

COUNCIL MEETING

1st MARCH 2017

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL REPLY FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

1. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett to the Resources Portfolio Holder

What has been the increase in pay scales and other benefits in cash and percentage terms since the establishment of local pay terms and conditions and how does this compare with what would have been paid to staff had they remained in National Conditions?

Reply:

The Council came out of the national pay negotiation arrangements in November 2012. Since then the Council has successfully implemented its own local pay arrangement with Bromley staff generally better rewarded for their performances and better remunerated than their national colleagues.

Between April 2013 (which is when the 1st local pay award was made) and now, the average pay award for Bromley staff is circa 7% compared to 5.2% for Local Government staff on national terms and conditions of service.

The local arrangement has served the Council very well, freeing up managers and supervisors to properly recognise and reward exceptional performances and discretionary efforts. To date, a total of 522 merited rewards have been made including 167 in the current year linked to appraisals. In addition this year a further 252 “mini” merited rewards of a lower cash value were also awarded for a one off exceptional performance.

Whilst the local arrangement allows us to flex our pay and other terms and conditions of employment like never before the Council has not make any changes to staff terms and conditions of employment.

Supplementary Question:

Does the Portfolio Holder recall the petition presented on 25th June 2012 by Glenn Kelly, supposedly on behalf of the staff, in which he asked that we did not introduce local pay and conditions, and would he like to circulate to all staff the benefits of not taking any notice of Mr Kelly and indeed the Labour Party who opposed it at the time.

Reply:

I do recall that very clearly and I certainly recall the Labour Group at the time warning staff and saying that if they went down this path they would end up worse off – they would certainly lose out in terms of pay and also implementation of all sorts of different onerous conditions. There were members of staff who listened to that and did not trust us. They numbered 2%. The 98% who actually saw through what the Labour Party were trying to tell them and came with us and trusted us have been amply rewarded, and I am very pleased that they have been rewarded. I would hope that at some point the Labour Group will have the honour and grace to recognise that they tried to take our staff down the garden path and abandon them, and apologise for what they said.

Additional Supplementary Question:

Councillor Peter Fookes asked whether, given that 90% of staff were opposed to introducing the new pay and conditions, the Portfolio Holder would now re-consult staff on the proposal?

Reply:

If any member of staff says they would rather accept the 1% national pay award instead of the 1.2% plus the £300 from the Council then I am sure that we could accept that on behalf of the taxpayer with some degree of gratitude.

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

What will the council do to make sure council tax payers are informed about the financial challenges which central government policy purports to impose on this council?

Reply:

Each year, as part of the budget setting process, we hold a public meeting and meetings with residents' associations to engage representatives of the local community in a public consultation process on priorities for the Council's budget. The impact of government funding reductions is one of the key topics discussed. We also conduct an online survey seeking residents' views.

We provide a range of supporting information on line including a Leader's open letter, detail about the Council's budget, the level of savings required as well as those already achieved and our strategy for setting the budget. A comparison of spending and funding levels across London is also provided.

Further detail about the financial challenges we face is provided in the annual Draft Budget and Update on the Council's Financial Strategy report to Executive in January and the annual Council Tax report to Executive in February. As well as the impact of significant and ongoing funding reductions these reports set out the Council's approach to budgeting, the financial context and economic situation which can impact on public finances. Details relating to cost pressures arising from new burdens and the impact of Government policy changes including welfare reforms and the new Living Wage are also included as well as the risks, and opportunities, arising from the full devolution of business rates.

Finally, further information about our spending and funding and what we are doing to maximise income and secure more funding for Bromley is included in the annual 'Guide to your Council Tax' which accompanies all council tax bills.

Supplementary Question:

Will you take solace in the fact that the Labour Party will do some of this work for you?

Reply:

I am not one to look a gift-horse in the mouth – if we can do anything more efficiently I am sure we will be keen to do that.

3. From Councillor Vanessa Allen to the Environment Portfolio Holder

There was an article in the Bromley Times last week about the Bakerloo Line extension, the northern section of which to Lewisham is out for consultation again by TFL as the new Mayor of London Sadiq Khan is pushing ahead with this in which the Portfolio holder stated that "it is utterly untrue and typically mendacious of the Labour Party to suggest that Bromley Conservatives are opposed to the Bakerloo line coming into the town". In view of the fact that this is followed by four quotes from the Portfolio Holder stating that Bromley council does not support this would the Portfolio Holder like to take this opportunity to clarify his position on the Bakerloo Line extension?

Reply:

Cllrs Wilkins and Allen remain misinformed at best on this subject matter.

What I said, to requote even their own selectively highlighted passage of my address was:

“However, should it be possible to bring the Bakerloo Line to Bromley town centre via New Beckenham without the loss of any of the existing rail services then the Council could be prepared to support this in principle.”

Cllr Allen’s question this evening further highlights the Labour Group’s continued misrepresentation of this Administration’s position on key transport related matters and also unhelpfully serves to undermine our continuing priorities of achieving a direct link to Bromley North (and ideally Bromley South) as well as an extension of Tram-link from Clock House Ward to Crystal Palace.

They really should stop playing such petty party political games on such an important matter.

I have appended and circulated a copy of the article in question to these minutes for colleagues’ perusal.

http://www.bromleytimes.co.uk/news/mayor_of_london_committed_to_extending_the_bakerloo_line_past_lewisham_and_into_bromley_1_4889838

Supplementary Question:

I cannot understand how he can call us mendacious when we are quoting from the records of Council meetings. How can he not accept what is written in Council minutes.

Reply:

I certainly do accept what is in the Council minutes, I just quoted them. What I said was –

“However, should it be possible to bring the Bakerloo Line to Bromley town centre via New Beckenham without the loss of any of the existing rail services then the Council could be prepared to support this in principle.”

This is not the same as saying, as the Labour Party are, that “Bromley Conservatives are opposed to the Bakerloo Line coming into the town.”

If Labour are confused and cannot understand that, they have bigger problems than I thought they had.

4. From Councillor Ian Dunn to the Environment Portfolio Holder

Can the Portfolio Holder provide an update on the clearance of the Waste for Fuel site?

Reply:

The latest situation at the Waste4Fuel site on Cornwall Drive is that 16,200 of the originally estimated 18,000 tonnes have now been removed.

Works were halted several weeks ago upon discovery of what is technically described as being ‘hazardous’ waste, to enable plans to be made for its assessment, treatment and removal, as well for the Environment Agency to arrange sign off on the extra funding required to process same, in addition to the additional extra tonnage since established to exist on site.

I am advised that the authorisation process is almost complete, and therefore remain extremely hopeful that works to finalise the job in hand will recommence shortly, and shortly could be as early as Monday next week.

Supplementary Question:

The talk about additional funding is what concerns me here. In the original Executive minutes when this was agreed Councillor Smith said that in purely financial terms risk had been strictly contained. Can you re-confirm that this Council's liabilities as far as Cornwall Drive is concerned is strictly contained in the £300k which was committed at the beginning of September?

Reply:

It might be. Equally, we have a funding formula where the Environment Agency has been paying at a ratio of approximately 6:1 for the waste removed so far. That could mean that instead of purchasing an asset worth an estimated £1.6m for £300k, we may have to pay up to £450k for an asset worth £1.6m. That could potentially leave us with a profit of £1.15m were Councillors minded to sell it for whatever purpose. If getting assets at a discount is a sin, then I am guilty.

5. From Councillor Kevin Brooks to the Chairman of Development Control Committee

What is the current backlog of outstanding Planning Enforcement items?

Reply:

There are currently 509 live cases, comprising of the following:

- Currently under investigation – 294
- Authorised formal enforcement action – 150
- Planning applications received after investigation – 50
- Enforcement cases currently subject to appeal – 15

Supplementary Question:

There seems over a period of time to have been a lack of investment within the Enforcement Team. With such a backlog of cases, over 500, will the Chairman explain how residents are to feel reassured that if developers exceed their brief they will be held to account?

Reply:

500 cases does seem rather a lot. Investment has been made in the Enforcement Team over the last eleven months. In April last year, the live cases numbered in excess of 800, so the reduction of 300 reflects that investment. If developers or anyone else who has sought and obtained planning permission breaches that planning permission they will be held to account by the legal process available to us.

**6. From Councillor Kathy Bance MBE to the Care Services Portfolio Holder
(Answered by the Leader of the Council)**

How many severely disabled people are living in inappropriate housing in Bromley? What is being done to address the shortfall in meeting their needs, other than isolating them in new remote locations?

Reply:

I am not sure that I can be precise about the first part of the question about how many severely disabled people are living in inappropriate accommodation. This can be a matter of subjective opinion.

Bromley does have a dedicated Housing OT who works with housing associations and housing developers to ensure that at least 10% of new builds are built with accessibility standards in line with the London Plan. The OT also works with households requiring adapted properties and housing associations to make best use of existing adapted units. This work will also include facilitating adaptations in non-adapted properties where these properties have the potential for adaptations to meet the household's needs and preventing the removal of adaptations in void properties to maximise availability.

Supplementary Question:

Officers are still directing this group of very vulnerable people to use the bidding system. Can you explain why that is when our housing officers have explained have categorically admitted that there are no suitable properties available to bid on?

Reply:

I cannot be specific on that, I am not the Portfolio Holder, but I will ensure that we get you a suitable response as soon as we can.

7. From Councillor Peter Fookes to the Environment Portfolio Holder

What is the Council policy on TFL taking over London train routes?

Reply:

The Council's position on the running of local train services is that the franchise should be run by the most efficient and reliable Train Operating Company which chooses to tender for the contract when the time comes to do so, whoever that might be.

Supplementary Question:

There seems to be a lot of confusion over Tory transport policy in this borough. Does he support Bob Neill, the local MP on this matter, or the Secretary of State, Chris Grayling?

Reply:

On this particular matter, Chris Grayling.

8. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett to the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio Holder

If he will make a statement on future plans for West Wickham Leisure Centre?

Reply:

The Council has previously looked at how to enhance or renew the West Wickham leisure facilities and has been working with Mytime Active, the current operator, as to how best to deliver these in the most optimal design to satisfy demand and in an affordable manner to ensure viability on the delivery of a new scheme. Unfortunately these discussions did not result in a new scheme being identified and the Council is therefore now commissioning a separate feasibility study through our consultants, Cushman and Wakefield, to look at the potential development to include a new leisure centre. This should take around two months complete.

9 From Councillor Angela Wilkins to the Care Services Portfolio Holder
(Answered by the Leader of the Council)

Please provide the rate of return which the Council will earn on its investment in the Manorfields facility.

Reply:

The current financial position was set out in the Manorfields post works completion report to Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee on 10th January 2017.

In summary, it quoted:

GLA grant contribution: £430,564

LBB capital contribution: £384,616

Leading to an annual revenue saving against comparative cost of alternative temporary accommodation of £370,096, with the added benefit of more residents being placed in the borough.

Supplementary Question:

I was hoping for a percentage figure. Can the same thing be expected if the Copers Cope application for a similar project is approved by Plans Sub-Committee tomorrow evening?

Reply:

Yes, I am informed that the business case for that potential solution, at least in the short term, dealing with some of our temporary accommodation problems, would have a significant benefit for the local authority.

10. From Councillor Kevin Brooks to the Environment Portfolio Holder

Whilst Penge is undergoing a Parking Review which may help parking pressures to a certain degree, what action can the Council take to maximise usage of the car park above the Blenheim Centre which would make a huge difference in easing parking pressures.

Reply:

I am a keen and eager studier of your web-page, and I know that this has been discussed on the Penge Councillors website for several years now, and they are quite clear that the ownership and the running of it is not by the Council or the Council's contractors.

To summarise, the formal answer is, I regret, that the Blenheim Centre carpark is privately run and as such is responsible for its own parking regime. If it is currently being under-utilized, it is possible that local businesses and local websites might be able to advertise its presence more widely than is the case at present.

Supplementary Question:

The reason for the question was more to do with the supplementary. Will the Portfolio Holder support, as part of the New Homes Bonus, the purchase of a ticket machine for the car park, as the company running it has indicated that if this was done they would invest in someone to collect the money, and so this would be a one-of payment?

Reply:

I obviously would not immediately commit to an unfunded spending promise. This is more a case for Renewal and Recreation. Potentially, if there is a business case, and were the Council to be given its money back over time as part of the revenue churn, it would be a

possibility. I do not make promises that I cannot keep, but let's take a look at it, and if it is viable, then possibly. We will follow up after this meeting, perhaps.

11. From Councillor Peter Fookes to the Care Services Portfolio Holder
(Answered by the Leader of the Council)

What are the latest figures for households in temporary accommodation?

Reply:
1,398.

Supplementary Question:

What are the Council doing about this problem, particularly for those residents who are sofa-surfing with friends and relatives?

Reply:

I think Councillor Fookes already knows what we are doing, and that is quite a considerable amount. We have heard reference this evening to Bellegrove, Manorfields, the issue around potential temporary accommodation in Copers Cope Road, our Mears project and much more. I will be alluding to this later in my budget speech.

12. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett to the Education and Children's Services Portfolio Holder

How many children receive boarding education funded by the Council?

Reply:

The Council only funds boarding education in specific circumstances: for children with Special Educational Needs as part of their agreed statutory Education, Health & Care Plan; and for Looked After Children.

As of this month, there are 31 SEN children with EHC plans attending boarding school, funded through the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Supplementary Question:

Is he aware that in The Times on 4th February there was a report from Buttle UK, a charity that provides help for children who are not necessarily disabled or special educational needs, but under privileged, to get a boarding education, and that in many cases this had been blocked by social workers on ideological grounds? Can he assure the Council that this has never happened in Bromley?

Reply:

Yes, I investigated this matter with the new Director of Services, and we are reassured that this has not happened in Bromley. In Bromley, we are dedicated and committed to supporting first class education for all of our children. That is evidenced by the fact that, hot off the press, we have figures for the national offer day for parents, and despite 77 more applications we have 72% getting their first preference, which is more than the London average. So we are committed to supporting schools and pupils in this borough.

13. From Councillor Angela Wilkins to the Renewal & Recreation Portfolio Holder

Given that the library locker facility installed at Anerley Town Hall is to be removed, will he now concede that the Council has closed a library and can no longer claim otherwise?

Reply:

In August 2014 the new Penge Library opened in Green Lane, Penge, which replaced the former Penge and Anerley Libraries. In order to test the need for some continued provision in the Anerley Town Hall the following were installed -

- 7 computers for public use providing internet access
- An automated locker allowing customers to collect pre-ordered books via self-service, and to return items.

From the opening of the new library in Green Lane it was clear that the majority of users of the two replaced libraries had transferred to the new library. Usage figures showed that more was being borrowed from this library than the combined totals of the Maple Road and Anerley libraries. In addition, many new people became members at the new library. For example, we had an increase of nearly 150% of new members joining, an increase of 84% plus of items borrowed, and an increase of more than 12% of the number of visits. That is against the combined totals of the two previous libraries.

Following its introduction the service that continued to be provided at Anerley Town Hall was widely promoted online, by way of an open day and through a publicity drive targeting local community groups and organisations. Nevertheless, only one person has used the locker to collect a requested item in the last 12 months. During this period 22% more items have been borrowed from the new Penge Library than the combined totals of the two old libraries.

In the light of this evidence it was decided that we should no longer waste public money with this, and the decision has been taken to remove the under-used equipment from Anerley Town Hall.

Supplementary Question:

I would like to congratulate Penge Library, which has been a huge success. We had two libraries, we now have one. That means that we have closed a library, doesn't it?

Reply:

Yes, indeed we have. We now have fourteen libraries in the borough, which is far more than our adjoining boroughs. We are very proud of our library service – we have improved it very greatly with new libraries at Biggin Hill, Orpington and indeed at Penge, and we have plans in the future to have a new library at Chislehurst. We are investing in our libraries, we are very proud of them, they are all doing very well, particularly the new ones. The fact that the one in Anerley is no longer needed means that we have closed it, and yes, we have only got fourteen, instead of fifteen, but I don't mind.

14. From Councillor Peter Fookes to the Education and Children's Services Portfolio Holder

How much have Bromley schools lost due to education cuts in 2017/18?

Reply:

Education is funded primarily through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). It is currently split into three blocks called High Needs, Schools and Early Years. Funding has remained static in the Schools block and there have been small increases in Early Years and High Needs.

The funding in each of these blocks is not in silos and are used across Education to fund expenditure where necessary. Schools will experience some change in funding in 2017/18, agreed with the Schools Forum, resulting from increasing pressures in the High Needs Block (mainly around SEN places) that have had to be funded.

Schools are protected by the minimum funding guarantee limiting any reductions in funding to -1.5% on a per pupil basis.

Supplementary Question:

Perhaps it could be better if the Portfolio Holder could report the full details to the Education Select Committee?

Reply:

Yes, I will make sure that happens.

Mayor of London ‘committed’ to extending the Bakerloo line past Lewisham and into Bromley

11:30 14 February 2017 [Emily King](#)



London Mayor Sadiq Khan

He has stated he is currently trying to build a financial case for further extension

Comment

The mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has stated he is “committed” to developing the Bakerloo line past Lewisham and towards Bromley.

His statement comes after it was announced last week that the Bakerloo line will be extended to Lewisham via Old Kent Road and New Cross Gate, in a bid to meet London’s growing population. The capital is expected to house 10 million people by 2030, compared to today’s eight and a half million.

Mr Khan and Transport for London (TfL) have said they see a second phase of the extension beyond Lewisham in the future, and work is continuing to build a case for this.

A spokesperson for the mayor of London said: “Sadiq is delighted to be pushing ahead with the Bakerloo line extension, two years earlier than originally planned. It will provide substantial benefits for thousands of Londoners and a real boost to the local economy. He remains committed to delivering a further extension of the line beyond Lewisham, and work is continuing to build a financial case for this.”

Bromley labour councillor, Angela Wilkins, has also shared her support for the extension towards Bromley.

She said: “Labour councillors in Bromley would totally support the extension of the Bakerloo line to Bromley - we know first hand the benefits the overground line brought in terms of regeneration when it opened up Crystal Palace and Penge.

“I’m really surprised the Tories oppose this extension - infrastructure investment like this is much needed in the borough and TfL’s consultation in early 2015 showed the vast majority of our residents want it too. Time they listened to locals if you ask me!”

Deputy leader of Bromley Council, Colin Smith, said: “It is utterly untrue and typically mendacious of the Labour Party to suggest that Bromley Conservatives are opposed to the Bakerloo line

coming into the town as they well know and anyone else can see for themselves by googling the historical debate.

“What we have long been seeking is an additional service, rather than a second rate replacement of the Hayes Line which appears to be the limitation of Labour’s ambition, which serves Bromley North (and ideally Bromley South) to further boost our Town Centre and support trade, business and commuters across the Borough by providing direct links to Docklands and the Thames corridor beyond.

“Our second strategic Borough wide transport priority has been to see Tramlink extended from Elmers End to Crystal Palace to serve residents living across the North West of the Borough, a vision which Labour no longer seem to share either.”

Ms Wilkins came back again, however, saying: “When Cllr Smith accuses Labour of being “mendacious” he verges on slander. I would like to remind him of his own words, as recorded in council minutes on numerous occasions. Please see some examples...”

Examples provided by Ms Wilkins:

- Council meeting July 21 2014, answer to oral question: “What we are not supportive of and have told TfL repeatedly is their intention to push the Bakerloo line all the way down to Hayes which would deny a lot of people of the south-western part of the Borough the opportunity to have direct access to Cannon Street and London Bridge.”

...”without any apparent desire at TfL to do anything other than to run the Bakerloo Line down to Hayes at twice the price of the DLR which we do want, as opposed to the Bakerloo Line, which we do not. “

- Council meeting Oct 13 2014, answer to oral question: ...”this proposition is neither the London Borough of Bromley’s first (DLR extension to Bromley North) nor second (Tramlink extension to Crystal Palace) preferred transport solution for which we have been lobbying for as a Borough for a number of years. It is therefore safe to say that we hold considerable reservations over the extent of the proposal at present...”

- Council meeting Feb 23 2015, statement on TfL consultation: “He...explained that the council was broadly supportive of the extension of the Bakerloo line to Lewisham, but not an extension to Hayes which would see the existing national rail lines subsumed by the Bakerloo Line extension and the ultimate loss of direct connectivity to London Bridge, Cannon Street and Charing Cross. However, should it be possible to bring the Bakerloo Line to Bromley town centre via New Beckenham without the loss of any of the existing rail services then the Council could be prepared to support this in principle.”

- Council meeting June 29 2015, answer to oral question: “I do not accept the premise of the assertion that “the people of Bromley have come out strongly in favour of the extension of the Bakerloo line to Beckenham Junction & Hayes.” The figures quoted are an arbitrary, small number of self-selecting respondents to TfL’s survey which do not accord with the findings of myself and others when seeking opinion both on the ground, and indeed on the very trains themselves, when the pros and cons of the question have been properly explained to them. “

In a poll conducted by the Bromley Times found that 86 per cent of the people that voted would like to see “as much public transport as they can get” in Bromley, and would welcome the extension of the Bakerloo line.