

**COUNCIL MEETING**

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

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

**1. From Cllr Angela Wilkins to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection & Enforcement**

The Home Office has recently published its Violence & Vulnerability (Locality) Review of Bromley. The review comes from a series of focus groups with agencies working in the field. Criticisms of the poor levels of service in Bromley are too numerous to list, but specific criticisms of this council include:

- *“Bromley is in denial about the problem it has with gangs and has been for years”*
- *“Bromley has no idea how to engage with the Afro Caribbean community around this issue”*
- *“There is still silo working with in the borough – in other boroughs staff know who to speak to, and they know who leads this agenda”*

The report’s summary concludes:

*“It was not clear to most of those we talked to who owns this agenda and roles of various partnerships and agencies. This indicates an issue around communication and leadership that will need resolving in the form of a clear recognition of the problem, a strategy to tackle it and a clear operational plan shared between police, the local authority, social landlords, schools, health agencies and the voluntary and community sectors.”*

Will the Portfolio Holder please give her response to this report?

**Reply:**

The locality review provides us with a broad brush overview of gangs and serious youth violence in the borough. We approached the Home Office for the resources to conduct the review to aid our learning and understanding of what is happening locally. We did not have to do this; we proactively bid for this money and for this review to happen. The review does not tell us anything we didn’t previously know but has cemented this into a review. The review is not a review of any single agency but a process done rapidly to see what practitioners know about the locality and to test the prevalence of local issues and identify barriers to tackle issues.

Work is already taking shape to address the issues in the report. In terms of governance and an overarching strategy we now have a gangs protocol in place, the police have helpfully provided an overview of gang and serious youth violence and will be doing a lunch and learn session for Council staff in December. In our recent feedback session with Ofsted they remarked on how “highly effective” our own Atlas team is in using contextual knowledge to increase our understanding of wider safeguarding issues in relation to vulnerable children.

There is no denial of an emerging gangs issue in the borough as we have put resources into the Atlas team and the MEGA Panel is a multi-agency panel tracking high risk vulnerable children. The MEGA panel considers all vulnerabilities which are overarching in relation to missing, CSE and Gangs because it would be unusual to have one without the other in terms of consideration of safeguarding. We have been very successful in mitigating risk in reducing the number of children tracked from 63 to 42 at the current time. This panel has been recognised as effective throughout the Ofsted monitoring visits and during the re-inspection. We have an effective youth offending service working with young people pre-court and post court and with young people with complex issues. The YOS are part of a regional serious youth violence practice group to disseminate and share good practice across boroughs.

We continue to have youth service provisions that operate across the borough providing services for young people, with our Penge youth provision being well utilised by young people. We work in a multi-agency way to safeguard children and young people through support, supervision, disruption and enforcement activities. We have a range of resources available to the local authority to enhance our work in relation to gangs and serious youth violence. We have access to the Response and Rescue (R&R) Pan London provision for those identified as missing, exploited and in gangs. The service (R&R) provision enables us to have mentors and gangs exit support and work with girls and young women. We have growing numbers of children receiving support. We regularly try to innovate and seize on opportunities to bring additional funding into the borough to work with children and young people, but to date this has been unsuccessful when competing with other boroughs whose needs are deemed greater than others with their gangs issues. We are introducing a new practice model within social care that will upskill our frontline practitioners and all managers in their work with children and young people. The serious youth violence is owned by the Partnership because safeguarding is everyone's business and the Vulnerable Adolescent strategy is led and driven by the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board. In terms of working with afro Caribbean young people, this is an area of work that we need to prioritise and focus on and the YOS recently commissioned a training session working with a group of challenging to young black males who often don't engage in services, the work focused on raising self-esteem, realising their potential and addressing risk factors for young people in the criminal justice system.

We have links with a gangs exit service to support young people move away from gang involvement and this reaches out to the parents of children involved. Our EIS service offers parents and adolescents opportunities for support in relation to gang concerns.

We have utilised the Safer London organisation to train and skill up staff; we are working closely with our police colleagues and have access to intelligence which supports our children and the risks they take.

Other things that have happened:

- In November this year there was a Safeguarding Board conference on Vulnerable Adolescents.
- In December this year, there was a Bromley Youth Council conference on gangs and youth violence for schools.
- Complex strategy/safeguarding meetings regarding our young people of concern.
- The safer Neighbourhood Board are funding a number of anti-gang workshops in primary and secondary schools, primarily in the north west of the borough.

- Concerning the Safer Neighbourhood Board, I am also in the process of arranging a community meeting in the Penge/Crystal Palace area for January next year.

The review only focused on a small sample of professionals working in the borough and as such has limitations, the reviewer stressed that the review “does not necessarily represent the full picture in the borough.” The reviewer also noted good work taking place within the borough.

**Supplementary Question:**

If there is no denial of the gangs problem, can she explain why the report from the Home Office, which was on the agenda for the Safer Bromley Partnership Board, was passed over without discussion? Secondly, why is there no evidence of all this rather technical and esoteric work that local people can see on the ground in Penge and Anerley and thirdly, would she agree that it was a mistake and a false economy to cut the ethnic minority officer from the budget?

**Reply:**

I disagree that the report was passed over at the Safer Bromley Partnership. We only received the report less than a couple of weeks ago and we did mention at the meeting that we were going to work through it and all the recommendations. I would just like to add that we did proactively ask for this report; we welcome the findings and we will work to make improvements.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Kathy Bance**

You said in your report that you are not denying that Bromley is an emerging gang borough, and you have done work with the Metropolitan Gang Team, and they have advised that we have four gangs operating, based in Penge. We have had five murders in Penge, or of Penge young men, and three in the last thirteen months. Do you not think we should stop using the word emerging and accept that we have a gang problem that we need to tackle?

**Reply:**

There are three gangs listed in the review and there is only one that is primarily a large group in the borough - the M20 gang. I am happy to review as time goes on whether it is emerging or not, but I do not think it is within our gift to decide what the classification is - I think that is down to the Home Office.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Kevin Brooks**

In Penge and the north of the borough the gang problem is very blatant - can the Portfolio Holder explain what she is doing to work with Lewisham and Croydon councils, who probably are successful with their bids, to try and get involved so that we can have a tri-borough effect on tackling problems?

**Reply:**

Working with other boroughs is done through the Police and they have regular intelligence, updates and joint meetings on a daily basis with the other boroughs on what is happening with gang activity. We are also, within our tri-borough arrangement, setting up meetings with respective counterparts to see what best practice there is in Croydon and Sutton.

## **2. From Cllr Ian Dunn to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education & Families**

The internal audit report into Leaving Care dated 15 October 2018 gave limited assurance and had 6 priority 1 recommendations. What are the implications of this for our ongoing Ofsted Inspections, particularly given that Pathway Plans were found not to be being reviewed every six months as required?

### **Reply:**

Cllr Dunn will be aware that our Ofsted Inspection concluded over a week ago, so there are no on-going implications. However, what I suspect is that Cllr Dunn is concerned about whether the recommendations have been followed up.

The audit report he is referring to was issued in October 2018 but it references the period of May 2018. Since that time there has been pace within the Leaving Care service in line with and highlighted by the published improvement journey and new measures have been put in place to address the priority 1 issues. We have had various Ofsted monitoring visits and Practice Assurance Stocktakes. They have confirmed that practice has improved and the recent Ofsted re inspection will, I am confident, validate the improvement in the service for Care Leavers. With reference in particular to the pathway plans, these are scrutinized through the Director's performance surgery and the monthly Governance Improvement Board where the performance for children is discussed.

### **Supplementary Question:**

Given the importance of Pathway Plans for Care Leavers, how did we get into the situation where many of them were not being reviewed as they ought to have been?

### **Reply:**

It is a fair question, and it is worth putting into context how these plans work. We have to remember that Pathway Plans for young people are a live document, and they are not done to the young person, they are done with them. Sometimes, young people are not available or choose not to sign their plan when required. We have to remember that, in addition to those sampled cases, a lot of them relate to young people that are twenty years old and above, the eldest being twenty-four. As adults, they will often decide what to prioritise and what not to prioritise. For example, in some of these cases, and I have a sample of cases in front of me that I am happy to share, one of the young people did not have it as a priority compared to what they were doing at work, there was one young person who was in custody and it was not possible to get it done within the specific timeframe. All of the samples have been audited and the professional judgement and rationale for those not being completed on time is on file and has been professionally assessed. We are confident that we have met those priority one issues.

## **3. From Cllr Kathy Bance MBE to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education & Families**

Can you confirm that at least one of the Harris Academy Secondary Schools will only be accepting pupils from Harris Primary Schools? If so, can you advise which of the Harris Academies will be affected and when is this likely to happen?

**Reply:**

I can reassure you that no Harris Academy in Bromley has admission arrangements which allow them to admit only children who attend a Harris Primary Academy.

**Supplementary Question:**

Did I get it wrong that you actually said that at one of the Education PDS meetings?

**Reply:**

I think you are referring to the consultation that was taking place, where the Harris Primary Academies were looking to see if that was a possibility, and at the end of that consultation period it was not agreed that they would single out children from Harris Academies. There is one school that seeks to prioritise children from one school, but none of them have arrangements that are specifically for children from other Harris Academies.

**4. From Cllr Josh King to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services**

Which areas in Bromley benefit from street or pavement cleaning with high pressure water and / or scrubbing machines?

**Reply:**

The primary street cleansing service does not utilise any pressure washing on hard surface areas across the borough. Any additional pavement /asset washing by high pressure washing are completed as a variable aspect of the service and cannot be met via the existing Street Environment Service revenue budget. However, when separate funding is provided the service has the ability to undertake this work. The Bromley High Street and Bromley North Village area has the provision of a street washer due to the size of the pedestrianised areas and the heavy foot traffic associated with these areas, funding for this is provided from Renewal & Recreation budget head. Street friends and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have previously been provided with chewing gum cleaning kits so additional cleaning can occur. BIDs have also procured additional cleaning or cleaning equipment, such as for cleaning chewing gum, to target particular locations of their priority.

**Supplementary Question:**

Given statements made at the Beckenham Town Centre Working Group, the pale colour of some of the paving in and around Beckenham installed as part of the Beckenham Town Centre improvements is already dirty in appearance. Do you understand the disappointment of residents and what can you do to ensure that the poor appearance is rectified?

**Reply:**

As I indicated, our current revenue provided service cannot clean those sorts of stones on an on-going basis, and I do not think there is any benefit in giving unrealistic expectations of what is and is not possible within our current cleaning service. I would certainly much prefer that roads are cleared from detritus and litter than it may look a bit dirty.

**5. From Councillor Simon Jeal to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing**

Is the Portfolio Holder aware that a number of crowd funding schemes for projects in the Borough are currently trying to achieve funding by the 17<sup>th</sup> December, including for Beckenham Green and a bridge to access the Crystal Palace Dinosaurs. Does the London Borough of Bromley support these schemes and would he encourage local residents and organisations to donate towards them?

**Reply:**

Yes, not only do we support these schemes but we have worked with both groups, in support of their applications, prior to their fundraising bids. This is something you may have heard on the BBC when BBC London Radio publicised the campaign for the bridge to the dinosaurs, which is also supported by Slash from Guns & Roses (I believe they are neither arms manufacturers nor florists, but are responsible for musical extravaganzas.) I am sure that their support is most welcome. More generally, the Council continues to work with many business and resident groups, Friends of Parks groups and other voluntary organisations. I am very hopeful here.

**Supplementary Question:**

I am pleased to hear that he is familiar with Guns and Roses. Can he confirm how much the Council will be pledging to each of the two projects - the Beckenham Park and the Dinosaur Project?

**Reply:**

I do not have the numbers, but I will send you an email.

**6. From Cllr Vanessa Allen to the Leader of the Council**

Why, unlike in recent years, will there be no public meetings about the budget this year, where residents can ask questions of the portfolio holders?

**Reply:**

There was no Public meeting (singular) this year for two reasons.

Firstly, the enduring disappointing attendance levels from Members of the public at the meetings, with commensurate lack of feedback to act upon as a result.

Secondly, the ever rising pressure on staff time and resources to set up, advertise and host such events.

In addition to retaining focus on the two 'round table' meetings with Resident Association officials from across the Borough this year instead, in an effort to contact as wide an audience and cross selection of the public as possible, the Council has also actively advertised through local media outlets, inviting anybody who wishes to contribute a view or opinion on Council related issues to do so more directly by use of telephone or email. I note that some colleagues across the chamber have been repeating that via Twitter and I thank them for that because all of that input is very valuable.

Any member of the public can of course also continue express their own views and probe Members of the Council through the more formal meeting structures of full Council, such as we have seen this evening, the Executive, Development Control

Committee, General Purposes and Licensing Committee, the Health and Wellbeing Board or the six PDS and Select Committees supporting the Council's decision making structure.

As an aside, and this research is not complete, early research suggests that none of our neighbouring Labour controlled Boroughs exceed Bromley's level of engagement with residents in terms of public facing consultations over their own budgets.

**Supplementary Question:**

The issue is that when we used to have meetings in several places in the evening scattered around the borough they were well attended and it was a very useful opportunity. When the meetings were reduced to only one in the daytime it stopped a lot of people attending, so I would like to repeat that we should reconsider this. If staffing levels were up to what they should be and vacancies filled staff would not be so over worked and we could have these meetings. I think the Council should re-consider this as it is a useful way of engaging with the public and letting the public see people face to face and ask them questions.

**Reply:**

I would not disagree with Cllr Allen's sincerely held views on this. If there is some scope or, indeed, a necessity as we move forward with some contentious budget issues in forthcoming years, we will of course increase consultation to the best of our ability, but in terms of why it was done, that was the rationale underpinning it this year.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Nicky Dykes**

Would the Leader agree with me that all ward councillors have a responsibility to do outreach with their own residents and use that medium to feedback any concerns, such as my colleagues in Bromley Town who have monthly surgeries to hear such things?

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Simon Jeal**

Would the Council Leader consider making more use of technology as referenced in the IT Infrastructure report and some other papers coming up later this evening as part of the consultation, such as Twitter Q and A's or other social media facing engagement with members of the public?

**Reply:**

As technology evolves we should, of course, use the new technology to the max, and I would have no argument with that.

With regard to Cllr Dykes' point, yes, it is absolutely incumbent on every councillor in this chamber to reach out to their communities, to correspond, engage and try to draw them into the system. Everyone will have their own ways of doing it – some people are very keen on ward surgeries, others find that you can sit there for three hours on a Saturday morning and nothing happens at all. Some people will find Facebook and Twitter a better medium. Everyone will have their own preferred method of communicating with residents but it is incumbent on all of us to ensure that we do that outreach.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Angela Wilkins:**

Would he agree with me that the voters in the north of the borough make their views very clear in terms of how much public spending and the levels of service that they would like to see? They vote Labour and they get Labour Councillors.

**Reply:**

Perhaps that is due to some of the literature that goes through the letter box suggesting that the north west of the borough is hard done by and has less spent on it per capita than other places when, perversely, exactly the reverse is true in those areas. Each Councillor will have their own methodology for communicating with their residents and it will vary ward by ward across the borough.

**7. From Cllr Kevin Brooks to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management**

On 12/12/18 Universal Credit is due to have completed its roll out throughout the country. As councillors one of the main issues we encounter is vulnerable residents unable to cope with the new payment structure. What is the Council doing to ensure residents do not slip into debt and face possible eviction?

**Reply:**

Universal Credit Full Service commenced in Bromley on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2018. The migration of current working age Housing Benefit claims onto Universal Credit has not yet been announced by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

Bromley is in partnership with Citizens Advice (CAB), delivering Personal Budgeting Support for Claimants of Universal Credit. This is offered to all claimants at their initial interview with their Work Coach. Alternatively, Claimants can self-refer direct to the CAB using a free-phone number.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, Bromley will no longer be involved in this process. The Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) have entered a contract with the CAB to deliver both Personal Budgeting Support and Assisted Digital Support. Details as to the form this support will take has not yet been advised, but based on initial meetings between officers of the Authority, CAB and DWP it is likely to be similar to the current offering.

Bromley Housing Department also have specialist money advisers within the Homeless Prevention Services Team. The advisers work directly with clients to ensure that they are able to manage their finances – this has a particular focus on supporting those moving over to Universal Credit.

Furthermore, the Bromley Children's' Project highlight families with budgeting issues and work closely with those families to work through their debt issues.

Both Bromley departments will continue with this support after April 2019.

**Supplementary Question:**

It is good to hear that there is work being done with residents. In this borough we rely quite a lot on private landlords for our housing, could I also ask what work is being done because nationally there have been stories about private landlords being far less positive in housing people on Universal Credit?

**Reply:**

We have had no feedback on specific issues with our private landlords, but it is an area that we need to be looking at. I am concerned, and will probably be meeting two or three times with Housing officers during the course of the rollout to see what the implications are that we suffer from. I will be more than happy for you to join me at those meetings and have an input from your specific area, which will be very valuable.



**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Marina Ahmad**

Does the Portfolio Holder have any concerns about any particular groups of vulnerable people, for example lone parents or young people leaving care?

**Reply:**

During the initial consultation period we fed back specific concerns which I had at that time. One particular concern was about the idea that the entire benefit would be paid to one person in the household. We have made arrangements so that it can be split in certain cases, but that worries me. I do worry about the roll-up of various things happening at the same time – I think there may be a cumulative impact that would not necessarily be obvious to people looking in isolation at individual elements. We have a report later on about Council Tax support, and I make reference there about my concern about the cumulative impact of certain measures being taken. I think that is something we need to have on the radar as we go through next year, but we will have to keep a close watching brief on exactly what is happening in terms of implications for Housing, and Cllr Morgan and I will be speaking about that.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Simon Jeal**

To pick up on one point regarding payment being made to one member of the household, is he aware of the campaign that Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid have been running over the last sixteen days in relation to domestic abuse and particularly some of the signs of domestic abuse? Could some of that literature be given to those in the Housing Department and those who may be closest to dealing with Universal Credit within the borough, so that they can look out for the signs of potential domestic violence?

**Reply:**

That might be extremely valuable, and I would like to look at that literature and speak to Cllr Morgan about putting these on the counters, and it may well be that the literature you describe will be extremely valuable.

**8. From Cllr Simon Fawthrop to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management**

In relation to the written reply to my questions 10 and 11, would the Portfolio Holder please detail with a year by year summary of the extra costs this Authority would have had to bear, had it passed the 'alternative budget' proposals of the Labour Party opposition since 2002/3 to date, summarising:

(i) The financial effect such action would have had on the current level of the Council's useable reserves, accruing the extra deficit incurred (or gained) each year at the 'Base Rate' of that time.

(ii) The financial effect such action would have had on the Council's current budget deficit, ahead of preparing the budget for 2019/20?

**Reply:**

Given the question requests a year by year summary of extra costs, I have circulated a paper setting out the detail in table format ([Appendix 1](#)).

**Supplementary Question:**

It is interesting to note if you take that in accordance with the written question on page 4 or 5 of the written answers, that cumulatively, councillors on this side have saved £509m since 2011/12 - that is a lot of money. On that track record, would he trust the Labour Party to set a budget for this Council?

**Reply:**

We are not going to find out. It does not matter whether I trust them – it is a question of whether the electorate trusts them. The electorate did give them the trust from 1998 to 2001 and since then they have entrusted us. It is something that we have always been very jealous about – the fact that we do have a careful stewardship and sustainability about the way that we do things. Sometimes people accuse us of being over prudent. I do not think it is a question of over prudence, because we never know what is round the corner. It could be Ofsted or whatever – we always have to be prepared. I am more than happy with the way that we do careful stewardship going forward and I would rather not test the Labour group's ability to come up with an alternative budget

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Kathy Bance:**

Could Cllr Arthur explain why we have failed two Ofsted inspections so abysmally, with all the savings that you have made?

**Reply:**

I could try. I have been in this chamber long enough to remember 2001 when we had a failed Ofsted, and that is when the administration sat on that side of the Council. You have to be a little bit careful before you start throwing stones.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Angela Wilkins:**

Would Cllr Arthur agree that it is somewhat disingenuous that this question was asked by Cllr Fawthrop given that not long ago he was questioning the cost of questions? Is it appropriate for this type of highly political question to consume officers' time with the response?

**Reply:**

It is a bit tricky to be asked to support or defend Cllr Fawthrop's line of questioning – it is really for him to defend, and not me.

**9. From Councillor Angela Page to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Enforcement**

How many CCTV cameras do the Council currently have and how is success measured?

**Reply:**

We currently have 171 fixed CCTV cameras and 20 vibration relocatable cameras. Regarding how success is measured, every month we count -

- The number of incidents where the control room has assisted the police to investigate and also when recorded images have been disclosed to the police in terms of packages of evidence to be used in court;
- The number of incidents where we have been able to disclose recorded images to other parties, including solicitors and insurance agencies for a fee;

- The number of live incidents reported to the police;
- Specialist operations conducted in the control room by the police and other groups.

Unfortunately, we cannot measure successful prosecutions in court, and those that end up with people going to prison, because that data is not made available to us by the Police, although the Police do sometimes commend our operators for their support and expertise during various operations.

**Supplementary Question:**

It is reassuring that residents around the borough are protected in this way. Are there many occurrences of camera breakdown, and if so what is the average time that before they are up and running again?

**Reply:**

Faults are rare, but when a fault is reported according to the contract they have to be inspected within four days of the fault being noticed. Repairs are made as quickly as possible, but it does depend on how quickly they can get hold of the part required.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Kevin Brooks:**

Has CCTV caused a reduction in fly-tipping or simply moved it elsewhere in the borough?

**Reply:**

With fly-tipping it is very difficult to catch anybody on CCTV, but we have had a recent success in the last month or so when we put a relocatable one in Kangley Bridge Road and on the first day of us putting it there, after we received information from a ward councillor that there was frequent fly-tipping there, we caught somebody, we found the vehicle involved, seized it and last week I went to a scrap yard in Erith where I watched it being crushed. Before they did that, they took everything off and it will be recycled and the company we used, called Recycling Lives, which is a charity who employ people leaving prison in various locations. Whereas the normal prisoner leaving prison has a 77% chance of returning to prison, of the people coming into their scheme only 5% return to prison.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Angela Wilkins:**

Could the Portfolio Holder explain precisely what criteria are used to determine the location of the relocatable CCTV cameras?

**Reply:**

I do not have the full guidelines off the top of my head, but I will be happy to get that information from the officers and forward it on to you.

**10. From Cllr Nicholas Bennett to the Leader of the Council**

(Question withdrawn.)

## **11. From Cllr Tony Owen to the Chairman of the Development Control Committee**

How do you suggest the Council responds to the erratic and inconsistent planning appeal decisions, especially in the Petts Wood Area of Special Residential Character (ASRC)?

After recent 'rogue' decisions, especially three by one planning inspector, officers and planning sub-committees have no idea where things stand and how they should judge future applications.

### **Reply:**

The Council is able to challenge appeal decisions through the courts if there is a procedural issue with the way the decision was made, however it cannot do so simply because it disagrees with the conclusions of a particular decision. Such challenges are risky and they can result in the Council paying costs unless it has a very clear and strong case on procedural grounds.

The Council should continue to deal with applications in the ASRC in accordance with established and emerging development plan policies. Indeed, there is no sense in creating an ASRC if it is not respected in subsequent planning decisions.

While previous appeal decisions can be a material consideration, they are not decisive in future planning decisions and the Council is entitled to take a different view from that expressed in a related appeal decision, provided it can support any planning decision it makes with cogent policy based evidence. If not, there is a risk of costs in any subsequent appeal.

When applications go to appeal the inspector can only see what is written in the minutes. I would point out the practice that Cllr Simon Fawthrop makes of giving a detailed submission with the reasons he considers to be the grounds of refusal when a sensitive application occurs in his ward. This is then given to the committee clerk for inclusion in the minutes so that, when the application goes to appeal the inspector has the Member's local knowledge and further information to take into consideration. I would say that Members with similar applications would be well advised to follow this practice.

### **Supplementary Question:**

Could we as a Council present to the Inspectorate a list of decisions that were allowed and a list of decisions that were rejected, all very similar. There is total inconsistency between its inspectors. You can challenge an appeal, but that is one decision, but the problem is a general problem of consistency and they just go into complaint mode if you complain. What I would like the Chairman to do is challenge the consistency of decision making by the Planning Inspectorate with examples where we show that they are just not consistent.

### **Reply:**

I agree that consistency in decision making is very important, and I would be open to doing as Cllr Owen suggests.

### **Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Angela Wilkins:**

Would Cllr Michael like to comment on the planning implications of the recently installed "Turdis" that I understand has recently arrived in Petts Wood and does she believe that this is partly in response to the Council's closure of the public toilet?

**Reply:**

No, I do not.

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

If more needs to be done to protect the Petts Wood ASRC, will she instruct officers to come up with the correct phraseology and wording and all the detailed planning alterations to our Local Plan that we need so that we can protect it in future?

**Reply:**

As I said, there is no point in creating ASRC if we then take planning decisions that go against them, so, yes.

**12. From Cllr Nicky Dykes to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Enforcement**

Could the Portfolio Holder please set out the representations made by the Council on the plans to merge Bromley's policing units with Sutton and Croydon? Can she provide an update?

**Reply:**

At the beginning of the process the Deputy Mayor for Policing & Crime, Sophie Linden came to Bromley to meet myself, the then Leader, the Chief Executive and the Bromley Borough Commander to outline their plans. At that very first meeting we voiced our misgivings about being merged with Croydon, and particularly the prospect of having a shared response team with two other boroughs.

Following this I had several meetings in London about it where again I voiced our disapproval. I also had several meetings at City Hall and at London Councils with the Deputy Mayor about our grant funding, which I always stayed behind to speak to her and reiterate our concerns. I also attended an All Party Parliamentary Group meeting about Policing at the House of Commons in which Bob Neil joined me after the meeting to speak to her again. I attended another All Party Parliamentary Group meeting about Serious Youth Crime at Portcullis House, and again stayed afterwards to be an annoying flea in her ear, to which she was always very polite and said she understood where I was coming from.

When the Tri-borough Commander Jeff Boothe was assigned his new post he came to Bromley to meet with the Leader, the Chief Executive and myself. He understood from the get go in his new job that a shared response team was unacceptable to Bromley Council and our residents. At the regular Bromley Leader's Committee meetings the Leader reinforced our position at every meeting, and myself and Nigel Davies had numerous meetings at Bromley Police Station with Jeff Boothe, again with the same message. Before Jeff arrived Nigel Davies and I had monthly meetings at Bromley Police Station with the then Borough Commander Chris Hafford, where he agreed to say No to everything at his regular meetings with the BCU rollout at Scotland Yard. I attended a meeting hosted by Jeff Boothe at London Bridge with my Public Protection Counterparts from Croydon and Sutton, where again we reasserted that sharing response resources and Neighbourhood Policing resources across the three boroughs was unacceptable and a recipe for disaster.

I invited Sophie Linden to the SNB Bromley Crime Summit last year and she came to speak about the Public Access Consultation. Although she kept trying to steer the

conversation to the Public Access Consultation, our residents stood up time and time again to highlight the geographical size of our borough and the fact that Croydon has a different crime profile to Bromley, and their fears that resources would be sucked out of Bromley in favour of Croydon was unacceptable to all of them. Councillor Michael and Madame Mayor also put our position forward forcefully. The Safer Neighbourhood Board also helped facilitate letters sent to the Deputy Mayors from the separate ward Safer Neighbourhood Panels, so that she was getting the message reinforced by our residents groups.

In the latter stages of the process the Leader sent a letter to the Deputy Mayor, and I contacted the Leader of Sutton Council and we sent a joint letter to the Deputy Mayor highlighting how neither of us desired a shared response team with Croydon and our reasons why. Previously to this, following advice given at the Public Protection & Safety PDS Committee as it was then, I wrote to the Public Protection Leads of the three boroughs involved in the first tri-borough Pilot. They highlighted to me how response times immediately went up, and this was put in the letter as evidence.

In conclusion, we never expected to halt the BCU process but to retain our own dedicated response team and our own dedicated neighbourhood policing team is a fantastic win for Bromley, and one that I am very proud of. It was a great team effort and thanks go to The Leader, Councillors, the PP&S PDS, LBB Officers, the SNB, Bromley Police and our brilliant residents groups.

**Supplementary Question:**

Thank you to the Portfolio Holder for being such a good flea in the ear, and to the Leader and all those others involved. Would she agree with me that, going forward, and in reflection of the fact that we do have our response teams, that we keep accurate and factual information in the public domain about our response times, and not scare-mongering as we might have seen recently?

**Reply:**

Absolutely. The correct facts are very easily obtained through the MOPAC dashboard website. It is very irresponsible to massage numbers or use completely incorrect numbers which has been done in a recent campaign.

**Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Ian Dunn:**

A couple of weeks ago I received an email concerning a shooting incident in Penge, and that was from somebody entitled Inspector, Neighbourhood Policing, Croydon. Would the Portfolio Holder agree that the fact that an Inspector in Croydon is writing to Councillors about a shooting incident in Penge shows that there is genuine cross borough working

**Reply:**

Was his name Craig Knight? Oh, Stephen Ward. The BCU is there - one of the benefits is that we can share gang expertise between boroughs, and boroughs such as Croydon have greater experience than us. There are benefits to the BCU and that is one of them.

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

### **13. From Cllr Angela Wilkins to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Care & Health**

The following failings were identified in a recent internal audit investigation of the Council's Adult Mental Health Contract with Oxleas:

- the contract has run for 14 years without review or variation to ensure it is relevant and fit for purpose;
- performance measures are obsolete and there are no defined monitoring measures in place;
- there is no Mental Health Board in place;
- care package reviews for the majority of clients were overdue until recently.

In relation to Direct Payments, internal audit reported the following:

- direct payment terms and conditions were not being met;
- instances where there was no evidence that payments made were being used for purpose intended;
- evidence found of over-payments being made to clients;
- a number of DP5 forms missing.

Were you surprised by these findings?

#### **Reply:**

Not completely as they are largely commenting retrospectively on matters the Department is already sighted to and have either already fixed or are in the throes of resolving.

### **14. From Cllr Ian Dunn to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning & Contract Management**

Eight London Boroughs including Barnet and Hillingdon and Sevenoaks and Tonbridge & Malling Districts in Kent have signed up to a Council Tax Protocol developed by the Local Government Association & Citizens Advice which asks that Councils:-

- Work with enforcement & advice agencies to help people pay their Council Tax bills while accessing debt advice,
- Ensure all communications with residents about Council Tax is clear,
- Use the Standard Financial Statement when calculating repayment plans,
- Offer flexible payment arrangements to residents,
- Do not use enforcement agencies where a resident receives Council Tax support,
- Publish their policy on residents in vulnerable circumstances.

What consideration has Bromley given to signing up to this protocol?

#### **Reply:**

The Head of Revenues and Benefits has met with the Service Delivery Manager at Bromley CAB to discuss the recovery of Council Tax debt. Part of the discussion at which revolved around the Council Tax Protocol.

The meeting proved fruitful and whilst the Protocol has not been signed, certain elements have been adopted with other joint working arrangements put in train. These include:

- Expanding the number of documents on which Taxpayers are advised as to where to obtain independent advice



- Citizen Advice Bureau's being invited to Pre-Summons Surgeries
- Provision of direct line telephone numbers to Recovery Officers for the making of arrangements
- Acceptance of the Standard Financial Statement; however it was advised that on occasions additional information may be requested.
- Commencement of monthly joint surgeries at Community House \*

*\* Due to commence early next year*

The Authority is committed to collecting revenue whilst minimising the distress and hardship to those owing Council Tax.

**15. From Cllr Kathy Bance MBE to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education & Families**

What involvement has the London Borough of Bromley had with Harris Academy Kent House in respect of the maladministration over the annulled SATs results of some Year 6 pupils?

**Reply:**

I take this as a follow up to the question Cllr Ahmad asked at the October Council meeting. As I explained to the Council in October, the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) may require a local authority to monitor the administration of Key Stage 2 tests in any school. Bromley Local Authority was required to do this at Harris Primary Academy Kent House. We fulfilled that task and reported back to the STA. The Local Authority has no further involvement.

**16. From Cllr Josh King to the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Community Services**

What proportion of waste collected for recycling in Bromley is sent overseas for processing?

**Reply:**

All of the waste and recyclable material collected in Bromley is processed in the UK. Recyclable materials that are derived as a result of the initial processing are brokered on the open global market. UK markets are selected wherever possible but for some materials (primarily plastics) the volume of recyclable material collected exceeds the UK manufacturing industries demand for feedstock. Therefore, a proportion of the processed recyclable materials from Bromley may be transported 'overseas' to create new products. The proportion of post-processed recyclable products sent overseas is not known as this material is no longer in the Council's ownership.

**17. From Cllr Simon Jeal to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation & Housing**

This year, volunteers from the Bromley Homeless Shelter and local churches will be starting to run a second winter shelter in the Borough, to increase capacity to provide beds and meals to rough sleepers. How is the council's homeless strategy addressing the support needed for the increasing number of Bromley residents becoming homeless?



**Reply:**

The Council's homelessness strategy sets out the priorities and activities being undertaken to support people in Bromley who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness. The full homelessness strategy which provides details on the range of initiatives being undertaken can be downloaded from the Council's website -

([https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/file/774/homelessness\\_strategy\\_priorities\\_poster](https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/file/774/homelessness_strategy_priorities_poster))

Overall these activities centre on the 3 following areas:

- To prevent or relieve homelessness wherever possible either by assisting a household to remain in existing accommodation or to secure alternative accommodation.
- To increase access to and the level of affordable housing supply available.
- To provide support to improve life chances so that households build the necessary resilience to sustain accommodation and minimise the risk of repeat homelessness.

**18. From Cllr Vanessa Allen to the Leader of the Council**

Bromley Council seems to be the only body in the country who do not consider that any planning needs to be done concerning Brexit. Why does the leader consider he knows better than the Local Government Association, the CBI, the NHS Confederation, chambers of commerce and so on?

**Reply:**

Because I do know better about the needs and requirements of the London Borough of Bromley than the LGA, CBI, NHS Confederation, Chambers of Commerce and so on.

So should you as a point of fact, likewise every other Member of this Council too.

**19. From Cllr Kevin Brooks to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education & Families**

How much of a priority does the Portfolio Holder see Religious Education in Bromley and, in the light of Bromley being dominated by academies, what influence does he have on advising schools on syllabuses?

**Reply:**

I see all learning as a priority. Regarding the specifics of influencing syllabus – the RE syllabus in locally maintained schools follows the locally agreed syllabus as set by the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).

**20. From Cllr Simon Fawthrop to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management**

What is the total number of employees for LBB (split by both full and part time not just FTE) and of those how many have the ability to work from home?

**Reply:**

As at 6<sup>th</sup> December, we had 1,484 LBB employees. 984 of these are full time and 500 are part time.

The ability for staff to work flexibly including home working is available to most staff, subject to the operational requirements and the business needs of the organisation. Each case is individually assessed taking into account a number of factors including suitability, technology, business consideration and exceptional personal circumstances.

**21. From Cllr Nicholas Bennett to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing**

What requirements are in the current arrangements with Mytime Active to ensure health and safety training for poolside staff to ensure the following don't occur:

- (i) movement of heavy 25m swim lane markers whilst swimmers are in the lane;
- (ii) placing of metal lane marker holders so they project over the poolside;
- (iii) a single poolside member of staff being distracted from watching the pool whilst moving lane markers and other ancillary activities;
- (iv) removal of slip mats in changing rooms before all users have vacated the area?

**Reply:**

It is the responsibility of Mytime Active to ensure they operate the swimming pools in accordance with good practice. However LBB undertake checks of lifeguard qualifications and training on a monthly basis. To ensure the pool meets programming requirements and to minimise disruption to users lane ropes may be moved with swimmers in the pool. If this is necessary lanes ropes are moved ensuring the safety of the swimmers in the pool. Industry standard lane ropes and fixings are utilised that meet the requirements for both public and competitive swimming.

Lifeguards ratios are determined through a risk assessment to ensure the safety of the users and full coverage of the pool is supervised. Therefore lifeguards who move lane ropes are not responsible for supervision of the pool while undertaking the task.

The mats in the wet change at The Spa are not utilised to create an anti-slip surface. The purpose of the mats is to help trap dirt in high traffic areas so they can be removed end of the working day to enable deep cleaning of the floors. For reassurance the floor in the wet changing rooms were treated with anti-slip properties in September 2018.

**22. From Cllr Angela Wilkins to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation & Housing**

Given that original proposals were to spend £1.3m on a few mirrored canopies planned for Bromley High St, exactly how much you are prepared to spend on them?

**Reply:**

The design and costings of the proposed mirrored canopies was discussed extensively at the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The Executive on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2018, on recommendation from the RRH PDS, agreed that the detailed design and implementation costs of the two proposed canopies be capped at the original budget figure of £800k. Work is now underway reviewing the design and costing options with the Portfolio Holder and local Ward Councillors prior to be being reconsidered by the RRH PDS and Executive in the New Year.

**23. From Cllr Josh King to the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Community Services**

The Mayor of London has recently confirmed the location of twenty public water fountains to help reduce single use plastics with the added benefit of discouraging the consumption of high sugar carbonated drinks. Would the portfolio holder support similar water fountains in Bromley and does he have plans for any?

**Reply:**

I would support water fountains if organisations such as BID's were inclined to provide them. However within the current financial context I do not see the provision of fountains along with the costs of the water as a priority. We provide toilets via the community toilets scheme, which should support those businesses participating in it. Members of the public, as customers can request tap water in food & beverage establishments, I suspect as customers they could also request water in shops. With the current pressures on our High Streets businesses I am reluctant to distract visitors from actually visiting shops and cafes.

**24. From Cllr Simon Jeal to the Leader of the Council**

Please provide a summary of the events, campaigns and other initiatives the London Borough of Bromley plans to run, fund or support in 2019 to mark events such as LGBT History Month, Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial day, World Disabled Day, International Women's Day, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Human Rights Day.

**Reply:**

With the exception of the recent adoption and embodiment the IHRA definition across the Council's equality guidelines/statement and training materials at this Administration's instruction, none.

I would take perhaps this opportunity to remind Cllr Jeal, as he has presumably picked up elsewhere, that this Council faces the unprecedented existential challenge to find ~£40m savings from a ~£200m budget by 2022.

As such, the Council is looking to reduce all avoidable non-statutory spending across the board in an effort to balance its books to ensure that vital services to all key client Groups across Adults and Children's services can remain protected at as high a level and quality that our reducing funding permits.

If he has any further thoughts regarding non statutory growth items/non-essential expenditure being added to the Council services, it would perhaps be helpful if he could table them with commensurate thought and advice as to where the means of paying for them might be found.

**25. From Cllr Kevin Brooks to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection & Enforcement**

There have recently been violent stabbing and shootings in the North of the borough. In addressing this, what action is the Portfolio Holder undertaking to bring together the police and specialist services both within Bromley and across neighbouring boroughs?

## **Reply:**

You are already very much up to speed on what we are doing in community safety with regards to mapping all the work which is going in across the borough to tackle serious youth violence and knife crime. I have included below a summary of the work undertaken to map all the partnership work which is detailed in the Knife Action Plan. We also have access to the Croydon and Sutton action plans.

## Response

### Community Safety Partnership Knife Crime and Serious Violence Action Plans

## Background

The London Knife Crime Strategy launched in June 2017 within it was a commitment for every London Borough to have a bespoke knife crime action plan.

With collaboration between MOPAC, MPS, London Councils an action plan template was developed drawing on expertise of Chief Executives, Directors of Children Services, Directors of Public Health and Heads of Community Safety from across London it is this refresh seeks to achieve a single consistent action plan format across London.

The action plan template aligns to the six “taking action” themes set out in the London Knife Crime Strategy. It is for Local Community Partnerships to own and develop plans that fit their local issues and needs. The six themes are:-

- ✓ Targeting lawbreakers,
- ✓ Keeping deadly weapons off our streets,
- ✓ Protecting and educating young people,
- ✓ Standing with communities, neighbourhoods and families against knife crime,
- ✓ Supporting victims of crime and
- ✓ Offering ways out of crime.

## Local action planning

In Bromley a task and finish group encompassing key partners has been established to facilitate input into a local plan. Next meeting scheduled for February 2019.

It is important that this action plan draws on and includes valuable information from across the community, for example, inclusion of the Safeguarding children affected by gang activity and Serious Youth Violence protocol that was published by the BCSB in August 2018.

## Governance

It is essential that our initial Knife Crime and Serious Violence action plan remain a “living document”, evolving to address need and demand.

- ✓ Governance / oversight of our action plan will be through the SBP strategic meetings
- ✓ Regular updating of our action plan will be the responsibility of the CSP.

In addition to this I am in the process of arranging a Bromley Safer Neighbourhood Board Community meeting, for January in the Penge/Crystal Palace area, which will enable residents to come together with the Police and Specialist Services.

**26. From Cllr Nicholas Bennett to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management**

For what reasons has the Commissioning Board been suspended and when will it resume scrutiny of Departmental proposals?

**Reply:**

The Commissioning Board is an officer board and as such is the direct responsibility of the Chief Executive.

## **Appendix 1 - Question 8**

A year by year summary of the Labour Party alternative budget proposals, effective from the 2003/04 financial year, is shown in the table below.

Financial Year (Budget Proposals)	Impact of Council Tax Changes £'000	Impact of Cost and Savings Adjustments £'000	Use of Reserves £'000	Notes
2003/04	(428)	1,730	1,302	
2004/05	0	300	1,300	
2005/06	0	1,000	1,000	
2006/07	0	980	1,830	
2007/08	0	0	0	(*)
2008/09	(240)	740	1,000	
2009/10	0	365	365	
2010/11	1,626	(34)	1,592	
2011/12	0	2,719	1,301	
2012/13	0	0	2,719	
2013/14	0	0	0	(*)
2014/15	0	0	0	(*)
2015/16	0	3,580	3,580	
2016/17	0	4,555	2,469	
2017/18	0	0	9,450	
2018/19	0	3,500	8,055	
<b>Total</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>19,435</b>	<b>35,963</b>	

\* No alternative recommendations

- (i) Assuming the use of balances for one year only, general and earmarked reserves would have reduced by £35.9m (£41.5m including foregone interest earnings using LBB average rates to reflect the loss of interest earnings on the Council's balances).

In view of the legal requirement to set a balanced budget, if no alternative options were identified to offset the annual adjustments in successive years and reserves were required to meet the cumulative impact, there would have been a total reduction in reserves of £132.5m (£151.0m including foregone interest earnings using LBB average rates).

- (ii) The proposals would have resulted in an ongoing budget gap (further savings to be identified) of £20.4m made up of £0.96m in reduced council tax income and £19.44m arising from increased costs and/or reduced savings options.

Budget decisions are made on an annual basis and the cumulative effect (had previous years' budget proposals been agreed) would have influenced alternative proposals in future years. It is not possible to identify the extent to which annual resolutions would have changed had previous proposals been implemented. However, it does illustrate that we would have a significant budget gap and significantly depleted reserves.