

COUNCIL MEETING

26th JUNE 2017

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL REPLY FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

1. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Community Safety

What action has been taken by the Police and Ward Security in the light of the reports of knife point robberies of bicycles in West Wickham, Hayes and other parts of the Borough?

Reply:

Once we were made aware that there were incidents of ASB having taken place in Blake's Recreation Ground, Ward Security were tasked to undertake site visits as often as reasonably practicable.

Ward Security has undertaken the following amount of patrols at Blake's Recreation Ground in West Wickham -

- | | | |
|-----------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| - April - | 14 Patrols | - 3 reported Incidents |
| - May - | 7 Patrols | - No reported incidents |
| - June - | 5 Patrols to date. | - No reported incidents to date. |

In particular, Ward Security attended Blake's Recreation Ground on the 21st April, as part of their patrols an evicted a large group of youths causing ASB.

Please be advised that Ward Security do not patrol the Borough's Streets in relation to reported knife point robberies of bicycles as this is a Police function. They will of course respond to and assist the Police if called to assist.

With regards to crime levels in West Wickham Ward, in the 9 weeks running up to and including the school Easter holidays (the time period to which I understand the question relates), there were

- 4 crime reports for theft of a cycle (two of these bikes were left unsecured and unattended outside KFC);
- 3 crime reports for robbery.

There was no mention of knives being used in any of these crimes.

At the time of this increase in crime, additional patrols were undertaken by the Police in this ward and plain clothes officers made an arrest off the ward in Croydon Road Recreation Ground in Beckenham, where they successfully apprehending suspects for a robbery there.

As a response to the community concerns Bromley Council's Community Safety Team, Inspector Byfield and the Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) met with a representative of the local parents to discuss what has been done and what young people can do to stay safe. The SNT also organised a community event on 23rd June at St Francis Church Hall

alongside the regular market. This provided local residents with access to various police officers and local agencies for advice, support and reassurance.

The local Police and Ward Security are aware of the upcoming summer holiday period and will factor this into team tasking. The Police and local authority have supported a group of local parents to compile a personal safety leaflet specifically for young people which will be offered to all schools in the borough; this leaflet covers advice and information on how to stay safe, as well as what to do in the event of a crime taking place and who to call. This has been funded by the Bromley Safer Neighbourhood Board.

The police, as always are available to speak with at local surgeries, on their telephone number and can be followed on twitter for current information on what they are doing.

Within the local authority, the Trading Standards Team are refreshing the Blade Safe Initiative. This involves visits to stores selling knives to ensure traders are complying with age related requirements and that all consumers are over 18 years of age.

Supplementary Question:

I met, with Mark Brock, forty parents at the Railway Inn in West Wickham in April. Mention of knives was made there, I understand that they may not have been reported at the time. Can we ensure that when we do come to the summer holidays that the excellent work being done by Angela Mumford of our Council with the parents is followed through, and that parents are aware that if there is any incident whatsoever they should report it directly to the Police rather than just passing it on amongst themselves because that is the way that the Police can get accurate information and intelligence on what is happening.

Reply:

Yes, you are absolutely right. It became clear at that meeting in April that a lot of these crimes were not being reported. If they are not reported to the Police they do not know they are happening and we do not know they are happening and we cannot tackle the problem. Part of the leaflet that the Safer Neighbourhood Board has just, on Friday, got funding from MOPAC for is to educate young people on who to call how to report a crime – that is very important. I think what happened in that meeting in April is that, although some of the victims of crime who said that they had been held at knifepoint, although they lived in West Wickham the actually those crimes occurred elsewhere in the borough or in Croydon. Concerning that parents group meeting, I had an email last week from Sarah Armstrong and there is another meeting being set up next week or the week after, which Amanda Mumford will be going to and I will be going too.

2. From Councillor Peter Fookes to the Leader of the Council
(In Councillor Fookes' absence a written reply was given)

What discussions have been held with the Mayor's Office with regard to the future of Crystal Palace Park?

Reply:

I attended a meeting with Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe this year on 15th May 2017 namely to provide an update on the Regeneration Plan and discuss the future of the National Sports Centre. This followed the Deputy Mayor's visit to the Park on 29th September 2016.

The discussions with the Deputy Mayor have focussed on the importance of the GLA resolving the future of the National Sports Centre, an important regional leisure facility, and ensuring no future conflict with the Regeneration Plan, which has been progressed by the Council.

Discussions also took place prior to the Mayor of London sending letters to the Big Lottery, Heritage Lottery Fund and Sport England this year regarding additional capital funding for the park.

There are regular meetings at officer level and the GLA's officers attend the Council's project monitoring meetings with AECOM, public consultation events and open days, and the Shadow Board meetings.

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

What is the total number and value of the Penalty Charge Notices identified as being issued as a result of malpractice or issued by Civil Enforcement Officers who did not have the right to work in this country, in the report by the Royal Borough of Greenwich into our former parking enforcement contractor?

Reply:

Council questions which require the disclosure of exempt confidential information can be rejected.

Here, the audit report has been reviewed by the Information Tribunal and consideration is being given on whether or not to appeal - until the period for considering the appeal expires (that is 35 days from the 9th June) any confidential information in the report remains confidential.

Having said that, the Member will be aware that the Council's Audit Sub-Committee did consider and accept Counsel's advice that the PCN's the Member refers to were lawfully issued. If the Member had concerns on that advice it should perhaps have been raised 2 years ago when it came before Members.

Supplementary Question:

Having had the first appeal against the Information Commissioner's decision dismissed recently, and with the potential to have a further appeal higher up the legal chain, if a decision is not taken to go higher up the legal chain will you commit to publishing the information which I have asked for within the statutory timescale?

Reply:

I am happy to give that assurance, we will obviously comply with any due aspect of law.

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

Whilst there may be a 'de facto' contract, have you managed yet to find the Waste Services contract (the full contact as required to be kept under legal seal) which was identified as missing in a recent internal audit and which I asked about at the last full Council?

Reply:

The candid answer is "No", and neither am I looking for it.

Securing and retention of such documents is a function of the Chief Officer's Legal team.

As has been explained previously, sufficient legal documentation is in place to fully support and enforce the contract in the original document's absence.

Supplementary Question:

Given the recent findings of a further Internal Audit report into Streetworks and the similarities between this and the audit report into Waste Services, which identified 15 priority one issues, do you think an internal audit of the Street Cleaning contract might actually reveal similar findings, and would it not be in the interests of the Council Tax payer to request an immediate Internal Audit investigation into the Street Cleaning contract?

Reply:

I do not believe so.

5. From Cllr Vanessa Allen to the Portfolio Holder for Environment

Further to the question asked at the April Council meeting, please provide information on where in the borough the additional £500k allocated for Environmental Initiatives in the 2017-18 budget is to be spent.

Reply:

Various options are currently still being evaluated and Members will be updated as to the various outcomes and recommendations over the course of the coming months.

Supplementary Question:

Can you give me any more information on what criteria you are using and when we can expect an update?

Reply:

The broad criteria is that we wanted to spend the limited money on the most effective way that produces the most good for residents across the borough. There is not a specific measuring stick. As I said in response to the time lapse, we should hopefully begin to recommend things in the coming weeks. I suspect that they will include projects such as more deep cleanses in the more tightly parked areas of the borough, including Clock House ward; and perhaps in the greener areas of the borough, slightly more environmental things which tick local boxes around parks; perhaps around high streets new bins with greater capacity to reduce overflowing waste. These are the sort of things that we are looking at, without any decisions having been finalised at this stage.

6. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment

How many electric car charging points there are in the Borough and if he will list their locations?

Reply:

There are 9 ULEV/EV charging points sites (with 5 proposed), located in the following streets -

Location	Number of Spaces	Status
Car Parks		
Civic Centre	2	Active
The Hill	2	Active
St Georges	2	Active

Penge East	2	Active
New Beckenham	2	Active
Burnt Ash	4	Active
Hayes Station Approach	2	Active
On-street		
The Meadway	2	Active
South Hill Road	2	Active

Proposed new EV charging point locations

Location	Number of Spaces	Current Status
On-street		
Glebe Way	3	Free parking- could add P&D as well
Thicket Road	3	Free parking
Ravenscroft Road	3	Free parking
The Avenue	3	Free parking
Brunswick Place	3	Free parking

There is a total of in the region of 35 actual points. We are looking at the evolving technology around the GULCS which is the roll out of far more electric points across the borough to meet the rising demand. Bromley is sixth on some measurements, and eighth on another, of demand for these new sites. What we want to do is to get them where they are serving a purpose without blocking up a parking space where they are not going to be as badly needed as in other places. It is an evolving feast that we are dealing with and you will see much more of this not only in Bromley but across London over the course of the next few years.

Supplementary Question:

I am sure that the Portfolio Holder agrees that electric cars are the coming thing, and they are going to take off very quickly in the next few years, particularly as people are concerned about clean air. Would it not be a good idea if we could publicise these, perhaps in his excellent "Environment Matters" newsletter so that the public can be very clear about where they can go to charge their cars.

Reply:

Yes, there is absolutely no reason why this should not be publicised. There is no point having these charging points if people do not use them. We should steer people towards them, and I will remind officers of the suggestion for the impending "Environment Matters."

Additional Supplementary Question from Councillor Simon Fawthrop:

Is the Portfolio Holder aware of a new scheme involving lamp post charging – will he look at that and make sure that there is a report to him and the PDS Committee, so that we can look at that and see whether that might be a cheaper and easier way to put charging points around the borough?

Reply:

I am aware of this and the matter was discussed at the London Councils TEC meeting only a week or so ago. One of the concerns about lamp post charging - which is clearly a good thing, particularly in the more tightly built areas of the borough where people do not have off-road parking available to them, and it gives people who live in that type of neighbourhood the ability to charge - is that more and more authorities have moved their

lamp columns to the backline, rather than near the kerb to avoid the volume knock-downs, which cost around £1,000 a time, and there is a problem because the technology works with lamp posts near to the kerb preferred. That is a consideration we will have to carry forward. It is also the case that in an area such as Bromley a large number of properties have significant off-street parking available to them and one would expect in those areas that the residents who have bought into the electric car methodology will be charging their vehicles on their own property. So I think there is broad consensus that there is not a simple one size fits all around this. We will have to plan very carefully about where we install this technology, which is not cheap to install, to ensure that where we do put it has value and purpose and that is what officers are looking at the moment.

7. From Councillor Peter Fookes to the Portfolio Holder for Care Services
(In Councillor Fookes' absence a written reply was given)

What progress has been made on dementia hubs?

Reply:

The Bromley Dementia Hub is a service commissioned by the Council with the support of the Clinical Commissioning group as a one stop shop to support Bromley residents diagnosed with dementia and their carers. The Dementia Hub had a soft launch in July 2016, taking initial enquiries from the Memory Clinic only. The service was fully operational by the Autumn of 2016, and whilst the primary route into the hub service is via the Memory Clinic, the Hub service is now available to all Bromley residents with a Dementia diagnosis. The Hub has received a total of 1182 referrals to date (615 from residents with a diagnosis and the remainder from carers), and the service user and carer feedback has been exceptionally positive. Over half of the people referred to the hub have gone on to have 1-1 support. The hub has supported nearly 100 carers to receive training in supporting those with Dementia, as well as provided training to almost 50 care and support staff in dementia awareness.

As the service has been operational for almost a year, the Council and the CCG are collating the first data set to help monitor how the Hub has supported people to remain independent.

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

When Adecco came to the May E&R PDS, neither their contract manager nor the officer managing the contract could answer a question on whether compensation would be paid to the Council should Adecco not meet its targets. Can you please confirm the consequences of Adecco not meeting their targets?

Reply:

A report was circulated to Members on the E&R PDS following its meeting last month – I would refer you to paragraph 3. It should be appreciated that the contract is mutually flexible to reflect the unique difficulty in recruitment of both temporary and permanent staff in this area. For example, in the last week or so we have secured Adecco's agreement for us to use five other agencies. The real solution is to make Bromley an employer of choice and move away from agency staff altogether. Members will be aware of the many initiatives now being pursued with marked success.

Supplementary Question:

You mentioned in your answer that there is an intention for Bromley to be an employer of choice and moving away from the use of agency staff. Do you have a sensible timescale for that to be done and would you be willing to publish, say, a five year plan.

Reply:

I am sure that the Deputy Chief Executive will have that information and will have already shared it with the Portfolio Holder and the PDS. That is the way that it will be shown in future, rather like a dashboard with these key figures. In terms of the penalty clause, when you realise that the horse you are riding is dead the logical thing to do is to actually dismount rather than send for a big whip. What we have done instead, in terms of recruitment, improved IT in the frontline - £0.5m spent, break out rooms, and a very successful recruitment day. All this information stemmed from the Dep Reps Forum, which was extremely useful. We were able to give higher pay and merit pay outside national terms, which your party opposed, but we think they are worth more, and should be paid more. I do think it is time to come together and support what is being done, because we are becoming an employer of choice. When the figures are shown to you will see that members of staff from other boroughs are coming to us an employer of choice, which is exactly what we wanted to achieve.

Additional Supplementary Question from Councillor Angela Wilkins:

I do not think that the question has been answered. The question comes from the Executive and Resources PDS Committee meeting when no-one knew whether there were any default payments where Adecco did not meet their KPIs. You may not have the answer tonight, but can we please be assured that the answer will be available for the next PDS meeting?

Reply:

I can only refer you to the published report – paragraph 3.

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

Given that in excess of £1million has been lost to this Council by poor management of the waste contract with Veolia, will he agree with me that the decision to try to save £60k by allowing Veolia to supervise the weighbridges was an extremely bad one?

Reply:

I neither accept the premise nor the factual accuracy of the theoretical figure mentioned in the assertion, nor more generally, so the answer to the question clearly has to be no. It might be helpful to understand where the Member opposite is 'sourcing' her asserted figure from, were she to have a supplementary question.

Supplementary Question:

The information came from both meetings of the Contracts Sub-Committee and meetings of the Audit Sub-Committee which I am not a member of but which I attended. The answers are in the paperwork and the documents that go with it.

Is it not the case that contracts like this where there is contractual self-monitoring are very similar to marking your own exam papers. It is perfectly natural to have the potential for the Council to be the loser and therefore we should consider not having self-monitoring in future contracts?

Reply:

I am personally more than happy with the current arrangements. Of course, every service across this authority needs to be audited, perhaps more regularly, to spot any errors that might exist, at a far earlier stage in any cycle where contracts might perhaps need attention.

10. From Cllr Vanessa Allen to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection & Safety

A recent News Shopper report highlighted once again the number of food outlets in the borough which have poor ratings for food hygiene, including 4 with zero rating and 68 on one star. In February the Food Standards Agency found over 70 places rated zero or one star, and a year ago 160 rated two stars or fewer. A well known local ice cream producer waited 18 months for an inspection which never happened and then moved premises. This highlights the need for:-

- inspections of new premises
- regular inspections of all premises
- follow up inspections where food standards are poor
- more inspectors

In view of the above can the citizens of Bromley look forward to recruitment of more inspectors in order to safeguard their health, deal with this long running problem, and also to help the businesses concerned to improve and thrive?

Reply:

I must clarify that it is the London Borough Bromley Food Safety Team Officers who carry out the inspections, not the Food Standards Agency. With regard the issue of more inspectors, an additional resource was recently deployed to carry out additional inspections of our high risk businesses and officers are currently preparing a business case for additional resources which will be considered through the appropriate decision making process shortly.

Supplementary Question:

Bromley's boast that it is committed to providing a good quality service has been shown to be groundless by the FSA report – the audit in April this year. Will the Portfolio Holder undertake to ensure that the FSA recommendations are not only fully carried out, but also that the Council seriously considers recruiting more than the minimum number of staff that are included in the proposals that you are going to be looking at on Thursday?

Reply:

I do not agree with your analysis of the report from the FSA. What that report outlines is that the Team have been doing an excellent job with the restricted resources available and it also says in the opening statement how greatly staff are committed to providing a good service for the residents of Bromley. There is currently a business case being put together in response to the report from the FSA and that will be decided upon in mid-July, and hopefully we will have some resources to bolster the Team. Overall, this is a very common circumstance across the whole of the country – there is hardly a borough in the country that has as any Food Safety officers as they would like. We plan to improve that situation for Bromley.

11. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment

How many car clubs have been established in Bromley and what are their locations?

Reply:

There are 14 Car Club vehicles located in the following streets –

High Street, Bromley South, BR1 1DS
Elmfield Park, Bromley, BR1 1LU
Sherman Road, Bromley, BR1 3GP
Station Road, Bromley, BR1 3LP
Rectory Road, Beckenham, BR3 1HW,
Copers Cope Road, Beckenham, BR3 1NR
Langley Road, Beckenham, BR3 4AD
Kendall Road, Beckenham, BR3 4PY
Knoll Rise, Orpington, BR6 0DD
Orpington High Street, Orpington, BR6 0NQ
Ledrington Road, Penge, SE19 2BA
Station Road, Penge East, SE20 7BQ
Witham Road, Penge, SE20 7YB
Anerley Park, Penge, SE20 8NF

Supplementary Question:

I understand that the car clubs are all organised by a private company. Would it be a good idea if the Council, in conjunction with the private company could put a letter round with our logo on to encourage those who want to use car clubs rather than owning the now rather expensive option of using a car.

Reply:

The route we have followed hitherto is that buildings, predominantly but not universally new buildings, have been left to advertise their own car clubs on the grounds that the more work we put in the more work and resource and money it will cost the taxpayer. If it felt helpful in future that we help to promote businesses, because fundamentally this is what these things are, they do generate profit, that is something we can look at but that might potentially raise questions about the Council's partisanship around supporting one company over another. This can certainly be looked at, and I am not against it in principle, but it is not as easy as it might seem at face value.

12. From Councillor Peter Fookes to the Portfolio Holder for Care Services
(In Councillor Fookes' absence a written reply was given)

What are the latest figures for homeless households in temporary accommodation?

Reply:

1,495.

13. From Cllr Ian Dunn to the Portfolio Holder for Care Services

There has been a worrying increase in reports of Bromley residents with care needs not be able to attend services due to cuts in benefits and increases in transport charges. How will the Portfolio holder ensure that no resident will be denied essential services due to financial restrictions?

Reply:

I am advised that there is no evidence to suggest that this is the case, and have also been informed that no complaints have been received regarding this matter. Any resident assessed as needing support will also have a financial assessment and those who cannot afford to contribute to their care package will not be required to do so.

14. From Cllr Angela Wilkins to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal & Recreation

This year, the Crystal Palace Overground Festival moved from Westow Park in LB Croydon to CP Park, delivering a much bigger event on Saturday 18th June than in previous years.

The sun was shining, the music was playing, and the event was a huge success. Will the Portfolio Holder join me in congratulating the organisers and the very many local volunteers who did an amazing job in bringing this festival into LB Bromley, so boosting our local economy and providing entertainment for many thousands of families?

Reply:

The Crystal Palace Overground Festival was a huge success this year and I would like to join Cllr Wilkins in congratulating Noreen Mehan and everyone who worked with her in delivering this fantastic event in the Park.

Supplementary Question:

This was a free festival, and I would like, on behalf of the festival organisers, to thank Cllr Arthur for the grant from the community fund which funded the volunteers and helped them. The festival is free to visitors – it will not make a profit. Will the Council be prepared to consider funding for next year and future years please?

Reply:

We will certainly think about it if someone will give us the details.

(The time allowed for questions had expired, but it was agreed that the final question would be considered.)

15. From Cllr Vanessa Allen to the Portfolio Holder for Resources

As part of the effort to combat global warming and climate change, fossil fuels should stay in the ground and not be exploited. The cost of global warming is often picked up locally, for example in the shape of damage by extreme weather such as storms. Bromley is one of many local authorities investing in companies involved with seeking new fossil fuel resources. As it is possible and indeed almost mainstream nowadays to invest in and make returns from fossil free fuels, please would the Portfolio Holder look into the options and make the appropriate changes.

Reply:

The Council's treasury management strategy, which is approved annually by Council, has regard to the DCLG's guidance on local government investments and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. The investment strategy specifies that investment priorities are security first, liquidity second, then return.

Within the Council's treasury management investments of around £308m, there is £10m invested in Diversified Growth Funds (DGFs); these are pooled funds which invest in a variety of asset classes and industries. The Council owns units in the fund, but not holdings – we cannot direct fund managers. The DGFs has a total of only £126k in its total portfolio which relates to fossil fuels, or 0.04%, so it is only a very small amount that they actually hold there. It might be that Councillor Allen is referring to the Pension Fund but that is an entirely different matter.

Supplementary Question:

This is a growing sector so I would ask again that opportunities are looked at for diversifying the investment that you do know about, and why not look at the Pension Fund while you are doing that?

Reply:

You can draw parallels between us and certain other boroughs, Islington, for example, who say that they wish to maximise their influence to promote corporate social responsibility. Their returns over the three year period are 8.9% whereas ours are 14.6%. Indeed you can compare us with any of the sixty areas in our consortium. You can compare Bromley favourably because we are the most successful of the benchmarked areas for one year, three year, five year and ten year investments. That was announced during the last week. It would be kinder to recognise that and compliment the way that our committee system works, the way that the Finance Officers input and the way that our external people, who we monitor very carefully, advise us. It is not our money, it is our employees' money and we are investing it as best we can for their benefit. If we were to ask our employees and our pensioners if they would rather have their pension as it stands, or would they rather have it top sliced in order to pursue some other agenda, they would probably compliment us.

Additional Supplementary Question from Councillor Simon Fawthrop

Does the Portfolio Holder agree that it is better to take professional advice and adhere to that, rather than listen to political ideology when making these decisions?

Reply:

It is a very fair point. If you look at how this dialogue has been extended over time it is interesting - the Guardian came up with this phrase about leaving fossil fuels in the ground, and actually said it should be 100%, then 80%, then 75%. I think that people were explaining to them that if you leave oil under the ground you will not have plastics or chemical industries which we are dependent on. If you are asking a question starting off saying that all fossil fuels should remain in the ground they should think about what that means.

Additional Supplementary Question from Councillor Stephen Carr:

Whether it be our Treasury Management, or our Pension Investment management, we have been enormously successful saving many millions of pounds for Council Tax payers in this borough and also saving many millions of pounds in frontline services for vulnerable people. Am I right in thinking that if we start making these ethical investments we would be putting at risk those frontline services that we have been able to protect, and whether we should ask the opposition parties where they will get the money if they did not have the money to invest in frontline services?

Reply:

We are one of only two London boroughs that is debt free. What that means is that when we construct our accounts we have a line item which says interest received. Every other Borough, bar one, has a line item that says interest paid. Whilst they are servicing their debts, we are using our money to secure frontline services, and the amount we are receiving is £14m-£15m a year, which goes straight into protecting frontline services. Other boroughs will reflect on when they borrowed money at very high interest rates and locked into those interest rates - they are carrying crippling levels of debt. £800m is not unusual in certain London boroughs, whilst we are £300m in credit and able to invest money on behalf our Council Tax payers rather than be profligate as other have been.