

QUESTIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ORAL REPLY

From Cllr Ian Dunn

Can the Portfolio Holder please explain why, two years after the adverse Internal Audit reports into Waste Services and Street Works, the recent report into the Arboricultural Services Contract gave an opinion of Limited Assurance, with four Priority 1 and six Priority 2 recommendations.

Reply

As Cllr Dunn is aware the retendering of the major environmental contracts whilst maintaining the performance of existing contracts has been the main focus of much of the department over the last couple of years. Past audit issues have been addressed and revised ways of working have been introduced. Once the new working practices had bedded in and been reviewed by the audit team, it always was the intention to roll them out across the department. In the case of Arboricultural Services with vacancies arising in the team the decision was taken to introduce the changes at the start of the new contract, with staff training occurring in advance of contract start date.

There is a report on this agenda which highlights in detail the steps that are now in place against each of the audit recommendations. This will ensure that contract monitoring and management processes are robust. The Audit was a useful review as it has helped demonstrate that the new contract will be robustly managed.

Supplementary Question

Cllr Dunn asked the Portfolio Holder what he did personally to ensure robust (management) across the portfolio knowing there had been two adverse reports.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder indicated that he had regular reports from and meetings with officers and referred to a particular focus on street cleaning (as there were many Council questions at that time and taking a risk based approach for contract monitoring and performance management, waste was the initial focus, followed by Street Environment), rolling over KPIs, and KPIs being addressed in the new processes. The Portfolio Holder did not specifically look at arboriculture.

From Mr George Lamptey

(Mr Lamptey was unable to attend the meeting and written replies were therefore sent to Mr Lamptey as detailed below.)

1. As a period of time it has been noted that Seymour Villas has been cleaned 47% of the time over the last two months. This has been recorded from a residents' point of view monitoring the road and does go on longer but want to focus on the most recent period. Why is this?

Reply

Seymour Villas is due for cleansing twice a week, Mondays and Thursdays. As it is this frequency, then sub-compact mechanical sweeping would only be necessary if detritus or leaf build-up was evident. That said, we would attend as per the schedule, inspect and take the corrective action to bring back to grade whether it means a mechanical, manual sweep or litter pick. We can however inspect the road to see if a change of bin type and numbers would provide the solution to eradicate litter in between sweeps. This has also been raised with our local Client Monitoring Officer (the Neighbourhood Officer for Penge & Cator) to include on their inspection rota for the foreseeable future when possible. The FixMyStreet reporting channel can be used to flag issues and provide feedback relating to cleansing standards.

2. What constitutes a clean road and how does the Council sign off that a road is clean? This is to do with litter picking and not sweeping for example whereas the resident expectation is that the road is cleaned fully twice a week.

Reply

https://www.bromley.gov.uk/info/200089/street_care_and_cleaning/1038/street_cleaning

The information requested is held on the Bromley website using the above address. We monitor our street cleaning standards against the standards set out in the DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse. Neighbourhood Management client team (comprising of 11 Neighbourhood Officers) undertake a minimum of 23,200 inspections across the borough and financial year to provide 90% confidence that the works undertaken are to the standards required.

With the current financial pressures on the Council, the Council has prioritised outcomes from its services not inputs into the service. That led to each road in the borough being assessed for its required inspection for cleanliness frequency; with action being taken if the road fell below the required standard. With this approach we have been able to make significant efficiencies with limited effect on the clean & green nature of the borough. Roads are not swept if they are essentially clean as this would be a waste of resource.

From Mr Richard Gibbons

Does Portfolio Holder share increasing concern amongst residents about air pollution in the borough - i.e. emanating from heavily trafficked roads near schools, shops, parks, stations, local amenities, anywhere people gather - and its detrimental effects on everyone's health, in particular children and seniors, highlighted in growing body of evidence?

Reply

This Council has always paid keen attention to the Environment with past strap lines of Clean & Green Bromley. For example that has led us to fund a number of tree planting programmes and reduce energy use across the Council Estate. Air pollution emanates from a number of sources including household heating by gas, transport and electricity generation. Singling out one source may not be the most beneficial way to reduce overall air pollution. Air pollution is also carried into our borough by the prevailing weather.

I acknowledge the concerns of residents and would highlight Outcome 4 of the recently published and approved third Local Implementation Plan. In brief this details proposals on how Bromley will improve air quality from transport sources in the Borough. With funding already secured, through the Mayor's Air Quality Fund, to implement proposals for anti-idling vehicle education and enforcement, the vehicle pollution trend is down.

The Plan sets ambitious targets to green the Council's fleet and to expand the existing electric vehicle charging infrastructure, to allow more motorists to adopt the technology, with support for the adoption of zero emission capable taxis through the delivery of rapid charge points. The Plan also seeks to introduce green infrastructure, such as even more trees as part of transport projects to absorb pollutants, and improve the walking and cycling infrastructure. However, the greening of the bus fleet as routes become due for renewal by TfL must continue.

From Mr Roger Lawson, Alliance of British Drivers

My question refers to the proposals for Loop Road/Centre Common Road in Chislehurst. What evidence does the Council have for believing this will cut accidents by 50%, when surely we should be aiming for a 100% reduction?

Reply

As much as Bromley Council would like to see all injury collisions on our road network prevented, it is seldom, if ever possible, to change a road environment sufficiently to be confident of eliminating all collisions. Predictions of the likely casualty saving at the proposed site of a road safety scheme are based on a judgement made by the traffic engineer, with reference to national databases of the efficacy of previous, similar schemes at similar locations.

Supplementary Question

In his supplementary question, Mr Lawson referred to having a revised Act of Parliament for Chislehurst Commons.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder indicated that the Chislehurst Society now own the Commons and may have influence. However, there was no evidence to suggest the Commons does not take its duties seriously and no evidence to suggest they should be

replaced. The Portfolio Holder indicated that the Commons benefit from the arrangement.

Mr Lawson also felt that the proposals for consideration at item 8e would not solve the problem of accidents at Loop Road.
