

COUNCIL MEETING

14th DECEMBER 2015

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL REPLY FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

1. From Cllr Russell Mellor to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

May I ask the Portfolio Holder if he is aware of my resident: Mrs Julie North?

Reply:

If he is referring to Mrs Julie North, who is chairman of the Palgrave Estate, Porchester Mead, then the answer is yes.

Supplementary Question

I am delighted that Cllr Morgan is aware of my resident Mrs Julie North who has been patiently waiting for a planning matter to be resolved. The purpose of my question is to tease out the solution he may have to resolve this obnoxious question of the unused site at Stumps Hill, Southend Lane.

Reply:

I have been to see the site myself. It is a site which could easily be developed, it is overgrown, neglected and surrounded by a not particularly attractive painted corrugated iron fence which is in a poor state of repair. The issue is that we all want the site tidied up. Unfortunately, these things are never easy or quick, but I will give you a chronology of where we have got to.

The Council issued a notice on 1st May under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended (Section 215) requiring the tidying of the site. The owner, Mr Winspear, then advised us on the 26th June, exactly 56 days after the 1st May, that he had appealed.

From 12th August 2015 to 7th October 2015, the Council waited for the appeal hearing date from Bromley Magistrates' Court but to no avail. The Council wrote to the Magistrates' Court several times to chase up on the matter.

In September the Council wrote to Mr Winspear to inform him that the Court have said that they do not have any record of his appeal against the Notice dated 1st May 2015. Mr Winspear insisted that he had appealed and was very adamant and wrote to inform the Council that he had indeed appealed against the notice. Again the Council checked with the Magistrates' Court and was informed that they do not have a record of the said appeal.

As a result of no appeal hearing with the Magistrate's Court it was decided that this matter can now proceed to prosecution action.

In November 2015, the Planning Investigation Officer for the above matter completed a statement for a prosecution for the offence of not compliance with the Section 215 Notice.

On 3rd December 2015 further prosecution instructions were requested by and given to our legal team. Details of the relevant correspondence relating to the above matter

have been incorporated as part of the planning investigations officers' witness statement. The matter is ongoing.

If the Magistrates' Court does issue a notice ordering the owner to tidy the site and he does not comply within a stated period then that becomes a criminal offence with all the consequences that flow from that.

2. From Cllr Vanessa Allen to the Leader of the Council

Since the Communities Secretary, Greg Clark, is urging councils to not only save for the future but also to make efficient use of assets to provide services, how does the Leader propose to follow the Minister's recommended course of action and use non ring-fenced reserves to provide the services local people expect to see?

Reply:

The Council faces a significant ongoing budget gap with the need for further savings due to reductions in government grant, new burdens and the impact of population change. It is absolutely right that the Council uses its non ring-fenced reserves to protect and provide services to local people. That is exactly what we are doing. However we do not do what the Labour opposition would have us do, namely throw our reserves at ongoing revenue deficits, which would see all those reserves depleted within four years leading to even greater budget cuts in the future. We say no to that type of financial illiteracy but instead we set aside reserves for specific purposes such as invest to save, supporting economic growth and longer term investment in order to generate income which helps to protect key services. If we did not do this we would already have a further budget deficit of £10-11m. In addition, I can confirm that the Government, as part of the Spending Review 2015, indicated that local authorities will be able to use receipts from asset disposals to spend on "reform" which relates to non- recurring transformation costs only. We say again, reserves do not provide a sustainable solution to maintaining local authority services. In the interests of the residents of this borough, we will continue to do it our way, not theirs.

Supplementary Question:

We have never advocated using all the reserves, just a small proportion. That was the point of the question, because of the cuts that happened last year. Greg Clark was interested in the point that we are putting away more than we are cutting. Can the issue be re-examined again?

Reply:

The Labour Group can challenge these numbers in committee and during the budget process which is ongoing from now until the end of February.

Supplementary Question:

Cllr Colin Smith stated that since 2011/12 the Council had taken £67m out of the revenue budget, in tranches of £16m, £22m etc. multiplied by the number of years we have taken them out, a total of £242m. This year we have an extra £20m to take out of the budget, giving us a potential revenue gap of £87m and a net total of £329m. Had we spent an extra £329m not only would we have no reserves but we would have a significant debt. How would he propose to fund that in these straitened times?

Reply:

There are only two ways – borrowing, and we know what happened when the Labour government borrowed, or cutting services to the depth Cllr Smith has just alluded to.

3. From Cllr Angela Wilkins to the Leader of the Council

In parallel to cuts to services, Members are often asked what actions the Council will be taking to reflect austerity in its own running costs. In this context, please give details of any plans to change the number of councillors to be elected in the Borough at the local government elections to be held in 2018.

Reply:

As Cllr Wilkins will be aware this is an issue which has been considered at the Constitution Improvement Working Group. From recent figures Bromley has one of the largest number of electors to Councillors in London with there being for example from recent figures 3,958 electors for each councillor in Bromley compared to 2,842 electors per councillor in Bexley.

Therefore whilst we need to make significant savings we also need to maintain an appropriate level of democratic representation and this is something the Constitution Improvement Working Group will consider further.

Supplementary Question:

There are a lot of rumours across the borough about this issue, and I was looking for a more definitive answer – when will we have an answer?

Reply:

It is when the Constitution Improvement Working Group have looked at the issue, deliberated and made recommendations back to the Council.

4. From Cllr Kathy Bance to the Portfolio Holder for Care Services

Will the LBB consider appointing a “member champion” for the Mental Health Challenge so that we can ensure we are being as effective as we can in promoting the improvement of mental health in Bromley across the full range of authority’s activities and responsibilities?

Reply:

The Council already works hard to ensure that the needs of those suffering from mental health issues are fully met in our borough. However, the suggestion of having this sort of champion certainly sits well with me – we have had over the years a champion for all sorts of causes and groups in Bromley.

My initial thought though is that because our efforts in this area are shared with our partners – particularly health and the third sector – this appointment is probably best made by the Health and Wellbeing Board so that the brief given to the champion is wider than just across the Council. I am very happy to talk with Cllr Jefferys, the chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board, and indeed with Cllr Bance to approve such an appointment.

5. From Cllr Ian Dunn to the Leader of Council

You are on record from the September Executive & Resources PDS meeting as saying that you wanted to see budgets planned for three years ahead. Can you please explain to the Council how you plan to do this, with particular reference to the forthcoming budget?

Reply:

Despite seeking a longer term financial settlement, which would further help us to manage our budget, it is unlikely to be forthcoming when we receive the local government finance settlement later this month.

Whilst I would like to see budgets planned for three years, with so much uncertainty around government policy and funding levels this is not yet possible. However, my hope remains that we will be able to move to three year budgeting once the government provides longer term financial settlements.

Supplementary Question:

Three year budgeting can help with uncertainties and identify changes further in advance. For next year's budgeting will you consider bringing forward a three year budget to Executive and Resources PDS Committee on a part 2 basis before the summer so that the Committee can conduct a proper scrutiny of the various options that are being considered?

Reply:

Our hands are tied, but if things do change rapidly and we were to get more information from the Government I think it is in everyone's interests that we look at our budgets, have more time to look in detail and to scrutinise them. Whether the summer is possible, I think some time earlier in the cycle would be helpful and I would be keen to see that happen.

6. From Cllr Kevin Brooks to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Safety

With Bromley becoming an emerging gangs borough and more gang related violence occurring in Penge earlier this month, do the Council believe the closure of the Hub at Snowdown Close with its positive youth provision was the right decision? Will the Council pledge money gained through any sale of the building to fund an increase in youth activities in the north of the borough?

Reply:

At the last full Council meeting I outlined the plethora of activities in Penge that the Council organises in order to tackle gangs. In reply, you welcomed the actions set out and stated that it sounded like there was a lot of work going on. In addition to these activities, the Council is aware of a number of voluntary organisations who deliver various services to young people in Penge aged 8 to 25 years old. The letting arrangements at Snowdown Close were only ever temporary. Christ Central Church run a youth session at Snowdown Close on a Wednesday which is the same night as when the Council's Youth Service deploys a detached provision in Penge in nearby

Queen Adelaide Estate or near the High Street. The Church stated that it envisaged expansion and other projects if they kept the building, however, they are already able to do this from the Church, running a number of other activities throughout the week, including a Youth Service on a Friday evening. The Church is only a four minute walk from Snowdown Close. It can also often be the case that a building that is not in use 24/7 may also attract anti-social behaviour, whereas residential development is unlikely to attract the same problem. Any money raised from the sale of this building will ultimately be used to support the stretched Council services in order to protect the most vulnerable members of our community.

Supplementary Question:

This is an issue that is very worrying in our part of the borough. Will you work more closely with the local councillors so that we can help you in solving this gang problem in Penge?

Reply:

Following the peer gang review this time last year, a gangs strategic board was set up and formulated a 15 point action plan. A key part of this plan, which was discussed at Holy Trinity Church at the event you mentioned, includes the mapping out of diversionary activities across the borough and we asked you as local councillors to come forward with the activities that you are aware of. Vic McNally, our single point of contact at the Home Office, is coming to the Board at the next meeting in January to review the progress we have made so far. If he is not happy with the work being done around diversionary activities and intervention then we will review what else can be done. Ultimately, I am very happy to work with the ward Councillors on an ongoing basis to discuss what we can do within your local community.

7. From Cllr Nicholas Bennett JP to the Leader of the Council

If he will comment on the claim made in the 'Open Letter' to him dated 16th November 2015 from the Leader of the Opposition that 'the Council's assets and reserves are approaching £400m and these could be used "to fund council expenditure and protect services"?'

Reply:

I would like to know where this figure comes from – as far as I am aware, there is no reference to a sum of £400m for assets and reserves reflected in the Council's accounts. Pantomime season has come early this year, as Cllr Wilkins, despite being informed to the contrary, has been spinning this fairy tale for far too long now.

The Council has usable revenue reserves of £131m (as at 31/03/15). Of this, £13m belongs to schools, our health partners and the insurance fund, £57m is set aside for invest to save and to support economic growth and longer term investments in order to generate income which helps to protect our key services. The remaining £20m held in general reserves provides a degree of protection against general financial risks as part of the Council's overall financial strategy. We also hold reserves of £51m which are subject to statutory limitations on their use and can only be used to fund capital expenditure.

The seven Labour economic financial dwarves would do better sticking to Father Christmas, or writing to me via the local journals and newspapers.

Supplementary Question:

As the assets of the Council include roads, school buildings and parks, has the Leader received a list from the Labour party of those that they wish to flog off?

Reply:

No.

Supplementary Question:

Councillor Wilkins suggested that when she went to her bank manager, they would look at not just what was in her account, but at a number of different things. Would the Leader accept that “reserves” was a very broad term and in fact we have £307.6m in investments and over £60m in property. Those are reserves – that is all I have ever said, and I would like that to be recognised.

Reply:

This is a serious issue when we are dealing with significant grant reductions from central government. We maintain that the best way to do that is not to flog off the family silver, but to invest in the future through invest to save projects, investing in properties generating higher returns to support the revenue account. We are struggling to come to terms with a philosophical and pragmatic difference in the way we see things on this side about living within our means as opposed to the Labour Group over the last 13 years of their administration demonstrating that they did not understand the importance of living within one’s means. We will do everything we can to protect frontline services for vulnerable residents and we believe we are doing exactly that with the investments we have made rather than cutting frontline public services.

8. From Cllr Tony Owen to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment

Given that developers at Berwick House, Orpington and the former police station are selling parking spaces at £10,000 and £20,000 respectively, what approach will be taken when the inevitable request for residents parking permits is received?

Reply:

The answer will be no, so far as I am concerned, if I am still in post and supported by the PDS Committee of the day.

In my opinion, the farcical Planning policy which encourages such over development at the cost of lost office space and employment opportunities in the future, self-evidently remains in complete denial that many inhabitants of such properties will still want and choose to purchase cars.

If left unchecked, this policy will continue to choke and change forever the pleasant character of many more of our Borough’s roads than it already has in recent years. I would therefore encourage all colleagues present this evening who are keen to preserve the pleasant nature of our Borough, to write to their MPs, urging its repeal.

Supplementary Question:

There was no supplementary question from Councillor Owen.

Additional Supplementary Question:

Councillor Ian Dunn referred to the report to Development Control Committee on Orpington Police Station which made reference to a confidential viability assessment that showed that no affordable housing could be provided as part of the development. He asked whether the confidential viability assessment had any reference to selling off parking spaces at £20,000 each, and if it did not did the Council have any remedy against the developer?

Reply:

Councillor Peter Morgan responded that he did not think the Council would be in a position to prevent an owner selling something that they owned.

Additional Supplementary Question:

Councillor William Huntington-Thresher asked whether the Portfolio Holder could confirm that the Transport advice on these two developments in his ward was that owners would not be entitled to a parking space. He asked whether he could be sure that for developments marketed as car-free developments this would continue to be the advice from Transport.

Reply:

I believe it was the case that these developments were declared no-car premises. The Transport Team have to make recommendations based on the NPPS. The Transport Team is definitely trying to make these developments car-free, but how can you stop someone buying a car if they want one?

9. From Cllr Angela Wilkins to the Leader of Council

Please can you provide a list of those Residents' Associations (and any other groups) invited to attend the two budget consultation meetings held recently and the dates on which invitation letters were sent?

Given the absence of any representation from Crystal Palace and Penge & Cator wards on these lists, can you please explain how this list was compiled and why many other interested RAs and community groups were not invited?

Reply:

I do have the list of Residents Associations invited to the budget round table discussions ([Appendix 1.](#)) They are separated into broadly East and West areas. The invitations were sent out by email on 6th November followed by letters where we have the postal addresses. The West Group were invited to the 30th November meeting and the East Group to the 1st December meeting with an indication that they could swap meetings if that was more convenient. The groups invited from the areas in question were the Penge Forum, the Penge East Residents Association and the Crystal Palace Triangle Planning Group. Mr Stephen Brush attended for the Penge Forum on 30th November – former Councillor John Getgood sent his apologies for the night.

Supplementary Question:

I do not know the Crystal Palace Triangle Planning Group and Councillor Bance does not know the Penge East Residents Association – perhaps we need to look further at this. If we are going to have consultation, can we do it better than this next year?

Reply:

The West Beckenham Residents Association also covers the area concerned. We are trying to evolve the best system of public consultation and I am very happy to keep reviewing that.

10. From Cllr Kathy Bance to the Portfolio Holder for Education

Bromley has 77% of its primary school pupils in Academies, the highest percentage in England. With the poor Ofsted results for our Bromley Primary Schools shown in the recently published Ofsted Annual Report, should we hold off pushing further primary schools into Academies?

Reply:

You have rightly picked out an interesting piece of information, that Bromley has the highest number of pupils educated in Academy schools at primary level, 77%. We are proud of this achievement and that we are meeting the Government's aspirations for Academy and Free School provision. All 14 of our Outstanding schools are Academies based on pre-conversion judgements and we would expect these schools to be maintaining their high standards.

6 RI and 2 inadequate schools should have now had their inspection under the new Common Inspection Framework, but it appears that there are delays in the 24 month re-inspection timetabling. We are optimistic that when inspected these schools, 5 of which are Academy schools awaiting their first post conversion inspection, will show an improvement.

Of the 10 Academy schools already inspected post conversion, 3 have remained at good, one has gone from inadequate to Good and one has gone from Outstanding to good.

With regard to Ofsted Outcomes, therefore, I believe that our policy related to Academisation remains on track but we are working to build relationships at local, regional and national level, and support new Academy structures to help ensure there remains a strong quality assurance oversight of Academy schools that enhances the work of Ofsted.

Supplementary Question:

What is being said that academy schools are not bringing the results down, it is the maintained schools. Is the Portfolio Holder confident that failing academy schools would be brought to our attention in time to intervene with school improvement resources?

Reply:

In the answer I spoke about some of the schools that have not yet been re-inspected with the new framework in place. When they are inspected we expect some improvement. It is vital that we ensure that we maintain a high standard of educational provision. This gets to the fundamental nature of what academies are meant to do. The academies in Bromley are trailblazers and are, like all academies across the country, held to higher standards, standards put in place by the current government. One of the other welcome changes to help maintain those standards is the introduction of a Regional Schools Commissioner. He is coming to our PDS Committee next month and Members will be able to scrutinise him there. We believe that it is not just about safeguarding and making sure there is better educational

provision. These changes provide greater freedom in decision making, improvements are driven by teachers and not by bureaucrats, schools are more responsive to parents, schools can get more engaged with their communities – there is a great list of advantages which is why the Labour Government decided to introduce them.

(As the thirty minutes allotted to questions had expired at this point, the Mayor asked whether Members wished to continue with the remaining questions. On a show of hands, Members decided to continue.)

11. From Cllr Kevin Brooks to the Portfolio Holder for Care Services

In the wake of the Chancellor's statement allowing a 2% Council Tax precept to help Social Care funding, will the Portfolio Holder seriously and actively consider supporting projects and places such as Melvin Hall which is used by Age Concern to provide help and companionship to elderly residents.

Reply:

Should the Council decide to levy the 2% precept this may help to mitigate existing cost pressures in social care but is unlikely to result in the Council being able to grant fund the voluntary sector. Social care funding must be directed towards those most in need and to the services which best meet their needs. The Council already commissions Age Concern Penge and Anerley to provide day opportunities for older people who choose to have their eligible needs met in that way.

Supplementary Question:

In my ward the residents of Melvyn Hall regard it as very important, and the organisers are using their own funding. With the current underspend, would you be able to outline any future support?

Reply:

I certainly appreciate the work done at Melvyn Hall, and I am looking forward to enjoying lunch with them next Thursday. In terms of where we put our money, the days of grant funding very worthy organisations are over. We are now in the process of commissioning services, and we commission Penge and Anerley Age Concern to provide day opportunities for people in the area who need those services and choose to have those services. In terms of helping them, we do have moneys available for new projects, and Melvyn Hall are interested in setting up a new project. So we do help day centres as much as we can, but we cannot simply give grants in the way we used to.

12. From Cllr Nicholas Bennett JP to the Leader of the Council

What estimates he has as to projected increase in the Borough's population to 2030 and the impact that this will have on the Borough's facilities and services?

Reply:

The Planning Division disseminates all projections (GLA, DCLG and ONS), together with other data to all Council Departments and Divisions who deal with this data in respect of their areas of service provision. The GLA population projections are more accurate, because they use local information that is not available nationally on a consistent basis. The ONS projections only use information that can be provided nationally.

The ONS and GLA 2014 trend based projections show an increase in the Borough's population of approximately 5.5% from 325,000 in 2015 to 343,000 by 2030. If this projection proves accurate and there is no local intervention, in my opinion it will put an intolerable burden on our schooling provision, health services, housing stock, transport capabilities, utilities services and all Council services.

Supplementary Question:

As we do not live in North Korea and cannot put Police points round Bromley to stop people getting in, is it not time to review Building a Better Bromley to see how we can accommodate what is likely to happen.

Reply:

Councillor Bennett makes a valid point so perhaps we do need to take stock and have a plan for how we deal with the next 15 or 20 years.

Additional Supplementary question:

Councillor Mary Cooke asked whether, when the Council considers whether to seek a reduction in the number of councillors, it would be sensible to take into account the increasing number of residents.

Reply:

That is a valid point. There is already a high number of residents per councillor and we need to take that into account in making any future decision. Since the borough was formed, local authorities have taken on significant additional burdens, such as public health and health and social care integration. It is really important that we have the right balance of councillors versus population to deal with these ongoing issues and new burdens. All these things will be taken into consideration in the months to come.

Additional Supplementary question:

Councillor Simon Fawthrop asked whether the Leader would agree that it was not just about the supply side, but that we should also look at the demand side in this situation of population growth? We should work with the government to ensure that immigration is controlled in a sensible fashion so that the population does not spiral out of control. If houses have got to be built somewhere eventually there will be no land left to build on if that logic is followed to its conclusion.

Reply:

That is what I have been doing for some time. I have the scars as the only Leader across London raising these issues at London Councils about the importance of managing demand as well as supply – it is not good enough to do what we are doing at the moment. As part of the Outer London Commission has been looking at the topic of removing barriers to building, and quite madly there appears to be a determination to remove barriers to building on green belt land to which I am opposed. There is clearly a move and direction towards finding room to build considerably more homes in London. It has now been accepted by Will McKee and the Outer London Commission that it should not be London but the South East Region as a whole that should be dealing with this issue of providing these additional homes, if indeed they are necessary.

13. From Cllr Tony Owen to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment

Why is Environmental Services raising no objections to planning proposals for flats with no parking provision in Station Square, Petts Wood?

Reply:

I assume question 13 refers to 9 Station Square, Petts Wood.

If so, I am advised that the proposal was to extend the upper floors of the building and convert them from a 3 bed flat to a one bed and 3 x 2 bed flats. The initial application (15/01485) had a highway ground of refusal relating to the lack of parking. The subsequent application (15/03834) for the same proposal included a Transport Report with a parking stress survey.

Most of the roads around the site have some form of controlled parking during the day so it would be difficult to keep a car on-street all the time. The roads nearest the site with free parking during the day are West Way and Fairway.

The parking stress survey, carried out overnight to establish the residential parking demand, showed many more available spaces than would be taken up by the likely number of vehicles which could be generated by this development.

Perhaps crucially, the Government's guidance in its 'National Planning Policy Framework' is that "development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe".

Given the information supplied about the available parking nearby, officers could not therefore sustain an objection on highway grounds.

Supplementary Question:

We have a number of free bays around Station Square, which the Department are looking at changing to pay and display bays. I would ask, can we all sing from one hymn sheet and act sensibly.

Reply:

As it is Christmas, we will all sing from the same carol sheet and I will try to act sensibly.

14. From Cllr Kathy Bance to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Safety

Our local police, traders and residents have asked for support from the Council to assist them to deal with the growing numbers of rough sleepers who are bedding down in rear shop doorways after drinking throughout the day. With money being scarce to address the problem directly, would the Council consider a Ward wide drinking ban to discourage the influx of problem drinkers to the area?

Reply:

There is currently an alcohol exclusion zone in Penge that covers the area immediately surrounding the High Street. Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 this current zone will expire in 2017. Therefore, we will review the position before 2017 and consider the need for a Public Spaces Protection Order which could be made wider and controls alcohol consumption in a similar way. There

is a process of consultation before an order can be made, and there will have to be evidence of the need for such an order. The order will also need Police backing as main body for enforcement. Street drinking can be associated with the consumption of high strength beers and where the problem of street drinking has been particularly severe in other boroughs, other initiatives have been tried such as one titled "Reducing the Strength." This is a voluntary scheme adopted by local off-licences who agree not to sell high strength beer and cider. Resources are needed to implement such a scheme.

Your question refers to a growing number of rough sleepers who are bedding down in the rear shop doorways after drinking throughout the day. Rough sleeping is often associated with alcohol use and this is something that Thames Reach London Street Rescue, the organisation who deliver rough sleeper outreach services for us, monitor closely in order to engage with and help people off the street. The last rough sleeper headcount was undertaken in Penge on 26th November by Thames Outreach. As part of the headcount, a very thorough search of Penge was undertaken, including shop doorways, rear access to shops and local parks. The headcount found two rough sleepers bedding down in Penge, both already known to Thames Reach. Thames Reach also inform us that in general, although incidences of rough sleeping have increased in the last eighteen months or so, these are generally isolated incidences and are still relatively low. Whilst a number of the identified rough sleepers do have mental health and/or alcohol use issues they do not tend to be part of any entrenched street drinking culture either in Penge or anywhere else in the borough.

Supplementary Question:

With respect, none of those facts are correct. There are at least nine rough sleepers sleeping nightly in Penge. I support looking at the wider issues prior to 2017, and I know you will get Police backing – they can tell you how many rough sleepers there are each night. The local Police have asked me, as we expected this answer as we are aware of the audit figures, to ask whether, as some support from the Council, they could be given advanced referral forms to get these rough sleepers who are sleeping outside the shops into the night shelter, which has been given some money in an anonymous donation, to stay open this winter. Thames Reach do work, and do a terrific job, but they are not on hand when the Police are. They come round and if the person is not where they were told three hours ago they go away again. The police find them two roads away, and they are looking for some support.

Reply:

The evidence provided by Thames Reach, who are experts in their field, suggests that there is not a significant problem in Penge and therefore it does not require urgent attention. If you or the police have information about where they could go to seek them out to perhaps get the data more accurate that would be very helpful. I am also very happy to look at the issue of referral forms to the police.

Additional Supplementary Question:

Councillor Ian Payne asked the Portfolio Holder if she was aware of the Bromley Shelter which is running until March, which will accommodate homeless people and rough sleepers, which is funded by donations and run by Churches Together in Central Bromley.

Reply:

I am well aware of the shelter and the very good work they do.

15. From Cllr Nicholas Bennett JP to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment

How often are the containers, situated at sites around the borough for the disposal of bottles, paper etc, emptied?

Reply:

The banks are emptied at varying frequencies, depending on how well used the sites are by the public.

Paper banks – Almost all sites are emptied weekly, with some emptied 2 or 3 times per week.

Bottle banks – Half the sites are emptied every week, with the majority of the remainder emptied every other week.

Can/Plastic Banks – The majority of the sites are emptied weekly, with the remainder emptied every other week.

Textile banks – All sites are emptied weekly, with some visited twice per week.

Officers have attached schedules to tonight's papers (Appendices 2 and 3) for councillors contemplation and, if necessary, amendment.

Supplementary Question:

The borough is rightly proud of its green and clean reputation, being the second best in London for recycling. Is the Portfolio Holder aware that it is becoming a common occurrence now that when one visits many of these banks they are overflowing. For instance, last Saturday week I tried The Spa, Shortlands Station, The Hill. At all three banks there was paper piled up outside, and at Waldo Road on Sunday even the banks there were full. It does seem to me that we ought to be looking at the timing of these collections, given that we have gone to fortnightly collections. We want to ensure that our citizens who do a good job continue to do so, and having overflowing containers is being a discouragement to them.

Reply:

I concede it is not an infrequent concern that Councillor Bennett rightly raises. Waste managers are in ongoing discussions with Veolia on the matter. I do not know if there is an easy answer to this. Clearly the more collections we require there is a cost involved. If any colleague is seeing a bin that is not being emptied as frequently as they believe it should, please let Mr Bosley know, copying me in. I will happily discuss this further outside the meeting.