

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**10<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2018**

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC FOR ORAL REPLY**

**1. From Byrom Mark Lees to the Environment and Community Services Portfolio Holder**

When are Bromley Council going to recognise that roads are not simply about getting motorised vehicles from A to B as quickly as possible, but are byways for everyone to feel confident that they can traverse safely in a variety of ways. Will Bromley therefore consider imposing a default speed limit of 20mph across the Borough?

**Reply:**

As detailed in our LIP which is out for consultation at the moment, Bromley has always recognised the importance of catering for all road users, be they cyclists, pedestrians, bus passengers, motorcyclists or car users. The safety of all road users is paramount and as such the Council has for many years invested heavily in road safety – both in terms of education programmes and safety schemes.

In respect to the widespread use of 20mph limits across the Borough, recently published DfT research suggests that there is little benefit to general 20mph limits. However, there is research to suggest that drivers respond well to advice or restrictions where they can see the reason for what they are being asked to do. Linking an issue/hazard with an action such as reducing speed makes them stand-out. Therefore Bromley will continue to implement advisory or mandatory 20mph limits in locations where a road safety benefit can be expected, such as near schools.

**Supplementary Question:**

Is there a Councillor prepared to volunteer to step out, perhaps with a child or a pet, in front of a car doing 20mph, and then to repeat by stepping out in front of one at 30mph, to back up their hypothesis about speed?

**Reply:**

We encourage all road users to look where they are going, whether the driver of a car, someone about to step out in front of a cyclist, a motorcyclist or a car driver. We encourage all road users to respect all other road users and not to hoot their horn or ring their bell at other road users who might be proceeding more slowly than they are.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Tony Owen:**

Will the Portfolio Holder confirm that he will base his decisions on facts, given the DfT survey that he mentioned, Manchester City Council and lots of other councils, and not the opinions of ill-informed lobbyists?

**Reply:**

Certainly we will be basing our opinions on facts, within the constraint that our Local Implementation Plan (LIP) has to be broadly in conformity with the Mayor's Transport Strategy and it may not be that the Mayor responds to logic in setting transport policy.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Kieran Terry :**

Is he aware of the recent report from LB Lewisham where they have one of these blanket 20mph zones -“The overall speed reduction achieved over all sites surveyed was just half a mile per hour.” Does he agree that instead of spending £1.23m, which was the cost of this scheme, we are better off spending taxpayers money on traffic schemes that will encourage proper reductions in speed?

**Reply:**

I was not aware of the Lewisham report, but we are aware of the DfT report which said that they had observed a similar - maybe 0.8mph rather than 0.5mph - decrease in speeds in 20mph zones, but also that they had observed a 0.7mph decrease in 30mph zones which were not affected by the 20mph limit. They were not therefore able to determine whether this was a genuine change in public behaviour on the roads, or the result of congestion or anything else. We will focus, as we have always have done, as we continue to drive down accidents to as close to zero as we can in terms of spending money most effectively to save most lives on our roads.

**2. From Dylan Evans to the Portfolio Holder for Education, Children and Families**

In this year's Make Your Mark campaign, young people in Bromley voted knife crime, mental health and ending period poverty as the issues they considered most important. What are the Council's plans for the coming year on addressing these important issues for young people?

**Reply:**

I am always keen to hear about what issues are impacting on young people in the borough and I applaud their engagement with them. The Make Your Mark campaign ties in with a lot of the issues that have already been highlighted by our own Bromley Youth Council who I am seeing on Thursday and will be picking up some of these issues. So, for example, in the last three years, Bromley Youth Council (BYC) has run two campaigns around mental health and wellbeing. They produced a video that is now available on YouTube which looks at challenging the stigmas around mental health. BYC also worked in partnership with Mind and Bromley Y to produce a 'Survival' guide to give young people the tools to support their peers at the early stages of mental health concerns. All of these resources have been shared with schools and local youth provisions.

In relation to Gangs and youth violence, which is a growing concern, BYC have been working on these as part of their current campaign alongside Council services, the Police and schools. Over seven hundred young people have been surveyed on these issues. In response BYC delivered a one day youth conference aimed to inform, influence and educate young people that are vulnerable or at risk of being groomed in to gangs, youth violence and CSE. There were many young people from our schools in attendance with their teachers. BYC are supporting work with the Met police youth engagement worker to divert young people into positive activities and raise awareness.

Regarding period poverty, which is relatively new to the agenda, that will be discussed at the next BYC meeting. I know Cllr Jeal is aware that the chairman and vice-chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board are sighted on this issue and committed to follow-up. There are current schemes already happening in Bromley - the Red Box project which is on Facebook, as well as the Metropolitan Police having a collection of sanitary wear that gets distributed to schools.

Three very important issues - I thank Mr Evans for highlighting them and they are being taken forward by both officers and members of our Youth Council.

**Supplementary Question:**

Does the Council feel that the lack of local authority governors imposed by the academy system in the majority of Bromley's schools will affect its ability to work with schools on these matters?

**Reply:**

A lot of schools are now academies and have their own governance structures. We are working very closely with schools to ensure that wider issues around public health are being addressed in schools, and indeed there are projects coming on-stream to support that. We have a good working relationship with schools that has been improving over the last couple of years.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Simon Jeal:**

He referenced the work that the Bromley Youth Council was doing on mental health; the Council is in the end stages of publishing its mental health strategy. Could he please indicate what involvement young people and the Bromley Youth Council have had in developing this strategy?

**Reply:**

The Youth Council have highlighted mental health issues as a key concern over the past two years, and I know that they have been involved in various forums so that they can feed into that strategy. We are always keen to listen to the voice of young people and we have been going through a process over the last couple of years where children's services have been growing and improving. An important part of that improvement process has been ensuring that the voice of children is at the heart of everything we do. I am very confident that we are hearing more clearly than we have done previously.

**3. From Vicki Hunt to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services**

Other than the school entrance on Bishop's Avenue to Bickley Primary and La Fontaine schools, how many school entrances in the Borough do NOT have zigzag yellow lines to warn motorists they cannot park, wait or stop?

**Reply:**

We do not have information related to all schools in the borough to hand on zig-zag lines and keep clear markings. Initial investigations show that this entrance is not alone in not having keep clear markings. It must also be pointed out that yellow lines with similar hours of operation can be in place in the borough around schools. Restrictions outside schools are selected based on the individual circumstances rather than a one size fits all approach.

**Supplementary Question:**

From my own research, I can tell you that of the seventy seven infant, junior and primary schools in the borough, 83% have zig zags at all entrances. Given this number of zig zag yellow lines installed as sensible measures to aid safety, will the Portfolio Holder provide a compelling reason why they cannot be installed at the

Bishops Avenue entrance to Bickley and La Fontaine Primary School, especially given the number of concerns raised by parents over many years?

**Reply:**

We keep road safety markings under review at all times. If there are road safety or other reasons to change they will be reviewed, but at the moment there are no plans to change the markings and there are no road safety reasons to suggest that it is a necessity.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Simon Fawthrop:**

Is the Portfolio Holder aware that at Wickham Common Primary School there are no zig zag lines because that is where all the cars park in front of the school in a forward direction, and that is far safer than having zig zag lines which would serve no purpose whatsoever outside that school?

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Nicky Dykes:**

I am aware that my Bickley colleagues have done a lot of hard work on this. Will the Portfolio Holder join me and some of the Bromley Town residents to air some of their concerns and have a discussion with the road safety team?

**4. From Nelson Pallister to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management**

How much unused contingency money in the last 3 completed years has been used to increase the Council's reserves and what was the total value of the reserves (total assets owned by the Council) at the end of each of these years?

**Reply:**

In 2015/16, £13.4m was allocated from the central contingency to reserves, £8.3m in 2016/17 and £8.4m in 2017/18.

The Council adopts a prudent approach in considering the central contingency sum to reflect any inherent risks, the potential impact of new burdens, population increases or actions taken by other public bodies that impact on the Council. The majority of the release of the unused contingency to reserves has been utilised for additional funding for the Council's Growth and Investment Fund which will result in additional income to enable a more sustainable financial position in the future and further funding to provide transitional support in addressing the future year's budget gap.

The total reserves (including all assets held by the Council) at each year end were £642m, £629m and £706m. Apart from earmarked reserves, capital receipts and general reserves, the majority of these sums are 'unusable' and not available to fund expenditure. These include unrealised gains & losses and technical accounting requirements.

Further details can be found in the annual statement of accounts which can be accessed via the Council's website. The Council's approach to the use of reserves and the Central Contingency Sum were included in the 2018/19 Council tax report to Executive on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

**Supplementary Question:**

I notice from the 2017/18 accounts that the usable reserves were £205m, and the unusable ones were £501m. With a total expenditure of £200m - £300m per year, is keeping £205m in usable reserves is being over careful? I want to thank the Council for its prudence.

**Reply:**

Thank you for the thank you. It is difficult to call whether £205m is too high or not. Bromley is one of only two boroughs that is debt free. People approach this in different ways - a neighbouring borough that has borrowed £1bn is now paying £50m per year just to service that debt. That is their way of tackling issues; we tend to tackle issues a lot better than that. The money we do have is invested very carefully; not only do we not have to pay £50m to service a debt but we get £14.5m as a return on our investment.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Simon Fawthrop:**

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm what our cash reserves are?

**Reply:**

No.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Kieran Terry:**

Does the Portfolio Holder agree that the £14.5m revenue that comes from those reserves is used to fund vital public services on an ongoing basis?

**Reply:**

Yes.

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

Parents with children at the Unicorn school have been campaigning for a weatherproof path from where the lollipop lady stands at the junction of South Eden Park Road with Cresswell Drive across the grass to Eden Park Avenue between the two football pitches exiting by the side of St Johns Church. Discussions and site visits have taken place with staff of idverde, and in June 2017 idverde indicated that funding for the project had been secured. However, since then Idverde have told the parents that funding is no longer available. Would the Portfolio Holder please advise the estimated cost of the path, whether there were any reasons apart from cost for not proceeding with the path and whether there are plans to revisit this decision?

**Reply:**

I do not have up to date costs for such a path. I also do not know if such a path following the route you indicate could limit sports activities in the park outside the football season, perhaps with cricket pitches. Improved facilities that will result in more children walking to school can be considered through engagement with the school and them improving the accreditation of their school travel plan. To ensure that any changes lead to an improvement in numbers walking, softer measures such as a walking bus may need to be included so that such a scheme would represent value for money.

**Supplementary Question:**

Would the Portfolio holder like me to share the emails with idverde where they have undergone consultation with the people in charge of the football pitches to mark out the right path that would not interfere with the pitches, and would he consider, given that he has already said that school safety is of vital importance, doing a walk to school with the parents along there, so that he can see just how narrow the pavement is as they enter Unicorn School?

**Reply:**

I would certainly appreciate those emails to let me understand the local points regarding the green space, and I am always ready to help any group walk to school more often. The only thing I would say, and I realise that this has come from parents, is that we really want all schools to reach their gold accreditation for their school travel plan, and therefore I do not want to do things independently of the school if that is not going to get them up to gold standard. I hope that parents are fully engaged with the school in getting their travel plan up to gold accreditation as a number of schools do, but unfortunately not all of them yet.

**6. From Laura Vogel to the Leader of the Council**

Could the Council please inform the chamber of any Brexit analysis that it has undertaken, or received, to assess the impact of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union on 29th March 2019 on the London Borough of Bromley?

I would like to know the Council's understanding of how the Government's deal, or lack of a deal, is anticipated to affect council finances, staffing, services, investments.

**Reply:**

The Council has undertaken no independent analysis on the possible effects or otherwise of Brexit; the latest general thoughts on related matters pan-London can be found on the following link from a recent London Councils Leaders Committee agenda:

<https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/download/file/fid/23765>

Senior staff within Bromley Council hold no reported concerns as to staffing or service issues.

In the unlikelyhood any unforeseen financial liabilities were to arise to the downside, the Council carries sufficient contingency reserves to ensure there will be no disruption to valued local services. Reserves that the Labour group opposite have often advised us to squander on preferred spending options over the years in a totally unfunded manner.

**Supplementary Question:**

Regarding the £700m in reserves, has the Council received any advice on how Brexit might impact that investment?

**Reply:**

We do not have £706m of usable reserves as the chamber was told earlier. Of the cash reserves that are usable, the answer to the question is no, because there is no evidence that any of the reserves will be needed.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Nicholas Bennett:**

Would the Leader agree that, given all the bogus forecasts that were made during the referendum by the Government and their supporters in Project Fear, any such forecasts are a waste of time anyway?

**Reply:**

I fully agree with that. The sky is not falling in, acorns are not hitting us on the head, and Chicken Licken is still with us. It is about time that Project Fear got off the case and started dealing with the realities. Whatever view one takes on Brexit, we are not here to discuss Brexit, we are here to discuss Bromley Council and its operations.

(At this point the time allowed for questions expired. The remainder of the questions received written replies.)

**7. From Dylan Evans to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families**

Several secondary schools in Bromley do not currently have access to in school counsellors, who can provide help for students with mental health issues, especially around the time of exams. Does the council have any plans to review funding for local agencies, such as Bromley Y, who provide this?

**Reply:**

It is not the case that schools do not have access to schools counsellors as suggested by the question - how schools provide support is a choice for each school's Head Teacher and governing body. As you say, some will commission counselling support from providers such as Bromley Y, some will use their own staff to provide confidential space for children to talk about their worries.

However, I am pleased to be able to announce that Bromley Council and Bromley Clinical Commissioning Group have been successful in bidding to the Department of Health to be a CAMHS Trailblazer, through which we will be developing mental health support teams working in schools. These areas (Bromley Y and the CAMHS Trailblazer) are targeted provision in addition to, not a substitute for, the support available to all children through schools' pastoral and early help systems.

**8. From Nelson Pallister to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families**

What is the local authority plan towards reaching families with children/young people with disabilities within the BAME community in Bromley who struggle with their caring roles and do not have the necessary support?

**Reply:**

I am pleased to confirm that all children who are in need from either universal, targeted or statutory services continue to have their needs met through resources within the local authority and, in particular, through the recent monitoring visits - the Bromley Children Project has been specifically mentioned in meeting the needs of the community in which they operate and in being flexible within any themes, trends and emerging needs.

**9. From Julie Ireland to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management**

During the recent by-election in Kelsey and Eden Park, the Liberal Democrats were refused access to the Langley Estate in South Eden Park Road in order to distribute election material. The residents' association were asked but replied by email "we do not want Lib Dem deliveries here". The Conservative candidate who lives on the estate and who is active on the residents' association was allowed to distribute leaflets, but we believe that other political parties were also refused permission. Does the Council have any by-laws or best practice advice for residents associations in private estates regarding the distribution of election material during an election period to ensure that all parties with candidates are allowed to leaflet without censorship?

**Reply:**

It is not for the Council or the Returning Officer to comment on or investigate matters of this nature and it is for you as a disappointed candidate to seek your own independent advice.

**10. From Nelson Pallister to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Care and Health**

Why are commissioned projects targeted at upskilling and engaging people with learning disabilities in the borough not being renewed?

**Reply:**

The Council is not aware of this and would be grateful if Mr Pallister is able to provide any additional information in respect of whatever it is he has heard. I will be in a position to formally address his question upon receiving the additional information.

**11. From Julie Ireland to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Enforcement**

The Council produces a free magazine "Safer Bromley News" that is distributed across the borough. What were the publication dates in 2017 and 2018, and what is the publication schedule for 2019?

**Reply:**

The publication dates for both 2017 and 2018 were similar, with borough wide distribution taking place in November 2018. If Safer Bromley News is published in 2019, then it could follow the same distribution pattern.