

COUNCIL MEETING

11TH APRIL 2016

QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN REPLY FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

1. From Cllr Simon Fawthrop to the Resources Portfolio Holder

What is the average cost to the Council in Officer time and any additional on costs of answering (this can be an estimated cost)

- a) a written question from Council Members?
- b) an oral question from Council members?

c) Using the answer to a) and b) above

In tabular format can you list the number of questions (oral and written) by Councillors (in alphabetical order) and the cost that these questions can attribute to each councillor since the Council election of May 2014.

Reply:

It is very difficult to estimate the cost of answering a Council question, as the amount of work can vary enormously for each question and we do not keep detailed records of the time spent on questions. There is also a wide range of officers who may potentially be involved, including Democratic Services officers providing central coordination, Chief Officers and their PA's, and officers in the departments (often at senior level) researching the answers and providing draft replies. In addition, most Portfolio Holders and Chairmen will spend some time discussing each question with senior officers and checking and approving each answer. There is not necessarily a great difference between the time spent on questions for oral or written reply.

Allowing for all the above, an estimate £104 per question is reasonable. The numbers of questions asked by each Member since the 2014 election are set out in Appendix 1, and the £104 figure has been used to total the estimated cost to the Council.

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

Can he confirm please whether or not the council has commissioned a report on the impact of membership of the EU on the council's budget?

If such a report has been commissioned, can he please provide the cost of such a report and also confirm who will be paying for it?

If such a report has not been commissioned by the Council will he inform his members that they should not be telling voters that it has?

Reply:

I am not aware that any such report has been commissioned and voters should not be told by anyone that it has.

3. From Cllr Ian Dunn to the Public Protection & Safety Portfolio Holder

Can you provide the number of food premises in the Borough, the number of new premises, the number of inspections of food premises carried out, the number of inspections resulting in the issue of notices requiring improvement and the number of prosecutions? All of this information to be provided for the last 10 years and broken down by year.

What is the current backlog of food inspections?

Reply:

We have data for the last 8 years as this is all we keep.

The table sets out the details to the specific questions posed by Cllr Dunn

Year	No of premises	No of Inspections	No of new premises registrations	No of premises with notices	No of convictions
2015/16	2415	565	315	8	2
2014/15	2398	638	310	9	2
2013/14	2286	889	333	17	0
2012/13	2210	897	382	15	0
2011/12	2110	973	312	22	3
2010/11	2055	992	211	4	0
2009/10	1984	1001	242	13	3
2008/09	2011	997	160	16	0

As at the 31 March 2016 we have 722 inspections outstanding in risk categories B-D (38 cat B = 12 monthly inspection, 288 cat. C =18 months inspections and 396 cat D = 24 month inspections). 340 businesses are unrated of which about 50 will require an inspection to determine the risks and future inspections. The remaining are very low risk and will be Category E premises which are not inspected but are subject to an alternative enforcement strategy based on reassessing their food safety risk every 3 years using questionnaires.

4. From Cllr Ian Dunn to the Public Protection & Safety Portfolio Holder

Can you provide the number of test purchases for selling age restricted products in the last five years broken down by year and the number of premises where this resulted in a review of the Premises Licence, also broken down by year?

Reply:

See Appendix 2.

5. From Cllr Kathy Bance to the Education Portfolio Holder

The Improvement Plan for Bromley Youth Offending Service dated July 2015, recommendation 1f stated:

‘Restructure the YOS staff structure to ensure that it is fit for purpose by ensuring all YOS core business is adequately staffed and resourced to meet the needs of children and young people’

The improvement plan was endorsed by members on 22 July 2015. The wording for recommendation 1f of the Improvement Plan (September 2015 onwards) no longer includes any wording after the word “purpose”.

1. Who authorised the deletion of the wording and why?
2. In view of recommendation 1f and endorsed by members in July 2015, explain why the following YOS posts will no longer be funded from April 2016?
 - a) Seconded CAMHS worker
 - b) Dedicated parenting worker
 - c) Substance misuse worker
 - d) Counsellor

Reply:

1. There was no decision taken to remove the wording referred to on the Improvement Plan. The fact the words are missing from the later versions of the Improvement Plan was an oversight.

However the improvement work carried out at the Youth Offending Service (YOS) since September 2015 has focussed on ensuring that the core business of the YOS is adequately staffed and resourced. The number of casework staff has been maintained despite a reduction in the number of children and young people being referred by the police and the courts. Caseloads at the YOS are lower than in the immediate past in order to ensure sufficient capacity to improve performance and standards

Meeting the needs of children and young people remains a priority for the staff at the YOS. The service now provides a wider range of reparation projects, a wider range of intervention programmes and operates in close partnership with key partners to ensure that the needs of children, young people and their families are met.

A recent mock inspection of the Bromley YOS conducted by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) stated that there was evidence of substantial improvements in the quality of work being undertaken since the HMIP Inspection in 2015.

2. The Bromley YOS has just completed a Consultation process which involved a restructuring of the service as a response to a reduction in the resources available and the need to make it more efficient and effective. These reductions included meeting the savings target set by the Council, a reduction in the Youth Justice grant and a reduction in the financial support provided by health partners. The restructure has resulted in the following changes:

- a) Seconded CAMHS worker.

The Oxleas Mental Health Trust informed the Council that due to a reduction in funding it was no longer able to provide a dedicated CAHMS worker to be seconded to the Bromley YOS.

From April 2016 children and young people known to the YOS who are assessed by a YOS worker as being in need of CAHMS services will be referred to the Bromley Well Being Service which is the single point of access for children's well-being services in Bromley. The effectiveness of this arrangement will be monitored and reviewed by the YOS Management Board.

b) Dedicated parenting worker.

The post of dedicated parenting worker was deleted to meet the reductions in funding to the YOS in the current financial year.

Working with parents remains at the core of the offer to families.. Parents are encouraged to accompany their children to the YOS and all statutory cases involve visits to the home of the young person. If a parent is made subject to a Parenting Order by the Court this will be held and implemented by the Case worker at the YOS.

In addition, families of young people known to the YOS will be referred to the Bromley Family Support Service and Tackling Troubled Families project so that they can access the range of parenting courses available for parents across Bromley. The advantage of this arrangement is that access to these services continues after the young person's order has ceased.

c) Counsellor.

The post of counsellor was deleted to meet the reduction in funding to the YOS in the current financial year.

Going forward, if a child or young person is assessed as being in need of a counselling service, they will be referred to the Bromley Well Being Service for an assessment and service. This arrangement will be monitored.

d) Substance Misuse worker.

The Bromley Clinical Commissioning Group informed the Council that the post of dedicated substance misuse worker at the Bromley YOS will no longer be funded from April 2016.

From April 2016, the local Young People's Substance Misuse Service, "Changes" will provide a dedicated substance misuse worker who will be based at the YOS two days per week.

6. From Cllr Kathy Bance to the Education Portfolio Holder

How can you provide assurance that the Youth Offending Service is 'fit for purpose' in view of the reduction in resources and staff from April 2016?

Reply:

Following the HMIP Inspection of the Bromley YOS in 2015 there followed an in depth review of the services offered to children, young people and their families which resulted in a detailed Improvement Plan being put in place, major staffing changes and increased support provided by key partners.

Progress against this Improvement Plan has been closely scrutinised by the YOS Improvement Board and the YOS Management Board together with regular reports to the Education PDS Committee.

Monthly audits have measured the improvement in direct work with children and young people and an independent mock inspection carried out by the Youth Justice Board took place in March.

Both audits and the mock inspection have provided evidence that progress has been made in improving the quality of work being carried out while regular performance reporting has shown that outcomes for young people have improved.

As with all other Youth Offending Services in London Bromley YOS has had to respond to a reduction in funding from both central Government and the local Council. While this has resulted in the reduction of some services delivered directly by staff based in the YOS, it has not had an impact on the direct work with those young people at risk of offending or those subject to statutory orders. Indeed, current caseloads compare favourably with caseloads over the last two years as referrals to the YOS have reduced.

While some services to young people and their families are no longer provided directly by staff based in the YOS, clear pathways for young people to receive services have been put in place such as those for counselling and substance misuse. The YOS Management Board will be kept informed of the impact on these services throughout the year.

7. From Cllr Peter Fookes to the Chairman of Development Control Committee

How many planning enforcement cases remain outstanding?

Reply:

Enforcement cases outstanding and including current investigations – 728.

8. From Cllr Peter Fookes to the Chairman of Development Control Committee

What progress has been made in the case of enforcement action in respect of 23 Genoa Rd, Penge?

Reply:

Planning permission has been approved DC/16/00225/FULL1 for the Retention of single storey rear extension and access ramp to day nursery (RETROSPECTIVE APPLICATION) decision dated 16th March 2016.

9. From Cllr Nicholas Bennett JP to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

When can I expect a reply to my letter to the Chief Planner of 11th February (handed in at the Civic Centre) and the reminder letter of 9th March regarding 2 Southcroft Avenue, West Wickham?

Reply:

A response was sent to Cllr Bennett on 8 April along with an apology for the delay (copy attached – [Appendix 4](#))

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

When I can expect a reply on the four points raised with me by residents of Bencurtis Park and sent to the Director on 24th February, with reminder email on March 9th and a further email to the Chief Executive on March 31st?

Reply:

I understand that officers have now responded and apologised for the delay, which I agree was unacceptable.

11. From Cllr Nicholas Bennett JP to the Portfolio Holder for Resources

If he will list by ward the number of residential properties which have been empty for more than six months?

Reply:

Unfortunately, the requested information is not available on a ward basis. However, attached as [Appendix 3](#) is the requested data “sorted” by postcode.

The information contained in this response was extracted from the Council Tax database and could possibly be understated as discounts/exemptions are no longer granted in respect of empty homes unless any of the circumstances tabled below apply.

The first column of the Appendix relates to empty properties where the full Council Tax charge is being levied, the second column relates to properties where 1 of the below exemptions apply.

Exemption Class	Description
B	Unoccupied dwelling owned by charities
D	Dwelling left empty by a property who is detained elsewhere

E	Dwelling left empty by a person in hospital or a care home
F	Unoccupied dwelling – liable person deceased. Exemption is for a maximum of 6 months after the date of probate
G	Occupation prohibited by law
H	Unoccupied property held for the occupation of a minister of religion
I	Dwelling left empty by a person needing personal care
J	Dwelling left empty by a person providing personal care
K	Dwelling left unoccupied by a student
L	Unoccupied dwelling where the mortgagee is in possession
O	Property held as accommodation for armed forces
Q	Unoccupied property where liable person is a trustee of bankruptcy
T	Unoccupied annexe to an occupied dwelling

12. From Cllr Tony Owen to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

How are agreements progressing with Biggin Hill Airport relating to the change in operating hours and when is the final version likely to be considered by the Executive?

Reply:

The Council has met with the Airport to outline the various conditions that were required following the Council meeting last November. We are awaiting a final response from the Airport on the conditions and how the potential implementation would happen.

Question 1

**Questions Submitted to full Council since the 2014 Election
(13 meetings, 21/7/14 to 11/4/16)**

Councillor	Written questions since May 2014	Oral questions since May 2014	Estimated Cost to the Council (£)
Allen	7	4	1,144
Arthur	0	0	0
Auld	0	0	0
Ball	0	0	0
Bance	19	14	3,432
Benington	0	0	0
Bennett (N)	30	29	6,136
Bennett (R)	1	2	312
Bosshard	0	0	0
Botting	0	0	0
Boughey	0	0	0
Brooks	11	8	1,976
Buttinger	0	1	104
Carr	0	0	0
Cartwright	0	0	0
Collins	0	0	0
Cooke	0	0	0
Dean	0	0	0
Dunn	21	7	2,912
Dykes	0	0	0
Ellis	0	0	0
Evans	0	0	0
Fawthrop	11	0	1,144
Fookes	23	18	4,264
Fortune	0	0	0
Gray	0	1	104
Harmer (E)	0	0	0
Harmer (W)	0	0	0
Huntington-Thresher (S)	0	0	0
Huntington-Thresher (W)	0	0	0
Jefferys	4	2	624
Joel	0	0	0
Livett	1	6	728
Lymer	0	0	0
Mellor	2	3	520
Michael	0	0	0

Morgan	0	0	0
Nathan	0	0	0
Onslow	0	0	0
Owen	8	15	2,392
Page	0	0	0
Payne	0	0	0
Phillips	0	0	0
Philpott	1	0	104
Pierce	0	1	104
Reddin	0	0	0
Rideout (Ca)	0	0	0
Rideout (Ch)	0	0	0
Rutherford	0	1	104
Scoates	0	0	0
Smith (C)	2	0	208
Smith (D)	0	0	0
Stevens (M)	0	0	0
Stevens (T)	0	0	0
Tickner	0	1	104
Turner	0	0	0
Tunncliffe	0	0	0
Wells	0	0	0
Wilkins	17	14	3,224
Williams	11	0	1,144
TOTAL	168	128	30,784

Question 4 -Trading Standards Underage Sales Work

Appendix 2

The number of test purchases for selling age restricted products in the last five years broken down by year and the number of premises where this resulted in a review of the Premises Licence, also broken down by year.

	2015-16	2014-15	2013-14	2012-13	2011-12
The number of attempts to purchase an age restricted product by volunteers <u>under</u> the age of 18	87	156	121	275	229
Number of sales of an age restricted product to <u>under</u> 18s	9	22	23	41	43
Number of refusals to sell an age restricted product to <u>under</u> 18s	78	134	98	234	186
% compliance	89.6%	85.8%	80.9%	85%	81%
Number of attempts to purchase an age restricted product by volunteers <u>over</u> 18 without ID in order to test Challenge 25 policy	71	98	98	Not tested	Not tested
Number of sales of an age restricted product to <u>over</u> 18s without ID	28	33	27	Not tested	Not tested
Number of refusals to sell an age restricted product to <u>over</u> 18s without ID	43	65	71	Not tested	Not tested
Number of licence reviews	1 Costcutter, Elmers End	0	3 Jerry's Penge; Kent House off licence Beckenham; Swarmi News Penge	0	4 Food Store Orp; Newlands News Penge; Nisa Local Penge; Shahs Bromley

Appendix 3
(Question 11 – Empty properties)

Post Code	Full Liability - number	Exemption/Discount - number
BR1 1	16	4
BR1 2	25	12
BR1 3	43	20
BR1 4	28	8
BR1 5	5	4
BR2 0	28	22
BR2 6	4	8
BR2 7	12	9
BR2 8	22	21
BR2 9	33	8
BR3 1	42	9
BR3 3	28	11
BR3 4	47	22
BR3 5	17	9
BR3 6	12	16
BR4 0	16	14
BR4 9	21	13
BR5 1	16	12
BR5 2	20	10
BR5 3	32	6
BR5 4	20	11
BR6 0	48	20
BR6 6	14	9
BR6 7	22	12
BR6 8	12	21
BR6 9	45	14
BR7 5	19	13
BR7 6	22	13
DA14 5	2	1
SE19 2	23	4

SE20 7	60	12
SE20 8	55	9
SE26 5	15	5
SE26 6	9	3
SE9 4	23	8
TN14 7	4	2
TN16 2	1	1
TN16 3	16	15
Total	877	411