

COUNCIL MEETING

8TH OCTOBER 2018

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC FOR ORAL REPLY

1. From Andrea Stevens to the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Portfolio Holder

Given the level of public interest in developments at Biggin Hill Airport, could I have an explanation as to why there are not any documents available on the LBB Planning website relating to an EIA Screening Opinion request for the following planning applications at BHA - 18/04180/EIA and 17/05343/EIA?

Reply:

Thank you for bringing this issue to our attention. Unfortunately, there was an IT technical issue which meant the relevant documents were not showing and this matter is being investigated so that the documents can be published on the website.

Supplementary Question:

I did note today that there are documents on the website; there are two documents for 2017 and three documents for 2018.

In the documents attached to a previous EIA screening request, reference 17/03894/EIA Mr Tim Horsman, Bromley Planning Development Control Manager, made the point in the decision, and I quote directly from his letter to Lichfields acting for Biggin Hill Airport - "The cumulative effect of development on the site is reaching the point where an environmental statement could be necessary to assess its visual impact. It is not considered, on balance, that this stage has yet been reached," and I note in the document on the current EIA screening opinion, that has been reiterated by Mr Horsman. When will the stage be reached at Biggin Hill Airport when an EIA is required?

Reply:

Not being an expert in these matters I haven't the foggiest idea when it might be reached, and we do have to rely on the expertise of officers. If Mr Horsman says it hasn't been reached then I have to respect his opinion. Clearly there will be a cumulative effect eventually which will mean it triggers it, but in his opinion it hasn't yet.

2. From Julie Ireland to the Leader of the Council

Two years ago Bromley Councillors voted: "This Council agrees that the negative impacts that the European Union has upon the efficiency and cost of Bromley Council activities mean Bromley Council would be better off if Britain was out of the European Union."

Given the current state of negotiations with the EU and the damage being caused to Bromley businesses and the impact on the livelihoods of many Bromley residents will councillors give their support to a People's Vote – let the people have a vote on the final deal.

Reply:

I personally believe that having already had a "people's vote" we do not need another, nor that we should avoidably extend the protracted 2 year debate we have already endured on the subject a single moment longer than is necessary.

I also believe that Brexit will bring significant financial benefits to our Nation and its people.

It is clearly not however, for me to know or second guess what 59 other Councillors think or believe on related matters.

Supplementary Question:

What plans has the Council put in place in the case of a “no deal” Brexit?

Reply:

The situation with a potential Brexit is that, if and when we leave, if the need arises, the Council has put in place, over many years, significant financial reserves so that we will be able to react and respond to any service issues that might arise.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Nicholas Bennett:

Does the Leader agree with me that we all had a leaflet that said, before June 23rd 2016, this is your decision; the Government will implement what you decide.

Reply:

I certainly do - I think it was on the £9m of literature that we all got through our door, to the chagrin of some of us. Yes, I completely endorse Cllr Bennett's comments.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Angela Wilkins:

If I have understood his reply to Ms Ireland's supplementary, is he confident then that if we do Brexit it is going to cost this Council quite a lot of money, and if so does he know how much?

Reply:

No, he is confident that exactly the reverse is true, but unlike the Labour Party who would have spent all our reserves a long time ago, what a prudent Council does is keep back reserves for unforeseen emergencies if it is required. Presumably if we did not have any reserves we would be criticised for that as well.

3. From David Clapham to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing Portfolio Holder (As Mr Clapham was not present a written reply was sent.)

Are you aware that the Airport Consultative Committee does not follow government's guidelines? As Bromley sits on the Consultative Committee and is a governmental body, why has it not tried so far to highlight that certain important factors do not conform with government guidelines?

Reply:

I do attend the Airport Consultative Committee meetings as do other Council and resident representatives. I am not clear though what aspect of the government guidelines are not being followed and if you could let me know, I can look into this.

4. From Julie Ireland to the Environment and Community Services Portfolio Holder

It's good news that the Council are planning to submit an application for funding from the Mayor's Liveable Neighbourhood scheme for the Shortlands area. Will the Council confirm that the bid will be made in time for this year's deadline and when will details of the proposed scheme be made available for public scrutiny?

Reply:

The Council is developing its draft LIP submission and other transport projects. The Council priorities lead to the identification of schemes; the Council then identifies funding sources to enable us to deliver them. All transport projects will be subject to pre-decision scrutiny which will determine which projects go forward and when. The Borough is working with Sustrans we are assured that there is sufficient time to prepare the necessary documentation before the submission deadline. Pop-up and other engagement events are being held to engage with the community. At this stage we are not producing finalised designs but detailing issues and aspirations for the area. If successful and we obtain Gate 2 funding for design and feasibility further events will be held. Formal consultation will occur when finished plans are produced should it proceed that far.

Supplementary Question:

Have Councillors from any other wards expressed an interest in a Liveable Neighbourhood Scheme for their areas?

Reply:

I do not recall any Councillors approaching me. The Shortlands area has transport priorities for us anyway. Officers have worked through a number of locations in the borough where we have transport priorities to deliver. The Shortlands area was probably our highest priority for various issues around the Shortlands Bridge but also seemed to have the greatest chances of success given what we have seen has been funded in other boroughs.

Additional Supplementary Question:

Does the Portfolio Holder find it very strange that only a few months ago Ms Ireland was campaigning in Bromley Town and now all of a sudden she is interested in Shortlands and yet a few months ago she was dedicated to the people of Bromley Town. Ms Ireland responded that the Bromley Town border did touch the edge of Shortlands.

5. From Julie Ireland to the Environment and Community Services Portfolio Holder

The Department for Transport recently announced up to £300 million of funding to create step-free access solutions and GTR (Govia Thameslink Railway) have asked for suggestions on what stations should be nominated for consideration of funding. Have the Council submitted any recommendations for stations in the Bromley Borough?

Reply:

Ravensbourne is the only GTR managed station in the Borough. Ravensbourne is the Borough's second least used station and Shortlands (the next stop on the line) is soon to be made step free. So this is not a priority for the Borough, unlike other stations where there is higher footfall and larger gaps in the step free network. We are lobbying for the delivery of the stations awarded Access For All funding in CP5 and for other stations that fall into the categories I've just outlined.

Note:

The Portfolio Holder subsequently reported that his answer had been slightly incorrect in that he should have stated that we only had one Thameslink operated station in the borough, Ravensbourne, and it was the second least used of all borough stations, and we also had one Southern operated Station in the Borough, Birkbeck, and it was the least used station in the borough. Southern and Thameslink were both GTR operated.

Supplementary Question:

Are you able to confirm that St Mary Cray Station is still on the list for step free access, and the same for Shortlands? We understood that that funding had been withdrawn.

Reply:

As far as I am aware, the funding has not been withdrawn, it has just been reduced and therefore spread out. St Mary Cray and Petts Wood are the two stations in CP5 that have not been done and my understanding is that Shortlands is either progressing or has been done. I do not use that station, so I have not been there. Certainly, the detailed designs have progressed at Shortlands, including where the lift shaft and motors will be. I understand that Shortlands is soon to be made step-free.

Additional Supplementary question from Cllr Kieran Terry

Would the Portfolio Holder back campaigning by ward members and the MP for Bromley and Chislehurst in requesting disabled access for Chislehurst and Elmstead Woods Stations? Both stations have over 1.2m usage and no disabled access.

Reply:

We would look to work through, progressively, the stations in the borough that have the need for disabled access. Certainly Chislehurst would be one to fund after the ones we have already identified. I do not know where Elmstead Woods would fit in to the borough's priority, but we do have a priority to work towards having our stations accessible.

Additional Supplementary question from Cllr Simon Fawthrop

Is the Portfolio Holder aware that planning permission has already been given for Shortlands to proceed?

Reply:

As I said, Shortlands is soon to be made step-free.

Additional Supplementary question from Cllr Kathy Bance

I am sure that lots of Councillors are worried at the lack of step-free access in their wards; could you circulate to us which stations have been identified, because most of our stations do not have step-free access, and I'm sure other Councillors have the same problems we do.

Reply:

I imagine you know which of your stations do not have step-free access. It really is a question of our priorities and working through those. Stations in Penge have been highlighted are part of CP6, though obviously we are still hoping that the three stations in CP5 will still be delivered.