

Oral questions to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces from members of the public and Councillors:

Oral Questions from the Public:

1) Question from Helen Brookfield:

Kelsey Park Bridge. Can the Council clarify why there have been so many delays and periods with no action being taken since the first bridge closed in February 2021?

Response to Question 1:

When the bridges were first closed in 2021, initial investigations by the Council's contractor idverde did identify certain options for replacement bridges, however on further investigation it became apparent that the process for replacing the bridges would be significantly more complex than was originally anticipated. Resources were approved to take this work forward, and subsequent stages have been completed as quickly as possible in compliance with the council's processes for robust governance.

This has included:

- Procuring specialist contractors to undertake surveys
- Produce costed designs
- Work with stakeholders to obtain feedback on the designs
- Ecological and arboriculturally surveys
- Finding contractors and obtaining costs
- Going back out to market to ensure value for money
- Considering all options against a backdrop of high inflation and council budgetary constraints.

I'm very pleased to say that we will be discussing a way forward tonight and if approved, the project can push forward.

2) Question from Helen Brookfield

Kelsey Park Bridge. Can the Council estimate how much extra costs for the works are now likely to be then they would have been if they had started the process of replacing the bridge immediately after it was declared unsafe almost 2 years ago?

Response to Question 2:

Prices were initially obtained back when the bridges were first closed, however these did not take into account the various items outlined in your previous question, for example, the site constraints and substructure requirements, so any comparison would not be meaningful.

The additional work undertaken to date has been necessary to inform design options and the wider business case.

Post meeting Note:

(Ms Brookfield originally sent in her questions for oral response. On the day of the meeting Ms Brookfield contacted the Council to say that she was no longer able to attend—as Ms Brookfield had contacted the Council, the responses to her questions were provided to her in written form)

3) Question from Eileen Welsh:

Given the high cost of either repairing or replacing these two bridges did the Council make any applications for extra funding from other funding streams; e.g. Lottery, London Mayor's funding so that both bridges could have been restored to their previous conditions?

Response to Question 3:

We have considered grant funding options for supporting the replacement of the bridges, but we are not recommending proceeding with an application because local authorities do not qualify for a number of community grants and the time it would take to secure the grants would delay us starting works onsite.

Officers have also investigated the availability of s106 of CIL contributions but there is nothing currently available to support this work, but we will pursue CIL money if it does become available.

I have told the Friends Group, they have our support if they want to fundraise to repair the second bridge.

Supplementary Question from Eileen Welsh:

The bridges have needed repairing for some time. There are various funding streams, so why not apply for funding earlier?

Response to the Supplementary Question from Eileen Welsh:

This matter is not straightforward as there are many criteria that need to be matched to successfully source commercial funding

4) Question from Eileen Welsh

There are many maintenance activities required to keep the infrastructure of Bromley's parks in good condition. The bridges are a good example of some considerable neglect over the years. The water in the lakes in the park is at such a low level that the birds are walking on mud and rats are frequently reported. Benches

need re-varnishing and toilets renovating. What is the Council's budget for park maintenance and how is it prioritised?

Response to Eileen Welsh:

The council's budget for maintenance of park assets has historically been met and managed under the annual operational maintenance budget, with works across the whole of the council's estate prioritised to manage risk. The total operational maintenance budget for 2022/23 is £2.314m. However, when setting the budget for 2022/23, the council also put aside an additional £2m in a Building Investment Fund, and an allocation of £250k was specifically made for park infrastructure.

idverde have responsibility for managing health and safety in the borough's parks and open spaces and this includes cyclical inspections of park assets, such as the Kelsey Park Bridges, with recommendations made on repairs.

In addition to this, there are some minor infrastructure repairs that are funded through the council's contract with idverde for the provision of parks management and grounds maintenance, such as bench maintenance, with items prioritised as a result of condition and risk assessments.

The council has recently launched the Parks Platinum Jubilee Fund which will see investment of up to £1m in the borough's parks and open spaces allowing for community-led prioritisation of this investment.

Supplementary Question from Eileen Welsh

Does the maintenance Fund get priority?

Response to the Supplementary Question from Eileen Welsh.

Not in terms of repairs.

The Council is currently reviewing all of its park assets, this includes toilets.

Oral Questions from Councillors

1) Question from Cllr Alisa Igoe

Fly-tipping beside recycling banks in car parks and at sites around the borough is a constant problem, including dumped household waste, mattresses and waste from businesses. Our contractor's cleansing team visit recycling bank sites daily to remove it. Could the Portfolio Holder please confirm that this removed fly-tipping is included in the total number of fly-tipping incidents recorded in the borough?

Response to Cllr Alisa Igoe:

Neighbourhood Management are aware of fly tipping concerns linked to recycling bring sites, our contractors Veolia visit sites regularly to empty banks whilst also clearing loose waste placed beside containers. All reported deposits are included in our fly capture returns.

Enviro-Crime officers visit recycling banks to monitor fly tipping, searching waste for evidence which could lead to enforcement action.

Neighbourhood Management are looking to introduce CCTV at known fly tipping hotspots. This CCTV uses artificial intelligence to identify fly tipping with images sent direct to enforcement officers allowing swift action against those who choose to deposit waste illegally in Bromley.

Supplementary Question from Cllr Igoe:

Are these images counted as part of the total number of fly-tipping incidences in the borough?

Response to the Supplementary Question from Cllr Igoe:

Yes.

2) Question from Cllr Ruth McGregor:

Will the Council commit to carrying out the necessary works to de-silt the canal in Betts Park, which is an important focal and heritage point for the park and the area and which is in need of improvement works.

Response to Cllr Ruth McGregor:

The Council has previously invested in a programme of improvements to Betts Park Canal which have stabilised the bank at the north eastern section of the canal.

Officers have scoped de-silting work that may be of further benefit to the canal as part of my commitment at the September PDS to consider options for improving the health of the borough's water bodies.

However, the costs to undertake works to the water bodies across the borough is predicted to be high, and therefore works will need to be appropriately prioritised considering the financial challenges facing the council in the next four years. This work will continue over the coming months with the results reported back to a meeting of the committee in 2023/24.

Supplementary Question from Cllr Ruth McGregor:

I believe that in the last meeting, there was an identified underspend of £8k which I think was to do with the canal structure rather than de-silting. Given that in the summer there were many health and safety and environmental issues raised by the public. I understand that the required spend is higher than what is in the budget but I would have thought it could be prioritised.

Response to the question from Cllr Ruth McGregor:

I don't have the details to hand. I am very happy to look into this with officers and write back to you.