

COUNCIL MEETING

8th April 2019 2019

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC FOR ORAL REPLY

1. From Richard Hart, Chair, Bromley CND, to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

Under the Borough's nuclear waste transportation plan, what emergency measures will be put into action in the case of an accident?

Reply:

The Council has a major emergency plan which sets out the steps that will be taken to initiate, control and co-ordinate its response to a major incident and the areas of activity in which the Council would be involved. By co-operating and developing an integrated emergency management approach, the emergency services and the Council have ensured that their arrangements for responding to a major incident would be harmonised.

Supplementary Question:

Mr Hart asked whether the public could view these plans?

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder responded that he would look into this.

(Note – In reply to Mr Hart's second question, the Portfolio Holder directed Mr Hart to the Council's website and through that to the Mayor of London's website which contained emergency plans – especially for incidents that would not be limited to one borough.)

Additional Supplementary Question:

Councillor Simon Fawthrop asked if the Portfolio Holder was aware that there had been no incidents since the service had started?

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder responded that if there had been an incident he would have been aware of it.

2. From Reverend Agnita Oyawale, Bromley Town Centre Chaplain to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management

How many Universal credit assessments and applications have been submitted from homeless individuals over the past 6 months?

Reply:

Universal Credit is processed by the DWP. However Universal Credit no longer applies to homeless households placed into temporary accommodation by the Council under the homelessness legislation. All homeless households now placed into temporary accommodation would be eligible to apply for financial assistance through the housing benefit regime. There are a small number of households who were placed into temporary accommodation prior to this latest change who may still be receiving Universal Credit payments through the DWP, however they are being migrated back to housing benefit.

Supplementary Question:

Reverend Oyawale asked whether actual numbers could be given?

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder advised the questioner to apply to the DWP for the numbers. He too was concerned about the impact of universal credit on homelessness, and added that the Council had taken mitigating action by studying the pilots and using the Hardship Fund. The Council had spoken to Ministers during the consultation exercise, and some of its concerns had been addressed - for example, payment could now be made direct to landlords. Another concern was all payments being made to one person in a household where there was a risk of domestic violence. He concluded by stating that the number of people in temporary accommodation had actually gone down.

3. From Sam Gee, St Olave's Grammar School, to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

Climate change threatens the existence of all of Bromley's citizens. With 42 other principal UK councils, including several Conservative, already having declared a climate emergency, how urgently will this Council take serious action to address the IPCC's warning that we have only 11 years left to prevent irreversible climate breakdown?

Reply:

The Council has a long history of taking serious action to address negative environmental impact. For example, we are entering our third 5-year Carbon Management Programme which aims to monitor and report the Council's own carbon emissions whilst informing our climate mitigation strategy. Energy efficiency projects, such as our LED street lighting upgrade project, not only reduce our energy consumption and emissions, but also save the Council money to further invest in similar projects. Our Carbon Offsetting Programme supports low carbon development within the borough, and will help further reduce local emissions through various carbon reduction projects providing community benefit. These programmes are overseen by a dedicated Carbon Management team. The same team also monitors and reports on borough wide emissions and uses this information to effect residential behavioural change in order to reduce emissions per capita.

In addition, the Council is taking action in a wide variety of ways. As the first London borough to introduce door to door collection, Bromley has always worked hard to achieve one of the highest residential recycling rates in London. Bromley's

biodiversity plan recognises the importance of our natural beauty and the need to protect green belt zones and areas of scientific interest for future generations. Our Flood Risk Action Plan identifies the potential damage climate change can do to our infrastructure and is supported by various flood risk studies recently undertaken. We are also pleased to see the growth of electric vehicles and charge points within the borough and will continue to support this initiative. However, the Council is not separate from the community and proactively works with residents and different groups to tackle environmental issues. For example, we have developed school travel plans to promote walking and cycling through our adult and child cycle training workshops, and Quiet Ways programme. As the custodian of approximately 100,000 public trees, we work with community groups to manage, conserve and grow these in a sustainable manner so increasing carbon sequestration. As we developed Bromley's recently adopted Local Plan we included policies and guidelines to promote planting for environmental reasons so it was not just the Council's estate that saw increased greenery. All of these endeavours serve to reduce emissions and ultimately mitigate the effects of climate change.

The Council recognises its responsibility to safeguard the environmental, social and economic future of Bromley residents that includes the effects of climate change. The Council however, is only responsible for a small proportion of the emissions in the borough. This, therefore is a responsibility we must share with all residents and visitors to the borough, and we would seek every opportunity to engage and motivate residents to do their part in these challenging times.

Supplementary Question:

Mr Gee urged the Portfolio Holder to use the Council's influence to put pressure on the Government.

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder responded that he did not want to go into further detail, but he was aware that Mr Gee had also submitted a question for the Environment and Community Services PDS Committee meeting the following night. The Council would continue to address environmental issues, and would take any opportunities to engage with the Government such as the current waste and recycling consultation. The Council had a long-standing carbon management programme, and a number of campaigns in the local community, but no one organisation could produce change alone and everyone had to do their bit.

Additional Supplementary Question:

Councillor Simon Fawthrop suggested that the Council's good work would be undone by the Mayor of London attempting to have 700 homes built on back gardens, destroying the borough's green lungs.

Additional Supplementary Question:

Councillor Peter Morgan asked whether the Portfolio Holder had investigated the effect of sun-spots, as opposed to man-made activity.

Additional Supplementary Question:

Councillor Marina Ahmad asked what had happened to the borough's air quality monitoring machines.

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder responded that whatever the role of sunspots or anyone trying to undo the Council's work, everyone had to play their part.

Some of the air quality monitors were managed by TfL, and an update would be reported to the Environment and Community Services PDS Committee in due course.

4. From Richard Hart, Chair, Bromley CND, to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

How often is nuclear waste transported by rail through the Borough, and are you concerned that nuclear trains pass close to the public?

Reply:

The Council is not notified of trains, or the routes of trains or any other vehicles, which may carry nuclear waste through the borough. The method of transporting nuclear waste is subjected to rigorous regulation, control, and continued risk assessment.

Supplementary Question:

Mr Hart asked whether the Council could find out the times.

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder responded that he would take advice from the experts, but he stated that there would be obvious security concerns if the times were widely available.

Additional Supplementary Question:

Councillor Angela Wilkins asked how the Council could prepare emergency plans if it did not know when the trains ran?

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder responded that London-wide plans were available on the Mayor of London's website.

5. From Richard Hart, Chair, Bromley CND, to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

Are you aware there is residual radiation from the trains and are there any plans for a risk assessment?

Reply:

The Council is aware of the findings of the 2017 Public Health England report entitled, 'Survey into the radiological impact of normal transport of radioactive material in the U.K. by road and rail'. One of the conclusions of the report is that 'doses to members of the public arising from the transportation of radioactive materials are extremely low'. The Council would be interested in the evidence you have regarding residual radiation and would be happy to discuss this with the Office for Nuclear Regulation.