

COUNCIL MEETING**26TH JUNE 2017****QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN REPLY FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL****1. From Cllr Nicholas Bennett JP to the Portfolio Holder for Education, Children and Families**

What progress is being made in investigating my suggestion that the care services and education bus fleets be combined and the schedules be aligned to as to use the same vehicles for both services?

Reply:

The subject of amalgamating the two services was also raised at the Education Budget Subcommittee and SENt are required to take a report to that committee later in the year, following a wider strategic review of SEN transport, policy, project initiatives and operations which would include an option appraisal around service amalgamation. This report is expected to be delivered September/October 2017.

2. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett to the Portfolio Holder for Education, Children and Families

If he will list the number and percentage of children above the age of 7 in each school receiving free school meals?

Reply:

	FSM NCY 3-6	Pupil Numbers NCY 3-6	%FSM
Alexandra Junior School	27	244	11.07%
Balgowan Primary School	13	382	3.40%
Bromley Road Primary School	10	78	12.82%
Churchfields Primary School	17	226	7.52%
Hawes Down Junior School	8	301	2.66%
Marian Vian Primary School	20	350	5.71%
Gray's Farm Primary Academy	52	226	23.01%
OAK LODGE PRIMARY SCHOOL	23	352	6.53%
The Pioneer Academy	39	231	16.88%
Wickham Common Primary School	5	251	1.99%
Burnt Ash Primary School	44	240	18.33%
Harris Primary Academy Kent House	47	218	21.56%
Pickhurst Junior School	19	512	3.71%
Southborough Primary School	36	234	15.38%
Harris Primary Academy Crystal Palace	48	195	24.62%
Valley Primary School	28	298	9.40%

Red Hill Primary School	59	434	13.59%
St John's CE Primary School	24	129	18.60%
Mottingham Primary School	55	246	22.36%
Castlecombe Primary School	28	121	23.14%
Chelsfield Primary School	7	60	11.67%
La Fontaine Academy	10	53	18.87%
Darrick Wood Junior School	22	383	5.74%
Downe Primary School	6	39	15.38%
FARNBOROUGH PRIMARY SCHOOL	9	124	7.26%
Green Street Green Primary	9	247	3.64%
Pratts Bottom Primary School	3	38	7.89%
The Highway Primary School	17	129	13.18%
Warren Road Primary School	16	480	3.33%
St. Mary Cray Primary Academy	49	135	36.30%
Trinity CofE Primary School	49	249	19.68%
James Dixon Primary School	51	217	23.50%
Leesons Primary School	32	124	25.81%
Midfield Primary School	50	189	26.46%
Worsley Bridge Primary School	42	202	20.79%
Edgebury Primary School	10	125	8.00%
HPA Orpington	50	217	23.04%
Scotts Park Primary School	12	271	4.43%
Oaklands Primary School	33	270	12.22%
Clare House Primary School	2	181	1.10%
Perry Hall Primary School	31	247	12.55%
Poverest Primary School	25	130	19.23%
Bickley Primary	8	239	3.35%
Manor Oak Primary School	37	115	32.17%
Keston C.E. Primary School	8	131	6.11%
Parish C.E. Primary School	30	342	8.77%
St George's CE Primary	15	191	7.85%
Unicorn Primary School	8	256	3.13%
Cudham CE Primary School	6	57	10.53%
St Paul's Cray CE Primary	40	110	36.36%
St Mark's C.E. Primary School	11	245	4.49%
Chislehurst (CofE) Primary	5	127	3.94%
St Joseph's R.C.Primary School	3	118	2.54%
St Vincent's Catholic Primary	7	118	5.93%
St Philomena's Catholic Primary	8	121	6.61%
St.Anthony's R.C Primary	14	107	13.08%
St Peter & St Paul Catholic Primary	17	128	13.28%
St James RC Primary School	2	124	1.61%
Blenheim Primary School	38	114	33.33%
Biggin Hill Primary	10	212	4.72%
CROFTON JUNIOR SCHOOL	37	715	5.17%
Holy Innocents Catholic Primar	12	128	9.38%
St Mary's Catholic Primary	4	239	1.67%

Highfield Junior School	10	376	2.66%
Hayes Primary School	14	385	3.64%
Raglan Primary School	9	243	3.70%
Tubbenden Primary School	12	370	3.24%
	1502	14689	10.23%

3. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett to the Portfolio Holder for Education, Children and Families

If he will give the number of male teachers in each school and the percentage that represents for the primary and secondary sectors overall?

Reply:

There are 29 male Teachers in the remaining Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools. This figure includes members of the Leadership Team. The LA does not keep data on academy staff.

4. From Councillor Peter Fookes to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment

What is the backlog for tree pruning in the borough?

Reply:

There is no backlog in the tree pruning schedule in Bromley, thanks to the thoughtful extra investment to the service, funded by way of taking early Corporate savings during the course of the recent difficult years of 'austerity'.

5. From Councillor Peter Fookes to the Portfolio Holder for Education, Children and Families

As it is not on the agenda for this week, when will a report on future school funding be going to committee?

Reply:

We are unlikely to hear anything back from the consultation on the National Funding Formula until the end of the Summer, therefore, it is doubtful that a paper on the future of school funding will be ready before the Autumn. This depends on the next steps by DfE and what they come back with.

6. From Councillor Peter Fookes to the Portfolio Holder for Care Services

What long term support is available for people who have been subjected to sexual abuse?

Reply:

Children's Services:

For children it would be CAMHS support; some young people use Bromley Y if they feel that they do not want to see a mental health service practitioner. In addition there are victim support groups and referrals through GP. The Haven also has referral routes.

Adult Services:

The Local Authority would support the resident with signposting to specialist providers. People deal with recovery in many different ways, any adult can request an assessment for care and support; where the outcome of the assessment indicates their eligibility a care and support plan will be devised with them to support their needs. The individual is likely to be offered a direct payment, so that they can best manage the care and support they require.

7. From Cllr Ian Dunn to the Portfolio Holder for Resources

Please provide the number of applications to Bromley’s Council Tax Hardship Fund, the number accepted and the total sum paid in each of 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Please describe the way in which the Hardship Fund is publicised to residents who have difficulties paying their Council Tax.

Reply:

Unfortunately, it is not possible to advise as to the number of requests made for Bromley’s Council Tax Hardship Fund. Whilst an application form is provided for the purpose of claiming, many of the requests for assistance are included in general correspondence or contained on the benefit forms,

The number and value of awards are entered in the table below:

Financial year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Number of awards	31	32	99
Value of awards	£6,644.27	£7,060.72	£22,217.36

It should be noted that the above figures do not include the removal of court costs and/or bailiff fees.

Bromley’s Council Tax discretionary discount policy is entered on the authority’s website as is the application form for those wishing to request assistance. Furthermore, revenues and benefits staff are advised to draw the scheme to the attention of possible recipients.

The Revenues and Benefits section has good links with agencies providing advice services to Bromley residents, who as well as being made aware of the scheme have been provided contact details of officers should they wish to discuss a particular application.

8. From Cllr Ian Dunn to the Portfolio Holder for Resources

Please provide the cost of defending the Freedom of Information application by a former Civil Enforcement Officer to obtain the Internal Audit report into the Council’s former parking enforcement contractor, including the cost of appealing against the

decision of the Information Commissioner on how much of the report could be provided to the applicant, dated 19 September 2016.

Reply:

Counsel's fees for the hearing were £8,355 plus VAT. Other costs involved would have been some interim advice and officer time which would be absorbed in the overall time of dealing with the c1,500 FOI requests received annually.

9. From Cllr Ian Dunn to the Portfolio Holder for Environment

Please provide a summary of the policies the Council has in place to monitor the compliance of our contractors with health & safety legislation and any specific health & safety requirements in our contracts with them.

Reply:

The primary responsibility for complying with health and safety responsibilities sits with our contractors, although this is monitored by Council officers including the production and adherence to method statements and is overseen by the Health and Safety Executive.

Any specific requirements would depend on the contract.

10. From Cllr Angela Wilkins to the Portfolio Holder for Environment

Please provide details of how many default penalties have been given for street cleaning by ward and by year, from May 2014 to May 2017.

Reply:

These figures are currently being carefully rechecked prior to formal presentation and will be forwarded as soon as they are to hand.

The figures are now set out below -

Street Cleansing Notifications & Defaults May 2014 to May 2017

WARD	May 2014 - April 2015	May 2015 - April 2016	May 2016 - April 2017	May-17	TOTAL
	Defaults	Defaults	Defaults	Defaults	Defaults
Bickley	6	3	3	0	12
Biggin Hill	19	0	0	0	19
Bromley Common & Keston	5	1	2	0	8
Bromley Town	23	2	0	0	25
Chelsfield & Pratts Bottom	0	0	1	2	3
Chislehurst	15	4	5	1	25
Clock House	19	3	14	1	37
Copers Cope	27	0	13	1	41
Cray Valley East	181	48	56	1	286
Cray Valley West	148	9	52	1	210
Crystal Palace	141	5	83	3	232
Darwin	54	0	0	0	54
Farnborough & Crofton	0	0	1	0	1
Hayes & Coney Hall	70	0	2	0	72
Kelsey & Eden Park	20	1	67	9	97
Mottingham & Chislehurst North	20	9	6	1	36
Orpington	24	2	19	0	45
Penge & Cator	91	4	51	0	146
Petts Wood & Knoll	8	3	0	0	11
Plaistow & Sundridge	12	0	13	0	25
Shortlands	10	0	2	0	12
West Wickham	26	0	52	6	84
No Ward Data Available	67	69	0	0	136
TOTAL	986	163	442	26	1617

11. From Cllr Angela Wilkins to the Portfolio Holder for Education & Children's Services

Was the £495,419 transferred from reserves to the CSC recruitment & retention fund included in previous sums allocated to work necessary post-OFSTED inspection or should it be considered as a further additional corrective expenditure?

The Executive has just agreed to spend £915k on "Step up to Social Work", a scheme designed to support recruitment of social workers, and one supported by this Council since 2011. How much has been spent to date on this scheme and how exactly has its effectiveness and value for money been evaluated given the serious problems this council has had recruiting and retaining social workers?

Reply:

The transfer of £495,419 from the reserves to the CSC recruitment and retention fund was not included in previous sums allocated to work relating to post-OFSTED inspection.

The funding has been set aside to deal with potential recruitment and retention issues within Children's Social Care, particularly around the recruitment and retention of social workers. Recently this has been an issue for Bromley and this funding will help to alleviate this through elements such as golden hello payments, market premiums and retention payments.

As stated in the report to the last Executive, Step Up to Social Work is a cost neutral initiative funded wholly by the Department for Education. Local authorities are encouraged to club together to form a training partnership with a lead authority. Bromley Council joined the scheme in 2011 (cohort 2) and has since then lead the partnership of 3 authorities in cohort 2; 6 authorities in cohort 3; 7 authorities in cohort 4 and now 6 authorities in cohort 5. Hence the grant from central government (DFE) is for the partnership not just Bromley Council. The lead authority i.e. Bromley Council receives the grant and project manages the scheme on behalf of the partnership.

The programme itself comprises of a post graduate education and work placement supervision, as well as a bursary payment to the student-participants. Currently, the post graduate element is a 14 month programme. It used to be 18 months so it runs over two financial years. To date, the Council has received circa £2.9m from the DFE on behalf of the partnership consisting of £232,666.62 in 2011/12, £440,333.16 in 2012/23, £790,270.89 in 2013/14, £419,063.04 in 2014/15, £251,933.64 in 2015/16 and £780,217.83 in 2016/17.

To date, across the partnership, the total number of trainees supported on the programme is 73 of which 67 (i.e. 92%) were offered employment having successfully completed the programme. The figure for Bromley is 12 out of 14 participants were offered employment. These figures are a good indication that the scheme is a good recruitment source of recruiting newly qualified children's social workers, taking into account the shortness of the course (currently 14 months) compared to the normal qualification route of 3 years' university education. It also represents value for money compared to the previous in-house "Grow your Own Scheme" the Council used to run prior to the cost neutral Step Up to Social Work funded wholly by central government. The In-house scheme was quite pricey because participants were released on their full salary and the participants' posts were then filled by a temporary replacement or an agency worker giving rise to a costly "double whammy" effect.

As we all know the recruitment and retention of children's social workers is an on-going challenge at the local, regional and national labour markets. The Step Up to Social Work programme is part of the wider strategy being adopted at the local and national levels to rebalance the demand and supply of children's social workers. The current disequilibrium means that the retention of children's social workers including the graduates of the Step Up to Social work programme is a real challenge for every local authority. Currently, 6 out of the 12 step up graduates who were offered full employment by Bromley Council are still here. Hence, at the national level the

government is looking to supplement the Step Up to Social Work Programme with a “Return-ship” scheme aimed at bringing back to the profession experienced people who left for a variety of reasons including career breaks, maternities, etc. At the local level Bromley Council has a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy aimed at shifting the balance in favour of the Council. This is sole responsibility of the Recruitment and Retention Board under the joint leadership and chairmanship of the Director of HR and the Deputy Chief Executive/Executive Director of Education, Care and Health Services. The Board’s objectives include a) improve the retention rate by reducing the leaver’s rate and b) reduce the agency staff usage. A key part of our retention strategy is the “No Quit Policy” and the Exit Interview. In relation to the former, HR and managers arranged a No Quit discussion with potential leavers or flight risk employees who have very good performance track record within 48 hours of informal or formal intelligence that the employee is planning to leave the Council. The aim of the No Quit discussion is to dissuade the employee from leaving the organisation. The Exit interview is equally important and prioritised especially with newly qualified staff including the Step to Social Work graduates. We get good feedback on how to improve the quality of the programme. To improve the quality, quantity and timeliness of the exit interviews HR is about to launch an online exit questionnaire capable of being accessed remotely anytime from any smart device including mobile phones, tablets, ipads, etc.

12. From Cllr Angela Wilkins to the Portfolio Holder for Resources

A recent FOI question revealed that the average increase in gross spend on temporary accommodation in London since 2010 is 53%. (Details here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-39305950>)

For Bromley, the increase over the same period is 1197% - the highest in London and 360% higher than Wandsworth who experienced the second highest increase. Please provide a full explanation for this astonishing statistic.

Reply:

There is no simple answer to this. In reality it is due to a number of contributing factors:-

Bromley is unique compared to other London Authorities since it became a LSVT authority back in 1992, where its entire housing stock transferred to what was Broomleigh Housing Association at the time. As a direct result, Bromley has less flexibility compared to stock holding authorities who can utilise their properties as they see fit reducing their reliability on the private sector in using Nightly Paid Accommodation (B&B) with additionally still managing their own homeless hostels ensuring quick move-on. Bromley when it had its own housing stock championed “the Right to Buy” campaign which reduced the available social housing stock in borough before transfer.

Additionally in April 2010, there was a deadline set for a 50% T/A reduction target for all local authorities. As such almost every possible permanent housing resource in Bromley went into reducing T/A to meet this target, which in essence left the pot empty.

On 1st April 2010, Bromley had 479 homeless households in T/A – only 69 of which were in Nightly Paid Accommodation (B&B)

As of 1st April 2017, Bromley had 1438 homeless households in T/A of which 843 were in Nightly Paid Accommodation (B&B)

Total number in T/A has actually increased by 300%, whilst the number in Nightly Paid Accommodation (B&B) has increased by 1221%.

Compounding the issue is the acknowledged rise in homelessness again due to a number of social issues, the impact of Welfare Reform, the reduction of available social housing and number of affordable homes available within London with demand far outweighing supply.

Council/Housing Association lettings in London have reduced up to 50 % since 2010. As a direct result, waiting times in Bromley to secure a property through Homeseekers choice based lettings system is now approximately three years and rising compared to a 12/18 month wait back in 2010. All of which means families are spending longer in T/A than they initially did back in 2010, and more often than not are being placed outside of borough in more affordable areas.

Home ownership is slipping out of reach for most, on average house prices are almost seven times people's incomes. Young people stay longer at home and often as a result get evicted due to increasing tensions. Home ownership is in decline, real house prices have risen 151% since 1996, while real earnings have risen about a quarter as much. Those that managed to buy are now experiencing hugely expensive housing costs and are stretched to their financial limits finding it harder to meet their monthly repayments putting pressures on relationships, which again could result in a homeless application as relationships breakdown.

More families are renting privately which can be incredibly unstable, with soaring rents, hidden fees and eviction a constant worry as a result they turn to the local authority where once they wouldn't have needed to. Landlords can get mandatory possession at the end of the agreed term and increase income by offering to new tenants at higher rent levels to protect their investment resulting in constant loop of homelessness. Those claiming benefits are priced out of market as more often or not the Local Housing Allowance Rate falls way short to cover the rent forcing them to move to more affordable areas away from their support networks or again to the local authority.

Since the 1980's, over 1.5 million properties were sold off in the United Kingdom under the "Right to Buy" initiative, most of which were houses and low rise flats in high demand areas. Insufficient re-investment by all Governments since has contributed to the current housing crisis. The introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act next year will go some way to prevent families being evicted by utilising all known prevention options(at a cost) however it doesn't address the major problem of lack of affordable homes now and for future generations.

The biggest groups applying as homeless are those evicted from private sector as term has ended and family/friends evictions.

13. From Cllr Richard Williams to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection

Over the last few months we have seen over 200 killings of cats and foxes that appear be the victims of the 'Croydon cat killer'. What action is LBB Is taking with our local police and neighbouring local authorities to put an end to this horrendous spree?

Reply:

The MPS have a dedicated team of officers working on Operation Takahe which is the investigation into these cat killings. To date they have invested over 1200 man hours and are bringing in a specialist in animal forensic pathology and criminal profiling experts from the National Crime Agency. Locally there are protocols in place should officers be called to any of these types of incidents and there are regular messages given out to our KINS and at Ward Panels in relation to reporting any suspicious activity and incidents involving cats/foxes. SNARL have also offered a £10,000 reward for any information leading to an identification and/or arrest. The Community Safety team helped facilitate a small grant at my request to pay for a print run of 4,000 warning/advice leaflets which were distributed by SNARL in the Bromley area.

14. From Cllr Richard Williams to the Portfolio Holder for Environment

Please explain why on-street parking did not deliver the budgeted -for income stream in 2016-17.

As we have experienced delays in delivering both consultations and decisions on various parking proposals in Crystal Palace ward, is your team of officers under-resourced?

Reply:

As you should be aware, the Council is not allowed by regulation to raise revenue by introducing on street parking schemes designed for such purpose.

I will take it as given that is not the Labour Group's suggestion or an evolving policy initiative, unless you tell me otherwise.

Annual parking budget projections are only ever an educated estimate of anticipated 'income', figures which will vary annually dependent on whether prospective parking schemes are progressed or rejected following consultation with local people and Ward Members, or indeed whether on street parking levels trend upwards or downwards in line with the wider business cycle and the health of the national economy.

The Council has recently suffered the resignation of a key senior officer within the Parking Design team, a post which is being pro-actively backfilled, so in essence, the answer to your question is no, albeit the Department does remain extremely busy at present.

15. From Cllr Kevin Brooks to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection

Given the recent incident in Penge involving a machete, what additional steps are being taken to stop the escalation of gang related violence in Penge?

Reply:

Whilst we believe the incident in Penge involving a machete was an isolated occurrence we are acutely aware of the potential for gang related violence. This week sees MPS wide activity in relation to Operation Sceptre which is specifically tackling knife crime. This involves a number of officers being deployed in plainclothes utilising stop and search combined with high visibility targeted patrols, weapons sweeps and other covert activities. We are also working closely with our partners in surrounding boroughs sharing intelligence and information, in order to identify and combat any rising tensions. Trading Standards will shortly be launching a “Blade Safe” responsible retailer campaign to remind retailers of their responsibilities when stocking and selling knives, which will be followed up with an under-age test purchasing campaign throughout the borough.