Harris Primary Academy Crystal Palace, Parish Church of England Primary School, St Paul's Cray and Worsley Bridge schools have permanently expanded and bulge classes have been added at a number of schools.

Consultation on permanent expansion is currently taking place at Midfield Primary School with Edgebury Primary School to follow shortly. It is planned that more primary schools will consult on expansion over the next year permanently increasing the supply of primary school places in the borough.

Major building work is underway to physically expand schools. Clare House Primary School is being completely rebuilt as a 2 Form Entry School. Major extensions are currently being constructed at Churchfields, Parish, St Paul's Cray and Worsley Bridge schools to provide additional forms of entry, with smaller schemes at Bromley Road, Hawes Down Juniors and Keston schools being delivered over the coming months.

In addition to those schemes already being delivered, the Council has a developed primary school capital programme for the next three years. Schemes at Edgebury, Princes Plain, Scott's Park, Stewart Fleming and St George's schools are currently subject to detailed preparation work. Feasibility work is underway at James Dixon, Marian Vian, Farnborough, Chislehurst St Nicholas, Leasons, Poverest, Blenheim, Green Street Green and Oaklands schools.

However, the local authority cannot satisfy all demand for primary places within existing local schools and Free Schools have, and will continue to play, an important role in the Council's programme. Harris Beckenham, Harris Shortlands and La Fontaine academies opened in September 2014 and new Free Schools approved in Crystal Palace and Langley Park are due to open over the next couple of years.

Demand for secondary school places has started to increase after a period of decline in rolls. This increase is driven by two factors, the increase in demand for primary places passing through to secondary age and migration into Bromley.

According to pupil roll projections produced by the Greater London Authority demand for Year 7 places will increase further from 3,508 in September 2014 to 4,421 in 2031.

More places will be provided in secondary schools this September due to increasing local demand with Bishop Justus, Langley Park School for Boys and the Ravensbourne Academy all taking a bulge class.

We continue to work with our existing secondary schools to identify options for expansion where sustainable, but expansion alone will be unable to meet the additional 30 forms of entry required by 2030. New schools delivered via the Free School route will be required to satisfy that demand.

Colleagues will also be aware that along with the Beckenham Academy and Bromley College sponsored University Technical College (UTC) announced last year, another secondary Free School, Bullers Wood School for Boys is due to open in September 2016.

The local authority is also continuing conversation with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark with regards the possible creation of new catholic secondary school in the borough.

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