

QUESTIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ORAL REPLY

Democratic Services Note: As the Portfolio Holder was unable to attend the meeting due to illness, Portfolio Holder replies to all questions listed for oral reply were provided in writing.

From Paul Eteson

Is Bromley Council aware of the extent of the current ecological and climate catastrophe that we are facing, and will they follow Parliament, over 100 UK local authorities - including Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Greenwich, Croydon - and numerous organisations, foundations and institutions, in declaring a climate emergency in response to this crisis?

Reply

Bromley Council believes actions speak louder than words. Bromley Council has committed to an ambition to net zero carbon emissions for Council activities by 2029. When ranking the priorities for London, we would see that knife crime is far more urgent to reduce and the immediate priority for the Council it to manage its finances over the next 4 years to address the £32m funding gap. Managing that will mean that funds remain available to invest to reduce our impact on the environment - one such proposed investment is on tonight's agenda. Declaring an emergency for climate or a crisis is in danger of diminishing the significance of the terms without actually achieving the change we aspire to. We have already reduced our greenhouse gas emissions by 33% relative to the 2013 baseline and that was on top of the 14% reduction from the previous 2008 baseline. We have a track record of achievement in this area and have committed to a more ambitious date than most other local authorities.

From Alisa Igoe, on behalf of the Ashfield Lane Road Safety Group, a residents' group of 78 households, campaigning for traffic calming measures on Ashfield Lane, Chislehurst

Could the Portfolio Holder please comment on Bromley being the borough with the highest number of road fatalities, six, within the period January to June 2019, according to TfL's latest published provisional information and whether this will lead to any change and increase in the funding allocated to road safety.

Reply

I am very sorry to hear of each time someone loses their life on the streets of Bromley. That is why Bromley is and always has been focussed on investing in effective road safety programmes, both educational and physical. Six fatalities in the first six months now unfortunately rising to seven is seven too many, but statistically speaking fatal collisions do not paint a very clear picture, as thankfully the numbers are small. This does represent an increase in road deaths in this Borough since 2017, but overall the number of road casualties in Bromley dropped by 13% in 2018, which is twice the decrease seen in London overall.

Bromley is a borough that has a high number of car journeys and a long road length compared to other London boroughs, including many roads of a semi-rural nature, so just looking at numbers rather than in proportion to road length/journeys can be misleading. Our most recent road safety strategy document, our LIP, was subject to public consultation and has been approved by the Mayor, only earlier this year. Our aim is that no one will be killed or seriously injured on our roads by 2041, or sooner if that can be achieved.

With regard to investment, I have recently written to TfL in support of a proposed new funding formula, which if adopted would result in additional funds for Bromley to invest in improving our streets and making them ever safer.

From Chris Wells, Co-Founder, Chislehurst Safer Streets

1. House of Commons Library analyses show that in Bromley & Chislehurst constituency, since 2010: road accidents rose from 221pa to 271pa; total casualties from 259pa to 331pa. The largest increases occurred in the last 2 years. What measures will the Council now introduce to improve road safety within the constituency?

Reply

Bromley's LIP3 document noted that there had been a change in late 2016 in the methodology for the collection of accident statistics. That change limits the ability to compare past years figures and has resulted in an apparent, but not necessarily real, increase in accidents – not just in Bromley but across London. This change was known at the time of the submission of the LIP3 document to the Mayor and was reflected in the road safety approach detailed in the LIP3. Bromley's LIP3 was approved by the Mayor.

2. A range of roadside driver advice/warning posters ('30 for a Reason', etc.) have been put up across the Borough. Will the Portfolio Holder confirm: i) the cost of the initiative; ii) what cost-benefit analysis was completed to recommended it; and iii) how is it being evaluated.

Reply

Bromley has had a programme of road safety posters which are moved around the borough. This programme has been in operation for over 15 years. This is part of the road safety programme and the Posters are moved around the borough, this ensures that a large number of road users see the Posters and since experience has shown that road users notice changes, that they are read. The programme is part of road safety education and it is not considered possible to disaggregate any one element of the education programme. The Road safety posters have recently been refreshed at a cost of £6,000 for 126 posters and it costs £5488.86 to move the Posters around the borough. This is considered to represent good value for money.

From Andrew Ruck

1. Does the Council consider Bromley has an air quality problem?

Reply

Bromley has some of the cleanest air in London; however, that does not mean we would not like to see an improvement in air quality. Exceedances are measured in some parts of the borough on some days. We are however not complacent and I will expand on that in my next answer.

2. What is the Council actively doing to improve air quality in the borough and what are the anticipated impacts?

Reply

Bromley has implemented a number of changes with the ambition to improve air quality issues arising from traffic.

- Bromley has implemented an extensive range of walking and cycling programmes, including cycle parking over many years.
- Bromley has an extensive tree planting programme.
- Bromley has had a programme to smooth traffic flow with the aim of reducing queueing traffic containing idling cars.
- Bromley is currently working with EV point providers to increase the use of EV & plug in hybrid cars.
- Bromley has let new contracts with vehicles that conform to Euro IV emissions.
- Bromley's LIP details plans over the coming years to change its vehicle fleet and lobby TfL to update the Buses that operate in the Borough.
- Bromley has encouraged staff to arrive at the Civic centre by Active means.
- The Road Safety Unit is about to relaunch its BUG (Bike User Group) in October 2019. This group will initially promote cycling to the Civic Centre for staff and contractors. They will make members aware of training, maintenance, marking, parking, changing new engineering schemes, pool bikes, cycle clubs and events and the cycle to work scheme. Once this group is running there is scope to extend the BUG group to other sites and expand to include walking initiatives.
- Bromley's award winning School Travel Team has one of the best performances in London in terms of Schools with quality travel plans.
- Bromley is in the process of starting a campaign to target idling outside of schools.
- Ensuring emissions from construction are minimised.
- Enforcing non-road mobile machinery for air quality policies.
- Enforcing air quality neutral or air quality positive for all new large developments.
- Ensuring the smoke control areas are appropriately identified, promoted and enforced.
- Continue to monitor for air quality so the benefits of our actions may be quantified.

In addition to the above, Bromley's environmental programmes, such as its high recycling rate, moving towards zero to landfill, LED Street lighting conversion programme etc. will reduce emissions more generally not necessarily in the borough boundary. The Council has also very recently announced an ambitious target that Council direct activities will be net zero for carbon within 10 years.

From Gera Drymer

Considering the serious harm to public health from open fires, is L B of Bromley going to take urgent action to take all possible steps to ban garden bonfires in all smoke control areas in the borough?

Reply

No, except when it constitutes a statutory nuisance. Although barbeques are generally fuelled with smokeless fuel, they can still produce smoke and carbon monoxide. It would be impracticable to stop all fires within the SCA.

From Barbara Arora, Friends of Chislehurst Recreation Grounds

At the ECS PDS Committee on 18 June, the minutes include "The Portfolio Holder stated that indicator ES25 (Number of Hours worked by Friends of Parks Volunteers) was formed as the contractor was required to support Friends Groups and that it was felt that the best measure of the effectiveness of contractor's support to friends groups was the number of hours contributed by volunteers along with success of Friends' grant applications".

1. Can the Council clarify why it feels this is an appropriate measure of contractor effectiveness?

Reply

There has been some misunderstanding regarding this indicator. Bromley highly values the contribution of our friends groups and we are always impressed by the contributions detailed in the Friends Annual report. As a Council we are always keen that our residents remain active and committed to their area and that we, either the Council or our Contractors haven't inadvertently discouraged them, this applies to friends but also to recycling, anti-littering etc. The measure of hours of contribution by friends is therefore recorded by the Council and also feeds into pan London reports. However this is not a contractual indicator. There are many KPIs in our contract with idverde, Hours worked by friends is not one of them. The Chairman of the Friends Forum is represented on the Council's Parks and Greenspace stakeholder panel which is another measure of the importance we attach to our Friends.

2. Will the Council be willing to work with Friends Forum to design a more meaningful measure that removes the current onerous and often irrelevant record keeping they are asking from volunteers?

Reply

As I have mentioned in my first answer the recording of hours is required for reasons other than those linked to the contract. These reasons can be discussed with the Friends Forum to reduce the level of effort required on this aspect from Friends. Equally the PDS can change or revise any measure/indicator they would like to see reported each meeting.

From Richard Gibbons

1. Commend LBB joining 27 London boroughs in Idling Action Project. Would Portfolio Holder increase ROI by (a) also encouraging offending drivers to choose active travel and/or public transport for short journeys, and (b) including transport hubs where pedestrians/cyclists mix with cars/taxis in shared-space, e.g. Orpington station?

Reply

The Borough is undertaking a range of projects to promote active travel, including behaviour change initiatives in schools such as cycle training, Dr Bike sessions and escorted rides. We are of course delivering the Crofton Road walking and cycle scheme and Greenwich to Kent House cycleway in the coming months and have recently won an additional £210k funding to deliver cycle parking including 3 more secure cycle hubs. Idling will be enforced where we are legally able to do so. We may not be able to enforce idling on private land such as station forecourts - we can look to see if the rail companies are willing to host space for active travel and anti-idling messages.

2. Road fatalities Jan-Aug 2019 in LB Bromley are equal to those of 2011, 2012 and 2015, the highest of the past 10 years. In view of increasing fatalities how does the Portfolio Holder propose achieving Vision Zero whilst dismissing calls from residents cognisant with day-to-day road danger and continuing to enable drivers to speed?

Reply

Calls from residents concerned about road safety are never dismissed. The Council takes road safety very seriously and has for many years focussed finite resources to where the investment is likely to prevent most deaths and injuries. Our stated aim is to see no one seriously injured or killed on our streets by 2041, or sooner if we possibly can. Our most recent road safety strategy document, our LIP, was only approved by the Mayor earlier this year, so it is too early to suggest it is not working. Inappropriate speed is a wider education message that we are playing our part in delivering. I see this becoming a societal issue in the same way drink driving has been tackled.

From Parisa Wright, Greener & Cleaner Bromley (& Beyond)

1. Will you:

a) agree to funding additional Officers/Air Monitors, to those suggested, in order to help even more Bromley children; and

b) confirm that the Officers carrying air monitors will be dedicated to patrolling school areas during drop off/pick up times and sharing such air quality data with the relevant schools.

Reply

a) No. All CEOs will be able to issue the FPNs for idling as part of their general duties. However the two additional officers are to enable additional resource to allow for Borough anti-idling enforcement alongside other existing duties. It is thought that this level of resource is commensurate with the education first approach we wish to adopt. We would hope that we can use school travel plans, educational messages and local volunteers to deliver the anti-idling message far wider than enforcement could ever manage.

b) We will need to establish the most appropriate use of the air monitors so that the data captured is most useful. Data will be shared in order to support our anti-idling education programme which should involve schools in its delivery.

2. Will the Council ensure that the air quality monitors to be worn by Civil Enforcement Officers will provide information on PM2.5 as well as NO2, and PM10 (especially given their previous 2010 Action Points on this dangerous pollutant)?

Reply

In respect of the science behind such monitors there are too many variables involved in data capture and the monitors are not sufficiently refined to determine the source of the pollutants being monitored.

QUESTIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR WRITTEN REPLY

From Dr Brendan Donegan, Chair of Bromley Living Streets, a group of residents in the London Borough of Bromley, campaigning for safer, quieter, low-traffic neighbourhoods which encourage walking and cycling

Could the Portfolio Holder please provide details of public consultations planned as part of the Shortlands Liveable Neighbourhood project, a list of the individuals and organisations named as stakeholders in the project, and details of the processes by which individuals and organisations can provide comments, feedback and ideas on the plans for the project.

Reply

For reasons including brevity I am not going to provide a list, but we intend to fully engage and consult appropriately with residents, schools, residents' associations and appropriate borough wide groups in due course. As Dr Donegan may be aware, the Borough has continued public and stakeholder engagement most recently at the Friendly Streets event earlier in the summer. Consultations are of course public so anyone can respond and exhibitions etc. will be advertised through a variety of channels. We are in the process of appointing a project manager for the project and will develop an engagement strategy alongside the feasibility work we will be conducting over the next few months, this will first be reported to the PDS. The Shortlands and Ravensbourne Villages proposed scheme represents a significant spend of public money and scrutiny to justify value for money for tax payers will be a key element. There will be a number of review points for this project to pass.
