

COUNCIL MEETING

7th December 2020

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC FOR WRITTEN REPLY

1. From Dermot Mckibbin to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

According to the Sunday times magazine of 15/11/2020 a fire destroyed the low-rise building at Richmond House on 9 September 2019 in approximately 11 minutes. The building lacked adequate internal compartmentation which was believed to be due to the deregulation of building inspection.

What assurances can the Council give about the quality of building control inspections in Bromley in residential properties?

Reply:

The Building Regulations are meant to be administered and checked whether undertaken by a Local Authority or Approved Inspector. Grenfell brought an issue in relation to fire safety to light and we have had a minor amendment to the regulations introduced last year and a new draft Fire Safety Bill has been published by the government indicating the way they wish to move forward. The main issues with regards to high rise buildings is that any building over 18 metres in height now has to come through a local authority and not an Approved Inspector. There have been other improvements in the fire boarding to be approved on the outside of a structure as well as the total wall construction which should be non-combustible.

The Council's Building Control team deals with all applications to the best of its abilities to ensure that all developments meet the requirements of the legislation in place at that time.

2. From Dermot Mckibbin to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Enforcement

Please supply details of when leading councillors met with the Borough Commander of the London Fire Brigade in the last 12 months to discuss fire safety issues in residential properties in the Borough and please supply details of the Council's strategy to deal with improving fire safety standards in residential properties in the borough?

Reply:

Councillors and Senior Officers have met with the Borough Commander of the London Fire Brigade on a number of occasions, including as part of the Safer Bromley Partnership, with these meetings held in public and overall numbers not recorded. As generally homeowners and landlords are responsible for fire safety within their own residential property, it is not a matter which is discussed with the

London Fire Brigade, with the Council's statutory role limited in such matters to a relatively small number of scenarios.

3. From Richard Gibbons to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

Re. £11.8m Highway Investment, approved by Council 12 December 2016
<https://cde.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50044404/Enc.%205%20for%20Capital%20Programme.pdf>

Would Portfolio Holder kindly confirm how much has been spent on footway maintenance to date; how much remains to be invested; and provide a list of footways and rights of way (footpaths, bridleways, byways) that have benefitted from investment, and if any budgeted/scheduled maintenance remains outstanding?

Reply:

The highway investment project is nearing completion and a total of 151 footways have been resurfaced at a total cost of £3,450,000. Co-ordination issues have delayed works in three other roads; Centre Common Road, Valley Road and Queen Anne Avenue, which we will look to complete in the New Year. The capital budget is fully committed, and full details of the roads and footways resurfaced can be found in the previously approved reports.

4. From Richard Gibbons to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

Re. Rights of Way Improvement Plan (revised), 1 November 2007
https://www.bromley.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1715/rights_of_way_improvement_plan.pdf

Would Portfolio Holder kindly provide an update and current status for each recommended actions listed in Table 8.1 (pages 45-54); amounts expended; and actions that have and will be taken to inform residents of 1 January 2026 cut-off date for recording rights of way on definitive map(s)?

Reply:

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan was originally published in 2007, and the improvement and maintenance priorities detailed in Table 8.1 were aspirational rather than a planned programme.

The document stated that while Bromley Council has a statutory duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to publish a RoWIP, they do not have to implement it within a specific timescale. Unfortunately, no funds have since been allocated to Highway Authorities in London for this purpose. Maintenance and management tasks (Policy 4) will continue to be funded from existing allocations and the Council will endeavour to source additional funding for future improvements.

Applications for Definitive Map Modification Orders are being considered in preparation for the 2026 cut-off. Details of this process will be discussed with residents and other interested parties when requested, although Bromley Council do not consider it will be necessary to advertise this change in legislation.

5. From Richard Seabrook to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

Is a private developer adopting the upper part of the unmade section of The Avenue in Beckenham? If so, what will this adoption involve and at what cost to the Council and residents?

Reply:

The Avenue, Beckenham is currently an unadopted public highway, and there are no plans for any parts of this road to be adopted by the Council. A resident may, with the owner's consent, maintain or improve an unadopted highway, but even if this was done to an adoptable standard the Council would not adopt a short length of a road in isolation.

6. From Richard Seabrook to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

How does the Council ensure the needs of children with particular dietary requirements (for example due to religious considerations) are respected in the provision of free school meals?

Reply:

Academy Trusts and school governors are responsible for the provision of school food, including free school meals. Under Government guidance, schools should make reasonable adjustments for pupils with particular requirements, for example to reflect medical, dietary and cultural needs.

The Council provides support and guidance to any Bromley school that requires it.

7. From Emma Martin, Chair, Bromley Brighter Beginnings, to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management

Could you please confirm the exact amount that Bromley Council has been allocated from the Government's Covid 19 Winter Grant, which departments will be receiving a portion of the funds and how much money they will each receive?

Reply:

The Council will receive £754k for the COVID-19 winter Grant.

£605k will go to Education.

£149k will go to the Hardship Fund in Housing.

8. From Emma Martin, Chair, Bromley Brighter Beginnings, to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Can the Council please confirm that Bromley's portion of the Covid 19 Winter Grant will be used to ensure every child registered for free school meals in the London

Borough of Bromley will receive a voucher to cover the value of those meals during the Christmas holidays?

Reply:

Yes, families who are eligible will be offered vouchers.

9. From Patricia Morgan to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Were the Covid-19 Defra grants given to Bromley meant to provide welfare relief solely to Children in Social Care or more broadly to people struggling to afford food and other essentials due to Covid-19?

Reply:

No. The Defra grant provided Councils with discretion on how to identify and support those most in need. The funding was required to be spent within 12 weeks.

In line with the grant conditions, the full grant of 279K was split between the shielding and assistance programme in Adult Social Care (£119k) and Children's Social Care (£260k).

10. From Patricia Morgan to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

How many children in Bromley received any direct support from the Covid-19 Defra grants?

Reply:

It is not possible to directly disaggregate this data. Children's Social Care currently has 2,400 open cases, YOS has 109 young people it is supporting and Bromley Children's Project has 900 children it is supporting. The Defra grant was used additionally to the funding provided through financial assistance to children in need under S17 of the Children Act. All the children known have been supported throughout this pandemic with food, essentials and other support including but not exclusive to emotional wellbeing, Mental Health, Domestic Violence, substance misuse and other factors.

11. From Will Conway to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

CYP PDS Committee, 10 November 2020: Bromley Council was awarded £279,772.15 in Defra grants "to support people who are struggling to afford food and other essentials due to Covid-19. When asked what the Council had used the Defra grants for, they stated that the funds went to Children in Social Care. I am concerned that this money may have been spent on things that it was already the Council's duty to provide and not the extra needs occasioned by the pandemic which the grant was intended to address.

How many children in Bromley are currently recognised as "Children in Social Care"?

Reply:

Children known to Children's Social Care include children in need or in need of protection. Currently there are:

CSC open cases 2,400
YOS 109
Bromley Children's Project 900

12. From Clare Owen to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Does the Council know how many families in Bromley are receiving direct support from Bromley Brighter Beginnings, Bromley Relief, Bromley Food Bank and Bromley Homeless Shelter Advice Service?

Reply:

These are not Council organisations and will need to be contacted directly for the most accurate figures. The Council refer to numerous organisations and carefully monitor internal statistics and direct help and support where required.

13. From Lauren Brown to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

In what ways are Bromley Council exercising their Safeguarding Duties towards Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Children, particularly the duty to promote emotional wellbeing, confidence and a positive identity during this time?

Reply:

Children's Social Care which includes Early Intervention and Family Support Services and YOS ensures that all children are safeguarded in accordance with the Pan London and Working Together to Safeguard children policies without fear or favour. This includes those young people from a range of diverse backgrounds ensuring they supported well, and this includes children and their families with disabilities, mental health, physical and emotional; CSE and exposure to domestic violence and substance misuse.

14. From Verity Susman to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

How many of the cohort of children in Bromley in receipt of free school meals at the time the Covid-19 Defra grant was provided, received support funded by the Covid-19 Defra grant?

Reply:

The Defra grant was not provided for meals in the holiday. It was required to be spent to support families before the October half term.

It is not possible to directly disaggregate this data. Children's Social Care currently has 2,400 open cases, YOS has 109 young people it is supporting and Bromley Children's Project has 900 children it is supporting. The Defra grant was used additionally to the funding provided through financial assistance to children in need

under S17 of the Children Act. All the children known have been supported throughout this pandemic with food, essentials and other support including but not exclusive to emotional wellbeing, Mental Health, Domestic Violence, substance misuse and other factors.

15. From Verity Susman to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

What amount (if any) of the Covid-19 Defra grant was spent on statutory services?

Reply:

All of the Defra Grant was used for C-19 purposes and not on statutory services.

16. From Sally Bywater to the to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Would the Council not agree that it would have been more appropriate to issue multiple press releases through its social media platforms promoting help for vulnerable families and children all year round, rather than just the one on 25th October and why were there 5 posts on Halloween safety on the Council Facebook page and only two (same day) for the emergency number for family support?

Reply:

It would be and is more appropriate to continue supporting the most vulnerable families and children, which is precisely what we are doing. We will continue to monitor and reflect on what we do and the services we provide, making improvements where we can, as we will with any of our services. Our message that we are here to consistently support families and children is the right one and we are reminding families of this in different ways. In fact, our feedback from families facing difficult circumstances is that they are not picking up messages on social media and on the assumption they have online access at all, then valuable data is kept understandably for other matters including to maintain school contact and the like.

17. From Sally Bywater to the to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

By which communication means is the Council proposing to directly contact all families in the borough who are entitled to free school meals, to provide them with food vouchers over the Christmas holidays, by which date this will be achieved and how much it will cost the Council?

Reply:

The Council is working with schools to provide vouchers for vulnerable children, including all those eligible for Pupil Premium in time for the Christmas holiday period. It is anticipated that the Council will use approximately £585k of grant funding to meet this cost.

18. From Alisa Igoe to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Reference: Portfolio Holder's written answer to a public question at Children, Education and Families PDS Committee meeting on 10 November 2020.

The Portfolio Holder stated: "5,896 pupils eligible for a free school meal ... Spring 2020 Census" and "updated data not available until Autumn Census". This is a substantial increase on figures for 2019 which were approximately 4,500. What was the exact 2019 figure please and on which date will updated data be published?

Reply:

There were 5,232 pupils eligible for free school meals at the Spring Census 2019. Updated Census data will be published by early 2021.

19. From Alisa Igoe to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Reference: Department of Education statement 16 November: £170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme "Local authorities have local ties and knowledge, making them best placed to identify and help those children and families most in need"

Would you kindly confirm Bromley Council will, as the statement says, "identify" and approach families directly, to provide Christmas holiday food vouchers, rather than requiring families eligible for free school meals to call the MASH telephone line, as happened over October half term?

Reply:

The guidance does not stipulate that the Council should contact families directly. The Council is working with schools to provide support for vulnerable children, including all those eligible for Pupil Premium in time for the Christmas holiday period.

The MASH number is for families who are not known and require support and help and we do this all year round.

20. From Edward Bywater to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

How did the Covid-19 Defra funds of £100,000 for extra carers differentiate from the Covid-19 Defra funds for £119,000 that went for assistance and shielding support?

Reply:

£119k was allocated to Adult Social Care to operate the Shielding and Assistance Programme.

The funding of £160k provided to Children's Social Care included the £100K which was required and used to support those families with children with complex disabilities where short breaks and the residential unit managed by the CCG was closed due to Covid-19 – those health staff were deployed to front line NHS services. This increase in care was to prevent breakdown in families and children entering public care.

21. From Edward Bywater to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Will Council list the £18,000 worth of equipment for children it purchased with the Covid-19 Defra grants?

Reply:

Breakdown attached – appendix 1.

22. From Mrs Anne Clark to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Could you tell me exactly how many families in Bromley directly received a service or food vouchers from the Covid-19 Defra grant? Hopefully this will include the Christmas holidays.

Reply:

It is not possible to directly disaggregate this data. Children's Social Care currently has 2,400 open cases, YOS has 109 young people it is supporting and Bromley Children's Project has 900 children it is supporting. The Defra grant was used additionally to the funding provided through financial assistance to children in need under S17 of the Children Act. All the children known have been supported throughout this pandemic with food, essentials and other support including but not exclusive to emotional wellbeing, Mental Health, Domestic Violence, substance misuse and other factors.

The Covid Winter Fund will be used by the Council to provide support to families through Bromley schools, including over the Christmas period.

23. From Mrs Anne Clarke to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Would the Council explain details of the £ 30,000 Defra grant spent on "staffing and training?"

Reply:

The grant provided for two extra staff in the referral and assessment team to support vulnerable families who do not meet the statutory threshold and to support a sustainable solution to identify families who are most in need.

£5k was used to fund the graded care profile to support the professional network to identify emerging needs due to the impact of lockdown – in accordance with the grant criteria.

24. From James Hamilton to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

At the Children, Education and Families PDS Committee, it was stated that Bromley Council had been awarded £279,000 in DEFRA funding. Was any of this used to pay for services the Council had already committed to spend within Children's Services before 23 March 2020, and was any of this spend on statutory services?

Reply:

No, the use of the grant was Covid-19 related and used to support families during this period.

25. From James Hamilton to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

How many people in Bromley directly received a service or a food voucher funded by the Covid-19 DEFRA grant?

Reply:

It is not possible to directly disaggregate this data. Children's Social Care currently has 2,400 open cases, YOS has 109 young people it is supporting and Bromley Children's Project has 900 children it is supporting. The Defra grant was used additionally to the funding provided through financial assistance to children in need under S17 of the Children Act. All the children known have been supported throughout this pandemic with food, essentials and other support including but not exclusive to emotional wellbeing, Mental Health, Domestic Violence, substance misuse and other factors.

26. From Hanna Walton to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

How many children in Bromley who currently qualify for Free School Meals receive funding from the Covid-19 Defra grants?

Reply:

The Defra grant was not provided for free school meals and was required to be spent to support families within 12 weeks, which was before the October half term.

27. From Helen Alsworth to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Has the take up of free school meals in Bromley increased during 2020? Can the Council estimate the increase and break it down by schools?

Reply:

Updated Census data is expected by January 2021. I would expect a moderate increase on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals since the last Census data in Spring 2020.

28. From Helen Alsworth to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

The Government has stated an intention to tackle the issue of child food poverty, and I want to ask the Council if Bromley Council intends to develop a strategy to meet this need locally?

Reply:

The Council already works with partners across the Borough and coordinates on a strategic level to improve outcomes for children and young people across a range of issues.

29. From Maxim Rowlands to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Does the Council know how many Bromley schools currently run food banks for their families?

Reply:

All Bromley schools work to support families in hardship and do an excellent job of doing this. Many have hardship policies and provide a range of support, including access to food. Some will work in partnership with local organisations and other schools have elected to make provision within the school. We do not record a breakdown of this.

30. From Laura Vogel to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Children, Education and Families PDS Committee Minutes from 10 November, (19) Portfolio Holder's Update:

"Those parents in need of extra support were encouraged to call the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) helpline so their call could be screened to ensure they received the correct support. The Portfolio Holder explained that individuals often rung for one thing when actually, in conversation with a qualified social worker, the reason was discovered to be different. For example, someone could ring the number asking for advice but actually trying to report abuse, domestic violence or mental health concerns."

Does the Council consider it appropriate that Bromley only publicised the MASH safeguarding telephone number as the appropriate channel for parents to approach the Council for food provisions during the October half term and how many Bromley staff were manning the line at any one time?

Reply:

Yes. The number was updated to ensure that any caller who wished to contact children social care would go through the MASH – this relates to no wrong door – families can often ring this number on a ruse of information when in fact they are disclosing DV or other issues and qualified social workers are best placed to make judgement on this. Families have complimented the service in supporting them and picking up issues in confidence when there is a safeguarding issue.

CSC has 7 teams in the Referral and Assessment Team made up of 5 social workers and a team manager in each and therefore resource was available to support the MASH line, together with 2 extra social workers as extra capacity through the Covid-19 funding to support any increase. 40 qualified social workers and admin support in total.

31. From Laura Vogel to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Would the Council not have considered it more appropriate to issue a dedicated telephone number (as other Councils did) for families requesting food vouchers for the October half term, rather than only providing the MASH safeguarding number, which may have made families hesitate if they simply wanted to request vouchers to which they were entitled, yet thought they would be talking to a social worker?

Reply:

No.

We have had a high number of compliments from families contacting our MASH line stating that not only did they receive support but in many cases they received advice and guidance including some families who confirmed they rang on the premise of food vouchers but were actually suffering domestic violence and were able to use this as a reason to contact services.

32. From Liz Thomas to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Bromley Council was awarded £279,772.15 in DEFRA grants to 'support people who are struggling to afford food and other essentials due to Covid-19. When asked what the Council had used the DEFRA grant for, they stated that the funds went to children in social care. The funds were allocated on the basis of population, weighted by the English index of Multiple Deprivation. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-authority-emergency-assistance-grant-for-food-and-essential-supplies>

What is Bromley's English Index of Multiple deprivation and was this entire group covered in the disbursement of the Covid-19 DWFEA grants?

Reply:

In line with the grant conditions, the full Defra grant of 279K was split between the shielding and assistance programme in Adult Social Care (£119k) and Children's Social Care (£260k).

The English Indices of Deprivation measure relative levels of deprivation in small areas or neighbourhoods, called Lower-layer Super Output Areas. 39 separate indicators, organised across seven distinct domains of deprivation are combined and weighted to calculate the Index of Multiple Deprivation, these domains include Income, Employment, Education, Health, Crime, Barriers to Housing, Living Environment. LSOA level outputs are often aggregated and used to describe relative deprivation for higher-level administrative geographies, such as local authority districts. Bromley is ranked 230th out of 317 local authorities in the 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, with the 1st being most deprived. Twenty-three thousand children live in the worse 20% Lower-layer Super Output Areas in Bromley, these

areas are Bromley Common and Keston, Cray Valley East and West, Crystal Palace, Mottingham and Chislehurst North, Orpington, Penge and Cator.

Appendix 1 (Question 21)

Service Area	Item	Rationale	Unit Price	# Units	Cost £	Sub total £	£'000
Equipment							
EIFS	Marquee/Gazebos	To enable socially distanced outside events	£459.00	4	1,840		
EIFS	Board Games for All Ages		£100.00	1	100		
EIFS	Language and Numeracy packs		£100.00	1	100		
EIFS	Personal and emotional skills Games		£100.00	1	100		
EIFS	Sports Equipment		£500.00	1	500		
EIFS	Tablets and Apps	Cognitive educational activities	£550.00	1	550		
EIFS	Camera Equipment and Training	To enable online storytelling and activities	£1,000.00	1	1,000		
YOS	Outdoor Sports Equipment	To encourage physical activity	£1,500.00	1	1,500		
YOS	Art Materials	Individual art sets required due to C-19, to allow CYP to try something relaxing	£2,000.00	1	2,000		
YOS	Laptops and a Colour Printer	To assist with job applications and NEET activity	£2,500.00	1	2,500		
CLA/LCT	Camera Equipment	For socially distanced photography project and film project on race and identity	£6,000.00	1	6,000		
Fostering	Equipment for CLA Football Team		£500.00	1	500.00	500	
Fostering	New Equipment for THRIVE (Therapy Service)		£1,000.00	1	1,000.00	17,690	18