

COUNCIL MEETING

26TH FEBRUARY 2018

QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN REPLY FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

1. From Cllr Nicholas Bennett to the Leader of the Council

What steps are being taken to encourage the use of modular home construction to meet housing demand?

Reply:

The Council is actively seeking to encourage the use of modular constructed homes to meet housing need. In January 2018 the Executive approved, subject to full consultation and planning permission, the use of the site at York Rise for the provision of modular constructed homes. The report approved to proceed to formal tender for the provision and management of modular homes for the York Rise site and on a preferred supplier basis for any subsequent sites identified. This report further requested that officers look to identify any other potentially suitable sites for the provision of modular constructed homes to meet housing needs.

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

If he will make a statement on the implications for Bromley parents and young people of the proposals outlined in the Secretary of State for Education's interview in the Sunday Times of 18th February and in particular the abolition of the 50% cap on admission to Church schools, the creation of new Grammar Schools and the opportunities for non-university technical education?

Reply:

Like Cllr Bennett, I read with interest the report of the interview with the Secretary of State. I welcome the emphasis the Government is placing on technical education. Parity of esteem between technical and academic pathways has been much talked about but, until recently, little has been achieved. To that end, Bromley Council welcomes the proposed Shaw Futures Academy which will offer a technical education and widen the choice of secondary education for Bromley children and their parents.

Of course, our secondary school offer in Bromley is enriched by our grammar schools, St Olave's and Newstead Wood Schools. It is entirely fair that, as the Sec of State suggests, selective schools should have the same options and opportunities to develop and expand as every other school. I would like to take this opportunity to applaud the commitment of Newstead Wood School to working with their neighbouring primary schools to help raise the ambitions of our children.

Equally, I welcome the renewed commitment of the Secretary of State to lifting the 50% cap on faith admissions in new schools and we have re-opened discussion with the Roman Catholic Diocese about the opportunities this may create in Bromley.

I have written to the Secretary of State to congratulate him on his appointment and to invite him to visit our schools in Bromley, of which we are justifiably proud.

3. From Cllr Nicholas Bennett to the Environment Portfolio Holder

On what dates and times Parking Enforcement Officers have been in Corkscrew Hill, Courtfield Rise and Addington Road West Wickham, on the occasion of sporting fixtures at Sparrows Den in the past year and how many tickets have been issued for parking contraventions on each occasion?

Reply:

The number of penalty charges issued against sporting days (Saturday or Sunday) for each location from 01.01.2017 and 31.12.2017, (last calendar year) is:

Location	No of penalty charges issued	No issued on sporting days (Saturday or Sunday)
Corkscrew Hill	14	14
Courtfield Rise	2	1
Addington Road	30	30

Support Statistics:

Location	Dates of patrols	No of PCNs and date of issue	Reason for PCN issue
Corkscrew Hill	01.10.17	1 at 11:24 and 1 at 11:28 and 1 at 11:30	Parked on the footway
Corkscrew Hill	29.10.17	10 between 13:26 and 13:46	Parked on the footway
Corkscrew Hill	19.11.17	1 at 11:31	Parked on the footway
Corkscrew Hill	10.02.18	1 at 13:36 and 1 at 13:37	Parked on the footway

Location	Dates of patrols	No of PCNs and date of issue	Reason for PCN issue
Courtfield Rise	04.04.17	1 at 12:02	Parked on the footway
Courtfield Rise	29.10.17	1 at 13:54	Parked on a double yellow line

Location	Dates of patrols	No of PCNs and date of issue	Reason for PCN issue
Addington Road	12.03.17	19 between 10:38 and 11:08	Parked on the footway
Addington Road	19.03.17	11 between 10:43 and 11:07	Parked on the footway

4. From Cllr Peter Fookes to the Environment Portfolio Holder

When will the blocked drains outside 118 Oakfield Rd, Penge be dealt with?

Reply:

Penge was part of the cyclical gully cleansing schedule which commenced in April 2017 last year - and the gully outside 118 Oakfield Road was cleansed on 26/06/2017. However, as there was a potential blockage, as highlighted by Cllr Fookes' in his question above, Neighbourhood Management arranged for the location to be visited early on Friday the 23rd February and for all gullies in the road to be assessed and cleansed as necessary, and Neighbourhood Management can confirm that the gully outside 118 Oakfield Road was free flowing with no issues.

5. From Cllr Peter Fookes to the Environment Portfolio Holder

When will door to door textile recycling begin in Bromley?

Reply:

Following a Policy Development report to the Environment PDS, door to door textile recycling has been considered, but it was found to be economically unviable. We provide textile recycling bins at the majority of our bring sites and at our waste and recycling centres.

6. From Cllr Peter Fookes to the Resources Portfolio Holder

How many people in Bromley missed out on voting at the 2017 General Election because they did not register in time?

Reply:

I find this rather a strange question as of course as the law has made it clear for many decades that it is an Individual's responsibility to ensure that they register to vote.

The Labour government paved the way for the current system of Individual electoral registration in the Political Parties and Elections act 2009 – which was designed to achieve more accurate electoral registers and to counter electoral fraud – although individual voter registration was finally introduced by the coalition government through the Electoral Reform and Administration Act 2013.

The legislation has a cut off point for registration 12 days before an election. This is a statutory time limit and local authorities are unable to extend it and modern electoral law has always included a comparable provision.

Having said that at Bromley we do everything we can to encourage residents to register and exercise their vote including undertaking the Annual Canvass which involves sending multiple forms and undertaking personal visits to non-responding properties, along with a poster and leaflet campaign through the Borough. Bromley also identifies and contacts those properties where a change in residency may have occurred, such as new Council tax payers, to encourage any new residents to register to vote.

This works as Bromley has consistently been in the top 3 councils for Household Enquiry Form responses which means we have one of the most accurate registers in London

We increase publicity around election time and this works as in the period between the general election being called and the statutory cut-off date we registered 8875 new voters on the register.

We do monitor instances where residents attend polling stations to vote and are unable to do so because they have not ensured they have registered and at the general election 93 individuals out of a polling station electorate of 192,255 (total electorate was 232,436) had not registered to vote.

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

The meeting of the Executive held on February 7th was asked numerous questions by members of the public and an unusually high number of people had made the effort to attend the meeting. As Chair of the Executive, you have it within your power to extend the allocated time for public questions. Given that the meeting did not have a long agenda and ended shortly after 8pm why did you not show respect to Bromley residents and extend the time allowed in order that more questions and responses could be heard?

Reply:

There were indeed numerous questions, but the Council's Constitution allocates 15 minutes for public questions, and this is what was allowed on 7th February.

To that end it is something of a shame that Political Activists from opposition parties choose to pre fill the available slots to pose their wares for self-serving purposes on such occasions, thereby denying others the chance to do so themselves.

You appear to have overlooked the fact that I specifically permitted supplementary questions to be asked to the unanswered oral questions too, which was the first time that offer has ever been made in my 16 years on the Council, such was my alleged "disrespect"

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

A meeting of Constitution Improvement Working Party is overdue. Council passed a resolution in September 2017 requesting a report on improving transparency. There is also the option of making the Contracts Sub Committee into a main Committee. When will a meeting be held to discuss these matters?

Reply:

As you are aware, a meeting of the Constitution Improvement Working Group has been set up for next month.

9. From Cllr Richard Williams to the Resources Portfolio Holder

Can the Portfolio Holder say how many care leavers under the age of 25 have been in arrears for council tax for each of the last 3 financial years?

Reply:

The Authority's council tax database does not indicate the accounts that relate to care leavers, I am therefore unable to advise as to the number that have been in arrears over the past 3 years.

Furthermore, Bromley would be unaware of any care leavers residing outside of the borough who may have council tax arrears.

10. From Cllr Richard Williams to the Resources Portfolio Holder

Can the Portfolio Holder say how many care leavers under the age of 25 in arrears for council tax at any point in the last 3 financial years have had enforcement action taken against them, including how many have had court action taken against them?

Reply:

As advised in my response to the previous question, this information is unable to be obtained from the Authority's council tax database. Bromley would also be unaware of enforcement action taken by other local authorities in respect of sums owing to them.

However, where the Council Tax Section is made aware of enforcement action being taken against a care leaver, consideration would be given to assisting the individual through the discretionary hardship fund, budgeting assistance and/or a sympathetic payment plan.

11. From Cllr Richard Williams to the Resources Portfolio Holder

What would be the actual cost for 2017/18 and the projected cost for 2018/19 of introducing council tax exemption for our care leavers up to the age of 25, taking account any current discounts they may be eligible to? What percentage of the (i) Children's Services budget and (ii) council's budget would they represent?

Reply:

It is not possible from our records to identify the cost of providing council tax exemption for care leavers up to the age of 25 taking into account any current discounts to which they may be entitled. However, below are figures based on the following assumptions:

- all 195 care leavers reside in the borough;
- they all have a council tax liability;
- they receive no other discounts;
- they all live in a band "D" council tax property; and
- there are no care leavers from other local authorities resident in Bromley

On the basis of these assumptions, the potential annual cost for 2017/18 of providing assistance would be £217,706 (after deducting the GLA contribution). This figure would increase to £226,392 in respect of 2018/19.

For 2017/18 this represents 0.66% of the Children's Services budget and 0.15% of the council's budget (Council Tax Requirement budget). For 2018/19 this represents 0.66% of the Children's Services draft budget and 0.15% of the council's draft budget (Council Tax Requirement budget.)

12. From Cllr Ian Dunn to the Environment Portfolio Holder

Please provide the number of "Fix My Street" records raised during calendar year 2017 broken down by Ward and subject. Please also provide the percentage completed within the SLA also broken down by Ward and subject.

Reply:

Please see attached data for the calendar year 2017 for FMS reports by ward and subject (Appendix 1.)

We do not have SLA info for wards and subjects but we have included the average time for enquiries to be resolved.

Caveat being there is no set SLA against a subject as issues are diverse and can be complex but we do monitor SLA against enquiry status to ensure that through any enquiry lifespan it is being managed and not forgotten. This SLA covers all enquiries not just FMS and for 2017 for Environmental Services was 96.66%

13. From Cllr Ian Dunn to the Environment Portfolio Holder

The 2017/18 budget contained a proposal to set aside an earmarked reserve of £500k for Environmental Initiatives. Please provide a schedule of what this was spent on showing how much was spent on each initiative and in which ward.

Reply:

(See appendix 2.)

14. From Cllr Russell Mellor to the Resources Portfolio Holder

Can the Portfolio Holder advise me as to the sum of the Contingency Reserve as at the commencement of the current financial year, the number of drawdowns during the year, the value of each drawdown together with details and purpose of the drawdowns with final sum as at the date 26 February 2018.

Reply:

Details of the original 2017/18 Central Contingency and the drawdowns allocated during the year are shown in the table below (appendix 3). The drawdowns were approved by Executive or Council or by Portfolio Holders following consideration by the relevant PDS Committees. The detail and purpose of the drawdowns is included in individual reports to those Committees on the dates shown below. There will be further changes to the Central Contingency in the 2017/18 Budget Monitoring report to Executive on 28th March 2018.

15. From Cllr Russell Mellor to the Resources Portfolio Holder

Can the Portfolio Holder advise me within his remit of Contracts, as to the number of Contracts awarded to the Kier Group, or their subsidiaries, and the value of each contract together with the total number of tender invitations submitted during a 4 year period ending on the 26th February 2018.

Reply:

Three contract records have been identified within the specified four year period as being awarded to Kier Group – only one of which is currently active.

Street Environment (Lot 1 - Street Cleansing)

The contract, which runs from 29 March 2012 to 28 March 2019, forms part of the Street Environment Contract (originally let as four lots). It deals with day-to-day routine street cleaning activities and response to service requests incorporating operations such as mechanical and manual sweeping, fly-tipping and fly-poster removal, emptying and replacing street litter bins, weed control, autumn leafing and, in the event of severe winter weather, snow clearance and pavement salting. The value of this contract is £22,476,552.

Street Lighting Maintenance and Improvement Services Contract

The contract (which commenced 1 April 2013) was due to expire 31 March 2023. This contract was for improvements and maintenance of the Borough's lighting stock including street lighting columns, and both lit and unlit signs and bollards and nameplates. However, service issues led to a 'walk away' agreement between LB Bromley and Kier Services Ltd, with the contract becoming dormant on 30 April 2017. The Major Highways contract (with FM Conway Ltd) has been varied to include provision for this service from 1 May 2017 to 31 July 2018. The value of the Street Lighting contract with Kier was £11,887,000.

Street Environment (Lot 3 – Public Convenience Cleansing)

There was a contract with Kier for servicing Public Conveniences, which was let as a five year contract from 29 March 2012 to 28 March 2017. A full Council decision was made on 28th February 2011 to agree closure of public conveniences as part of the Council's savings proposals. A phased closure of the Borough's facilities took place, including town centre conveniences, and was completed by 31st March 2015. This was in conjunction with the expansion of the Council's Community Toilet Scheme as an alternative provision. The value of this contract was £281,983.