

Council

28th February 2022

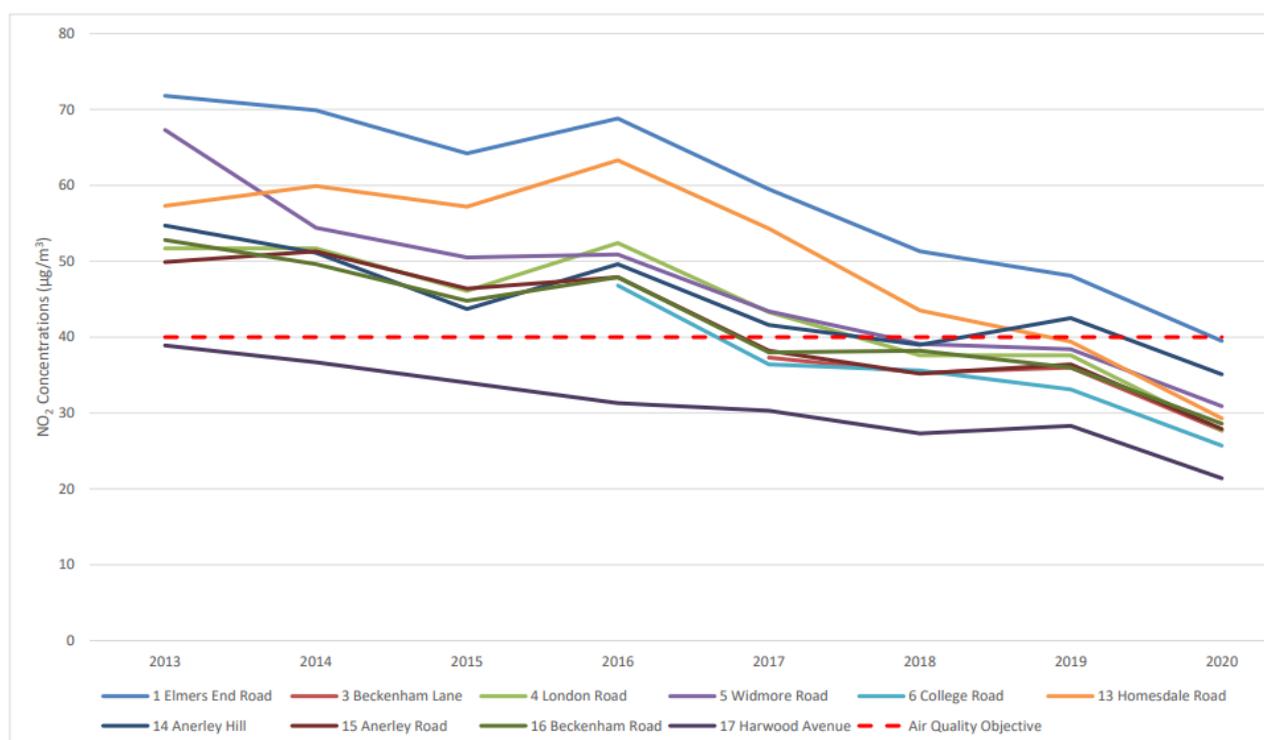
Questions from Members of the Public for Oral Reply

1. From Shaun Slator to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

What changes in air quality have there been over the last 4 years in Bromley?

Reply:

The information on trends in local air quality are presented in Bromley’s Annual Status Report. The latest version of which is available on the Council’s website.



Annual mean NO₂ concentrations at non-automatic monitoring sites are shown below. The graph shows the gradual decline of air pollution due to NO₂ over time.

The 2020 Annual Status Report shows that the annual mean NO₂ objective of 40 µg m⁻³ was not exceeded at any monitoring point in the borough in 2020.

The lowest annual mean NO₂ concentration in 2020, of 21.4 µg m⁻³, was seen at Harwood Avenue. The highest annual mean NO₂ concentration in 2020, of 39.5 µg m⁻³, was seen at Elmers End Road. Elmers End Road has been the location where LBB has measured the Borough’s highest NO₂ concentrations in recent years.

In relation to Particulate Matter (PM10 & PM2.5), the following data shows the trend in the concentration of these pollutants over time, as measured at the Borough's automatic monitoring station. As can be seen there has been a significant decrease over time – it has halved over that time.

PM10 (µg m-3)

Valid data capture 2020 % ^(b)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
98	33.3	30.1	29.5	16.8	16.5	18.8	15.8

PM2.5 (µg m-3)

Valid data capture 2020 % ^(b)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
56	-	-	15.5	-	-	-	8.5

PM2.5 monitoring was re-instated in Bromley 2020, and moving forward further results will be available. Between 2016, when the percentage was 15.5, and now that has reduced to 8.5, so that is another halving.

Supplementary Question from Cllr Ryan Thomson:

How many air quality devices does Bromley actually own and how many monitoring points are there across Bromley?

Reply:

The graph that you will be shown shows ten monitoring points. There are non-automatic monitoring points elsewhere. I can provide full numbers by email.

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

If the Government implemented election promises to abolish no fault evictions for private tenants, what would be the financial savings to the Council? Is the Council committed to the "levelling up" reforms of the private rented sector as recently proposed by Government?

Reply:

With regards to 'No fault' evictions, it would be impossible to estimate whether there would be any direct savings. The vast majority of applications from tenants in the private sector relate to grounds for eviction, rather than no fault evictions.

There is always a fine balance in ensuring tenants' rights are protected and at the same time ensuring that measures do not dissuade potential landlords from letting properties. There is thus the risk that some landlords may not be willing to continue to let properties, particularly to those tenants without a track record in renting accommodation being deemed as high risk.

Supplementary Question:

Does the Portfolio Holder support the proposals in the Levelling Up White Paper to abolish no fault evictions, and can the Councillor tell us what he has done to review data on the private rented sector as described in the Housing Strategy of 2019?

Reply:

That is two questions, which one would you prefer I answer? To answer the second, we have no rights to go trampling over people's private properties, we cannot, as a matter of course, go and check. However, whenever we get complaints we take them very seriously indeed and do go and inspect where we think it is absolutely necessary.

3. From Paula Peters to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

I understand that Bromley Council extended the consultation period for the supplementary planning document from 6 weeks to 12 weeks. Can the Council please clarify what was the actual date that the 12- week consultation period began for the supplementary planning document?

Reply:

The consultation on the Orpington SPD has not yet commenced. It is likely to start in early March 2022. The 12-week period will apply from that date when the consultation starts.

Supplementary Question:

Will the Supplementary Planning Guidance be included in the decision on the Areli development and for all further planning applications in the Orpington area?

Reply:

Once the Orpington SPD has been finalised, which will not be done until after the consultation, as we have to take the replies into account, then it will become a document. It does not over-ride the Local Plan but it informs the decisions.

4. From Helen Brookfield to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

Has Bromley Council notified TFL that it is dismantling the TFL funded segregated cycle lane in Albemarle Road and that it is using further TFL funding to pay for the cost of dismantling it?

Reply:

I do have a full reply prepared, but in view of the Mayor's request for brevity the short answer is yes.

Supplementary Question:

Given the healthy streets scorecard for 2021 and that Bromley has the fourth highest cycling casualties rate out of thirty three London local authorities, and was well

above the average, what are Bromley Council planning to do to reduce the danger for cyclists on Bromley's roads?

Reply:

Bromley has had a long programme of introducing cycle schemes across the borough. This experimental scheme was introduced in recognition of the fact that public transport was going to have reduced capacity following lockdown. That has now changed. We have gathered a huge amount of useful data from this and we can now see the use of this route and the feedback from the route was also very bad in the sense that 40% liked the scheme we had put in and 60% did not. That will be very useful in terms of developing our future schemes in that area for cycling. We have a long track record of implementing cycle schemes across the borough and we will continue to do so. You will have seen from a previous agenda item just how important road safety is to this borough.

5. From John Pead to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

What is the earliest recorded reference to the Orpington Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document currently under consideration?

Reply:

A report to Development Control Committee, Renewal, Recreation and Housing Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee and Executive in early 2020 set out the intention to prepare this produce a Supplementary Planning Document to guide development in Orpington Town Centre. This proposed approach was finally agreed in April 2020. A consultation exercise to inform the SPD was conducted between 15 July and 5 October 2020, seeking views on the future of Orpington Town Centre and what the proposed SPD should focus on. The consultation set out a number of key themes and related questions to focus representations. The consultation was conducted using Commonplace, an online consultation portal which includes the option of providing feedback using a mapping tool as well as via written response.

Supplementary Question:

A recent poll has shown 75% of people objecting to the Areli proposals do not know of the existence of the Orpington Town Centre SDP or its associated consultation process. What measures are the Council taking to ensure genuine public engagement with this consultation?

Reply:

We shall be using all the measures that we usually use. It will be on the website, and people need to go to that. We are hoping that the ward Councillors will also publicise it through their publications and surgeries. After that, we are open to suggestions as to what we do. It will be publicised in the local newspapers and if there are any other ideas we will follow these.

6. From Jonathan Andrews to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

Given the mass library closures and transfers to community ownership in Harrow, Ealing and Lewisham in recent years and the proposals to make large cuts to services in Croydon, how many libraries has Bromley closed or transferred to community ownership since 2015?

Reply:

None.

Supplementary Question from Cllr Kathy Bance:

This Council closed Anerley Library when it moved Penge Library to a new facility. Can you confirm that Anerley is in the borough of Bromley?

Reply:

Of course, and I think that was prior to 2015, hence my earlier answer.

7. From Alisa Igoe to the Leader of the Council

On 25 January applications to the Household Support Fund of £1.8million closed “due to heavy take up”. The Council said it was “pleased to have played its part in dispensing grants to around 1500 Bromley families in need over this period, significantly ahead of the government’s 31 March deadline”. Is it possible such a swift and high take up also indicates there are many families still in need, who the Council were unable to help?

Reply:

I don’t believe so personally, especially given that the Council’s Hardship fund for 2021/22 remains significantly underspent with just one month of the civic year to go, despite being doubled in size in 2021/22 from £100k to £200k per year.

I believe that the Council’s early launch of the Household Support Fund back in November, one of the first Boroughs in London to do so, and our ability to expeditiously process the grant at a time of year renowned for staffing shortages not least linked to Covid, is thanks in very large part to the streamlined distribution processes we had set in place for previous generous Government Covid grant schemes, as well as our ability to cross reference back to previous recipients already identified as requiring the funds on offer.

Supplementary Question:

The Hardship fund is the Welfare Fund? Is that a different fund? Does the Hardship Fund allow people who have been in accommodation for more than six weeks to apply, and does it allow immigrants to apply who have no recourse to public funds?

Reply:

That is not related to the Hardship fund, which is what the question was based on.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Simon Jeal:

How many questions were received after the closure of the Household Support Fund, and were those applications referred to the Hardship Fund?

Reply:

The Hardship Fund is not specific to this question. The total number of applications received I believe from memory was 1,846, or thereabouts, of which about 500 have not been paid and some 1,320 have been paid.

8. From Cindy Mayer to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

Has the draft SPD been written with Areli's high-rise residential blocks in mind e.g. 12-15 storey may be suitable for this location? Report HPR2021/009 dated 10 Feb 2021 shows the Regeneration Board was steering the direction of this application and SPD could potentially make it easier to get approval.

Reply:

The guidance in the draft SPD is not informed by the Areli application. It has been developed independently by the Council's policy and urban design officers, with consideration of the national, London-wide and local planning framework, including the emerging emphasis on design quality in national policy. You should note that the SPD does not relate solely to the Walnuts site it applies to the whole of the wider Town Centre and surrounding area.

Supplementary Question:

In terms of the draft SPD, why does the Planning Department and the Regeneration Board use the height of Orpington College as a benchmark for future development? I would have thought that one of the key lessons learnt from this type of 1970s high-rise residential block is that they are divisive and segregate the community. This is why many London Councils have gone through a regeneration programme to replace them with much more suitable four to five storey blocks instead.

Reply:

I do not think the officers have come at this with any pre-conceived thoughts or ideas or policies. That is why we are going to have a consultation and we look forward to hearing from you and everybody else what their ideas are, particularly in respect of height and density. It is still an open question and nothing is pre-conceived.

9. From Stuart Mayer to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

It would appear that the regeneration board has been steering Areli since June 2020 regarding the Walnuts quarter. Given that 97% of residents oppose this scheme it would appear that both the Council and Areli have misjudged public opinion. Isn't it time that the Council consulted with residents on this matter?

Reply:

We are unsure which Regeneration Board you are referring to. The Orpington Town Centre Development Board brings together stakeholders in the town centre, it is not a decision-making forum or a steering group, it primarily serves to share information.

The Council has not consulted as there is not a scheme that the Council currently has an agreed interest in to consult on. This is a scheme that has been developed by Areli and now that they have submitted a planning application residents are being consulted in the usual way.

Supplementary Question:

Given that there has been such a massive interest in the Areli proposal, I understand over three thousand residents have made comments to date, would you agree that any consultation on the SPD if you got anywhere less than five hundred it would be a failure on your part, and you need to make sure that you get a significant number of residents consulted on the SPD.

Reply:

I desire to get as many responses on the consultation as we possibly can and we will be doing everything we possibly can to promote the idea and encourage people to reply. I am hoping that the three or four thousand who have commented about Areli will also comment about the SPD, but it will be a wider consultation than just the Walnuts scheme.

Additional supplementary question from Cllr Simon Fawthrop:

There have been over three thousand public comments in relation to what is effectively the Orpington West part of the SPD. Rather than getting those people to bureaucratically write in again, will the Portfolio Holder accept that those comments can be used to inform the SPD?

Reply:

I can see no reason, other than sheer bureaucracy, why that should not be the case and I will encourage the Planning Department to do exactly that.

10. From Dermot Mckibbin to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

The Prime Minister supports councils encouraging more cycling in “Gear Change: one year on.” Will the Council consult with residents in BR3 on steps to promote more cycling in BR3 such as bike hangers, cycle lanes and better facilities at Beckenham Junction station?

Reply:

The Council is always keen to hear from residents about their ideas to help facilitate cycling, whether that is requesting additional cycle parking or suggesting cycle routes. Cycle parking is easier to deliver as the limited road-space in most of the Borough can limit where cycle routes can be introduced, but we will always consider both aspects, not to mention the cycle training on offer to riders of all levels of experience.

Bike hangars are installed in locations where there is a demand for cycle parking and insufficient storage space in private dwellings. To request a bike hangar please complete the online traffic request form on the website.

There are already 48 bike parking places at Beckenham Junction, but if you have suggestions as to how bike storage might be improved, then please let the Council know so we can liaise with Network Rail and Southeastern as appropriate.

Cycle routes to Beckenham Junction have been improved in recent years and the Council is looking to make further improvements in the Beckenham area over coming years.

Supplementary Question:

Could the Portfolio Holder send me data by ward showing the number of bike hangars in each ward, and also would he join me in coming to Beckenham Junction Train station to look at the bike storage facilities because they are not lockable and they get damaged when people are away in town. I think the Council could use its influence to good effect with South East Rail to improve the bike storage facilities not only at Beckenham Junction but at all railways stations throughout the borough.

Reply:

I can certainly provide you with information on bike hangars – you will not be surprised to know that they predominate in areas with higher density housing. I can certainly meet at Beckenham Junction Station. The land is owned by either Network Rail or Southeastern, so we have to do it in conjunction with them. We have introduced that in certain places. There tends to be a charge associated with it so there has to be an understanding that it will be viable for those locations. Indeed, there is a charge related to bike hangars.

Additional supplementary question from Cllr Simon Jeal:

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm how many new cycle lanes have been implemented in BR3 over the past four years?

Reply:

I will answer by email.

(At this point the time allowed for questions expired – the remaining questions received written replies.)

11. From Helen Brookfield to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

What plans does the Council have in regard to ensuring private landlords are aware of and comply with the current legal requirements for all rented properties to have a minimum EPC rating of band E and to work with landlords to improve the EPC ratings of their properties in order to achieve the 2035 target for EPC rating band C?

Reply:

The Carbon Management Team works with our domestic energy efficiency and advice partners to assist residents in saving money on their fuel bills, how they can improve their Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), and LBB can provide an assumed EPC assessment if none exists. The Council has access to housing stock software for assumed EPCs across the borough to enable a targeted outreach approach.

The Council was successful in a tri-borough application for a 6-month MEES intelligence gathering officer which will eventually inform a business case for additional resources for enforcement. Consultation on the recruitment process is on-going. It should be noted that the Council's approach is to first inform, guide and educate property owners and landlords of their responsibilities regarding their properties' energy performance, with monetary fines being a last resort.

12. From Alisa Igoe to the Leader of the Council

On 20 December the journalist Jodie Ginsberg tweeted a thank you to the Leader of the Council, remarking on your compassionate response to an issue she said she had raised with you, relating to housing resettled Afghan families. Could you please expand on the discussion and any positive outcomes from it?

Reply:

Ms Ginsberg emailed me on Saturday 18th December to detail the case of an individual and their family known to her organisation who she advised had been allocated to Bromley by the Home Office, but for whom no notice had been provided to receive and furnish a dwelling for them.

I set the necessary wheels in motion for her over the course of the weekend with the relevant Home Office, Council and Clarion officers, resulting in a further message from Ms Ginsberg on Tuesday 21st December thanking me for my assistance and confirming that the matter was now moving forward to her satisfaction.