

PUBLIC QUESTIONS FOR ORAL RESPONSE

1) Question from Alisa Igoe:

Aside from TfL's installed electric vehicle charging points at a few Bromley garages, the Council website notes a total of 36 electric vehicle charging points in the borough, at car parks/on-street locations. This is currently reduced to 30, as 4 are currently closed and 2 for taxis only. Full EVs have zero exhaust emissions. Will you be urgently installing more?"

Reply:

The Council has facilitated the installation of number of EV charge points across the borough over recent years, some on street and some in Council car parks. More recently we have seen charge point introduced by garages and Supermarkets. They have been largely located at destinations so people can charge their car away from home whilst shopping or visiting local establishments. We have seen their usage increase but they are far from fully used. We have been using that experience to ensure that we had an appropriate charging scheme in place plus we didn't install equipment that would become obsolescent and fall to the Council to remove before their costs had been paid covered. We have found that the technology behind the original charge points has been superseded with the electrical charge rates now too slow for customers.

With that experience gained, the Council is currently in the process of finalising its plans for a comprehensive strategy that will inform the long terms plans for installing electric vehicle charging points, this includes the application for Government funding that is essential to the Council's plans.

As part of working through what is a complex issue we are in advanced discussions with electric vehicle charge point providers with the intention of expanding the current network.

Residents are able to make a formal request for an EV charging point via the council website. Priority will be given to those without off street parking facilities. We have only seen a very small number of requests with most occurring recently.

Any technical faults with charge points should be directed to the supplier in the first instance.

Supplementary Question from Alisa Igoe:

TfL have recently opened a new rapid charging electrical hub in Woolwich which is the second of its kind across the capital. Would you collaborate with TfL to install a rapid charging hub?

Reply:

Two years ago, the Council offered 25 locations to TfL for rapid charging points. One had already been installed on the A222 in Coney Hall. I am not sure if they installed one in West Wickham or did so subsequently. TfL were particularly keen to support the relevant charging points for black cabs. We were in discussion with TfL concerning possible locations—some of the locations were not used because the black cabs did not want the charging points located in the taxi ranks. We were disappointed that TfL did not progress with more of the locations that we offered to them.

Supplementary Question in response from Cllr Simon Fawthrop:

Was the Portfolio Holder aware that many Apps were available that could provide the location of charging points? Will the Portfolio Holder bring forward a paper on this as I feel it is a very important issue and I feel that we should address this in more detail.

Response from the Portfolio Holder:

As you should have noted in my previous answer, we are intending to bring a paper on this to the November PDS. Sometimes Apps are specific to a particular charging technology so it's not necessarily straightforward, but hopefully over time there will be more commonality between Apps and charging technologies.

2) Question from Alisa Igoe:

The Open Space Strategy Consultation operated from 12 November to 7 January 2021. At the 14 January meeting a Member asked if the results would be available at the 11 March meeting. You advised it would come to the 9 June meeting. 9 June he asked why the results had been moved to the 1 September meeting. Today's Work Programme shows it listed for the 17 November meeting. Will it definitely appear in November and why is it taking so long to publish the results?

Reply:

The consultation elicited considered and well-intentioned responses, which showed great diversity both of a positive and negative nature. As part of the revision process of the strategy, officers sought to ensure that both the views of the consultation respondents and the impact of the pandemic had been fully considered and understood when redrafting the strategy, especially where there have been negative perceptions of certain aspects. The Council's intention was to ensure that the revision process delivered a high-quality and ambitious strategy that reflects the priorities, needs and aspirations of all sectors of the community. Given the feedback it is important we get this strategy right rather than meet a particular timescale.

Having said that, following a process of stakeholder engagement regarding the content of the redraft, it is intended that the strategy will be reported to the November PDS Committee.

Supplementary Question from Cllr Ian Dunn:

Given that the Strategy has had 800 potential changes to it, will the Strategy be coming back to the Committee for approval or for final revisions?

Reply:

Its coming back to the PDS Committee, the PDS Committee can make whatever recommendations they feel appropriate.

3) Question from Tony McPartlan:

I note from the Council's net zero carbon action plan, that 'Council fleet' does not include vehicles used by Council contractors. Is this not in effect 'cheating' our way a little to claiming that we will be net zero when vehicles providing Council services are predominantly contractor owned?

Reply:

The Council's net zero target applies to all those emissions that it directly controls, namely all scope 1 and 2 emissions, plus some scope 3 emissions from business travel, water and paper usage, electricity (transmission and distribution) and office waste.

However, we recognise that emissions from our procured services are significant, even though they fall under the direct control and responsibility of our suppliers. Hence why we not only strive to select contractors with good environmental credentials but also work closely with our suppliers of major contracts (e.g. our waste contractors) to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions arising from the services delivered to Bromley. The Environmental Services contractors have all been challenged when they have appeared before this PDS committee on their net zero targets, their target net zero dates typically are similar or ahead of the Council's.

With regard to Environmental Services contractors' vehicles, their current replacement dates are all consistent with a programmed replacement prior to the Council's 2029 date, and we are expecting that viable Zero Emission Vehicles will be available at that time. The demands placed on waste services vehicles are some of the most challenging and few options are currently available and we require them to be reliable.

Supplementary Question:

Is there any scope to add fleet electrification as a pre-requisite to new contracts?

Reply:

The answer is quite clearly 'Yes'. Whenever a 'Gateway Zero' contract comes to a PDS Committee for approval there is the ability for Members (if it's not already in there) to add this as a condition of the contract at that point.

4) Question from Tony McPartlan

According to the 2020/21 Outrun, £326,000 of Government Covid-19 grants were allocated to cover portfolio staffing costs. Have these Covid grants, designed to help local residents and businesses, been used to simply balance the portfolios books.

Reply:

Staff working on the Shielding, Volunteering and Assistance line worked to set up a food distribution hub, recruited 4600 volunteers and operated an incoming assistance line. All staff on this programme were diverted from their Business as Usual roles with no external paid staff involved. The grants for this programme were spent on food, equipment and enhanced DBS checks for volunteers, but because of the sound management of this programme, running costs were minimal. In addition, community funding was received from other sources – for example a generous donation from Direct Line – which was distributed to the Voluntary and Community Sector. A significant portion of the Council's grant was also provided to the voluntary sector food organisations to directly help residents. Any remaining grant was used to contribute towards some revenue staffing costs for the seconded employees.

It is important to state that through this programme, there were no residents that approached the Council that went without support where needed. Customer satisfaction was high and thousands of people were helped through direct pro-active contact from the Council and shopping and befriending volunteers.

On the Contact Tracing programme, many Council staff worked long hours and weekends to support vulnerable patients. Some paid-for external support was used to help on that programme to ensure that the relevant clinical expertise was available and this was funded through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund.

Supplementary Question:

Some businesses are no longer here because of the pandemic. Does this not seem a shame to you when potentially there was grant funding there to help them?

Reply:

I'm not quite sure what you are implying in your question. There were many grant schemes that the Council managed effectively. The Council did its best to ensure that those businesses that were eligible for grant funding received the relevant financial support. There were some limitations set down by the grant providing organisations which stipulated how the grants could be disseminated to businesses; this was directly or indirectly linked to central government guidelines. This matter really is a matter for the Resources Portfolio from where you can likely get more detail on these issues. The Council has distributed a large number of grants for significant sums of money and has supported many businesses to get through this difficult time.