

Council

24 April 2023

Questions from Members of the Council for Oral Reply

1. From Councillor Chris Price to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces

Will the Council commit to building a high quality perimeter fence around Hoblingwell in this financial year?

Reply:

I am really happy to announce (and we made a joint announcement with the Police last week that went out on social media today) that we will indeed be funding the fence, and I want to take the opportunity to thank our Friends Groups, local Councillors including Councillor Hitchins and our former councillors Stevens and Ellis who I know campaigned long and hard for this. It is frustrating for some residents that this has taken a long time to get to this stage, but we do have to take every decision very carefully, we have to speak to our stakeholders and ensure that our public money is being spent in the best way possible.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Colin Hitchins:

I would like to thank the Portfolio Holder and the Conservative Group for their support in obtaining this fence. We protect our green space from developers, but we also need to protect it from those who wish to destroy it for our community to use. Would you agree that we need to look at all of our green spaces, not just Hoblingwell, to ensure that they are all maintained in a safe manner for our community?

Reply:

I absolutely do agree with you, and I wish my budget was quadruple what it is now, but we must all live within our means. I want to thank the Friends Groups for all that they do, because they are stewards within our community to help us maintain our green spaces when public money is so tight.

Supplementary Question:

I had not heard that news – thank you very much. We are very pleased that we are going to have high quality fence going in around Hoblingwell to help ensure it is a safe space because that area has so much to offer, and as you said the Friends Group there are amazing. Can I ask for a time-frame, so that we know when this is happening, and we can get that message out to people?

Reply:

I also want to put on record my thanks to the local Police, who worked very closely with us to ensure that this was the right solution to tackle the problem. In terms of the time-line, it goes out to tender in May. There are local government tendering and procurement rules, so it takes about three months, then we need to appoint, so hopefully within the next six to eight months, but it will be done as soon as possible.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Alisa Igoe :

It is wonderful news, but in future could the ward councillor be told before the press release comes out?

Reply:

It was, but it was sent out this morning, and I know people have day-jobs and so might not have seen it.

2. From Councillor Alisa Igoe to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

Lady Tanni Grey-Thompson has tweeted “This is why I can’t change to an electric car” with photographs of inaccessible electric vehicle chargers on raised kerbs/pavements. Could the Portfolio Holder please confirm to me that all EV chargers installed and due to be installed in Bromley, including in car parks, are compliant with BSI PAS 1899:2022 accessible charging?

Reply:

The EV charge points on highway land and in Council car parks were installed before the guidance was released, however in the majority of aspects they do meet the requirements, lacking in only a few areas related to screen positioning and potentially footway dimensions.

New installations and current ones on replacement, will, of course, follow the Guidance.

3. From Councillor Tony McPartlan to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

The draft Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Management Policies will soon go for an eight week public consultation. These policies will have an immediate and major impact on our existing tenants. What plans are there to involve them in this consultation?

Reply:

As a Social Landlord, there is a statutory requirement to consult existing tenants on the Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Management Policy. The full consultation programme is being drafted with external consultants who have been supporting the Council on this project, alongside the Council’s Communications Team. Following

the eight week period, officers shall prepare a covering report evidencing how consultation has influenced the final documents, these will be presented back to the Executive for final approval.

Supplementary Question:

Would it be possible for this report to be put to Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee so that we can see it as part of our scrutiny?

Reply:

I see no reason why that should not be possible.

4. From Councillor Jeremy Adams to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces

Last April, this chamber voted to ‘commit to a target of net zero emissions for all other Council activities (Scope 3) by 2030.’ Yet the Council’s CEO said last month at ERC PDS he has no mandate to expand net zero to contracted-out activities. When will this start?

Below is the link to the page that includes the relevant motion:

<https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=7106>

Reply:

That motion was not carried – we decided that it would be scrutinised by the Environment and Community Services PDS Committee, which it was. The Committee decided it needed a little bit more thought, because what Scope 3 emissions means is all of the emissions of our contractors, so we need to first find out what the benchmark is. We need to know what our contractors are emitting. Our carbon manager at the time came to the PDS meeting and asked to hire consultants to look at that and the Committee said yes. That work is ongoing and will come back to the PDS Committee for further scrutiny.

Supplementary Question:

To clarify, is the process you are going through now effectively an audit of what the footprint is and where the big impacts might be and the biggest early wins? I am not expecting that you will say we will be looking for negotiations straight away – it is about identifying where we can potentially make gains. Is it about auditing the carbon footprint and working out where we can make gains in potentially reducing those emissions?

Reply:

Yes.

5. From Councillor Kathy Bance MBE to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management

Waterman's Square is part of the Heritage in Penge. Can the Portfolio Holder confirm that LBB is responsible for the historic aspects of Waterman's Square? If she is, is she also aware that Waterman's Square is slowly falling into disrepair?

Reply:

The open space at Waterman's Square is maintained by the Council through its contractor idverde. The residential properties surrounding are not in the Council's ownership and therefore not the Council's responsibility, however the Council is responsible for the boundary wall and the gates to the park. Officers from Environmental Services and Property will undertake an inspection to ascertain whether any works are required and report back to me and Councillor Bear once this work has been completed.

Supplementary Question:

I am pleased to hear that because there has been an action plan running around for the last two and a half years and I have tried to work with the previous Portfolio Holder. I have been made aware that Clarion Housing are now moving their tenants out of Waterman's Square so that they can do some maintenance work – is that in conjunction with London Borough of Bromley or is that totally separate?

Reply:

I am unaware of that – perhaps Councillor Bear knows better? (Cllr Bear – I am not aware – we will have to make enquiries.)

Councillor Bance added that Waterman's Square was due to form part of the Festival of Architecture later in the year so it was an important building.

6. From Councillor Kevin Kennedy-Brooks to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Care and Health

The Centre for Mental Health has reported in order to halt the increase in people experiencing poor mental health councils must do more in the areas of living standards, personal safety, wellbeing and care. Can the Portfolio Holder detail how these are being fulfilled.

Reply:

Our Making Bromley Even Better Strategy sets out how this Council is working to develop the social and physical environment where our residents can thrive and where people can lead safer, healthier and more independent lives.

This in turn will be supported by our Local Care Partnership Strategy that will set out how the Council with the NHS and other local care and health services will work together and with residents to improve physical and mental health. Our approach is one of early intervention and prevention.

The Bromley Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out a joint vision and action plan between Bromley Council and the local NHS to support residents to have good mental health and wellbeing.

Supplementary Question:

I brought up this question because Mental Health Week is coming up on May 16th – 21st, and last year the theme was loneliness and an excellent loneliness project has been done and I know you were involved in that, Councillor Cuthbert. This year's theme is anxiety. Going beyond just those people who are registered as having mental health issues, we now have the cost of living crisis, rising bills and much more pressures. As well as internal remedies, what pressure is this Council putting on our Government to raise more funding to help our residents to not suffer from anxiety?

Reply:

The Bromley Local Care Plan has a particular chapter around South East London strategy. We are working with the South East London Health Board to take some of those initiatives forward from the point of view of looking after people with mental health problems. As I have said before, it is more of a prevention angle that we are taking at the moment. Certainly, this is something that will be coming to the Health and Wellbeing Board in June. We have already had an update recently at the Health and Wellbeing Board about the Mental Health Strategy and I will be happy to circulate any highlights to people who are interested in this chamber tonight.*

Supplementary Question from Councillor Simon Jeal:

Can the Portfolio Holder please confirm when the Joint Mental Health Strategy is next up for review and to what extent the performance in terms of early intervention, and the success of that strategy will be put forward to the PDS Committee for reporting?

Reply:

We have had a recent update at the Health and Wellbeing Board, so that is something that will be taken forward. I am not sure when it will be reviewed again, but we have only just had an update and I am happy to circulate any of the workstreams that we discussed at the Health and Wellbeing Board.

*Note:

- An update on the MH strategy was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 30th March. Key highlights over the last year include:
 - the roll-out of mental health support teams in schools
 - the expansion of the children and young people's mentoring programme
 - the opening of the new Bromley Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub – community based multi-agency MH service
 - Appointing dedicated MH link roles in GP Practices – MH post in each Primary Care Network
 - Transformation of 80 units of housing to support more independent living for people with long-term mental health challenges
 - Recovery Works project helping people with MH back into employment

- Agencies involved in the MH strategy include: LBB, ICB, PRUH, Oxleas, Bromley Healthcare, Bromley Y, BLG Mind, Mencap, Hestia, Ambient, etc.
- Bromley Well – People with poor mental health can access a wide range of support from Bromley Well. Targeted MH community support from across agencies is now coordinated through the Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub operated through Oxleas and Mind.

7. From Councillor Simon Jeal to the Leader of the Council

What plans does London Borough of Bromley have to mark Pride month this June?

Reply:

I am pleased to advise Members that GLL will be running a series of events in our libraries. There are no details to hand at the moment, but as soon as we know what they are doing you will be updated.

Supplementary Question:

It is great to hear that we will be running events in our libraries. Many London Councils also mark Pride Month by either flying the Rainbow Flag or transforming their own logos into rainbow colours. Is that something that Bromley will consider this year?

Reply:

Members who were present in July 2019 will recall the answer I gave then. In my view, practice and tradition have formed over the years that the Union Flag, and on special event days, the Cross of St George, or that of the Armed Forces, best serves the choice of flag to flown over the Civic Centre at all times give its over-arching symbolism for all Bromley residents.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Will Connolly:

How disappointing is it that nothing has changed since 2019 and the same Councillors have to raise these issues about representing our residents. Does the Leader not agree that what better way is there to be proud of Bromley than to celebrate Pride in Bromley and showcase London Pride, regional Pride events and work with our community groups, those that are representing those community groups, and bring people together this year and every year?

Reply:

I think what is most important is to judge by your deeds, not your words. Our deeds to the local gay community, LGBT+ are demonstrated through all our policies, all of our work programmes and ensuring that they are looked after, treated equally at all times is in the vanguard of what any responsible Council will undertake. We talk of regional, we talk of national events, it is absolutely at anyone's wit to attend central London events if they wish to, it is half an hour away on a train. The position in Bromley, and I am very comfortable with this, is that the Union Flag is the flag that represents all Bromley residents at all times, and that is why we take the position that we do.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Alisa Igoe:

I was in the audience in 2019 and I was rather sad to hear the reply. You say deeds – how about something on the website? How about changing our website for Pride Month with more colour, and a news item, rather than the current one.

Reply:

I personally do not see the need to make any adaptations to the website. We are a serious Council, with serious policies, and we demonstrate that by what we do at all times to all of our residents. There is absolutely nothing to stop any group that wishes to go an extra step, to do more, and if the Council can facilitate that through granting licenses for events in parks, whatever ideas people come up with of course we can look at that, but that is exactly why we are doing what we are doing at the moment. It is around that level of consistency with firm actions rather than perhaps temporary words that do not get delivered upon.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Chris Price:

I would really encourage you to look at this again, because for people to feel included it is crucial that they are seen to be included. June is also Gypsy Roma Traveller month - what is the Council doing to help celebrate that. We have in our borough potentially the largest settled Gypsy Traveller community in Europe so it will be great if we can celebrate them as well as celebrating Pride Month, and there will be other months that we should be celebrating and putting to the front of our website. Can I ask what will we do? How can we get the Council to be on-board with this?

Supplementary Question from Councillor Tony Mc Partlan:

Has the Leader considered the disabled members of the LGBT community who might struggle to attend events in central London and who might require events to be held locally. With them in mind, might he reconsider his position about not holding more local events?

Reply:

I can only repeat that if any groups wish to organise events for any other group it is absolutely within their right and capability to do so, but it does not form part of the Council's programme.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Graeme Casey:

I appreciate your position as far as the Union Flag representing all the people of Bromley, but I do take exception to the idea that, even though we are a serious Council, simply changing the colours on the website is a frivolous thing to do. I think it would be a nice marker for many members of our community to show that we do have pride in all aspects of our community. Would you consider it to be a mark of frivolity to change something, rather than the serious message that it would instead be putting out as Councillor Igoe suggested?

Reply:

I would not use a word like frivolous, but I do not think it is essential to the running of the Council. I would like to concentrate on what we can deliver properly in terms of

service delivery, making effective outcomes for all Bromley residents irrespective of their race, religion, creed, colour, sexuality or anything else.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Sam Webber:

I think the Leader referred to GLL. I understand it is Greenwich Leisure Ltd who operate our libraries. But nonetheless, these are Bromley Council libraries. I think the distance implied in that answer – that they are not even Bromley Council library events is a concern, and I would argue that that could be re-framed, surely? These are not GLL events, these are Bromley Council library events. At the very least, I would ask the Leader to re-consider something on our website as a reasonable, rational request, as we put on other advice for our residents and for all events.

Reply:

Councillor Webber's thoughts are noted.

8. From Councillor Ruth McGregor to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Enforcement

April 24-28 is National Stalking Awareness Week. What is Bromley Council doing to promote safety for all residents, but particularly VAWG?

Reply:

Stalking is an important issue, and it is covered in our Safer Bromley Partnership Strategy.

Throughout the year Bromley works with these partners to promote safety for all residents including women and girls.

Examples of such work are Ask Angela, Ask Ani, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust's work and the Bromley Street Pastors from local churches who patrol the streets at night offering support and safeguarding to vulnerable individuals who may need assistance in such things as getting home.

We would also encourage stalking incidents to be reported to the police to ensure perpetrators are found and there is accurate knowledge of the issue locally.

Supplementary Question:

I am aware of the work that the Safer Bromley Partnership is doing. I just wondered if there is anything specific relating to this week, being that it is National Stalking Awareness Week? I am glad that you are working with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, but is there something specific?

Reply:

There is the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, they are doing their conference, but also Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid are also doing a webinar on 26th April because this year it is around young people and stalking because that is the highest percentage. Both of

those are focussed on that and we work closely with Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid – it is on their website as well.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Alisa Igoe:

I am just on the website. Have we got something about it on the website?

Reply:

I am referring to the Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid website. I am not sure that it will be on our website at the moment.

9. From Councillor Tony Owen to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

What information does he have on Bromley's record of the number of people killed or seriously injured since 2005 and how this compares with other London boroughs?

Reply:

We have made good progress in making our streets as safe as they can be. As road length and road miles travelled varies so much between boroughs, the best comparison of casualties is to either look at the casualty rate per mile driven on the boroughs' roads or to look at the relative success boroughs have had since 2005 in reducing the number of fatal and serious collisions on their streets.

In 2021 – the last year for which comparative data is available – the rate of KSIs (killed or seriously injured casualties) per vehicle miles driven showed that Bromley had the 9th lowest rate of all boroughs in London, and the lowest rate of the boroughs in South East London. Looking at progress in decreasing the number of KSIs in this Borough, in the five years from 2005 Bromley had an average number of KSIs per year of 203 – this had reduced by 2021 to a five year average of 103. This decrease is better than in any other London borough.

Supplementary Question:

Does the Council keep time-series data which can be analysed in context?

Reply:

Yes we do, and perhaps we look at it over a five year rolling period, because if you take one year on its own that distorts all statistics. As Councillor Owen knows because he has been lecturing us for very many years about how we should look at statistics and I am grateful to him for that question.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Tony McPartlan:

The Conservative Party have often mentioned on their local leaflets that we have the safest roads in London. However, you just said that we have the ninth best in London in terms of killed and seriously injured, so, is what was said about having the safest streets in London correct?

Reply:

I assume that they were referring to the decrease.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Alisa Igoe:

Could you just confirm the figures that were on documents at the Environment Committee? The number of KSI casualties projected for 2022/23 is 101, which is 27.8% higher than our target of 79. Also, for 2021/22 the target was 89 and the number was 109 which was 26.7% higher than target. In previous years it was 15.21% and I think there was a 10% before that. So really, when we are looking at those last two years 26.7% rising to 27.8% over our target of 79, do you not feel that actually our casualties are far too high?

Reply:

One casualty is far too high, but as I said in answer to Cllr Owen you have got to take a series of years and look into it over a rolling period. Taking out years in isolation, you get ups and downs and that is not how you look at road casualties. We want to see nobody killed or injured on our roads.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Chloe-Jane Ross:

Do you have any concerns about all the KSI data coming through? When I have looked before I have seen quite a serious accident, and then there is no KSI, there is nothing on Crash Map. Is there a concern? Is there a London-wide issue? Is it quite common that the data is looking good because actually not all of the data from the Police or insurance companies or hospitals is actually getting through?

Reply:

A very interesting question, and it is one that I have asked my officers to look at when we have the report on road safety to the June Environment and Community Services PDS Committee because you are absolutely right, we have got to go on the statistics that we are given by the Police. I doubt that we miss any killed or seriously injured statistics as clearly they would have had the Police or Ambulance Service present. But I am well aware that, for instance, at a junction in my own ward where a local resident lives on the corner and has got CCTV, he has reported far more collisions than appear in the official statistics.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Will Rowlands:

I agree that one statistic of KSI is too many, but would he agree that one of the many ways that you can actually reduce the casualties on the roads is by having the ambitious targets that this Council has?

Reply:

I am not sure that a target makes any difference at all in that sense, but clearly we want to set ourselves ambitious targets and aim to get there. Clearly what is most important is that we improve road safety on our roads, and a comprehensive report is coming to the June PDS meeting.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Kathy Bance:

I agree that we work on these figures of killed and seriously injured, and with this high level of killed and seriously injured we ought to be adding another column of serious collisions, so that all the roads where there are hot spots of serious collisions can be identified before people injured? Is this a statistic that we could start picking up?

Reply:

When the information is available it is put on to a collision map, and that is available on the internet. Clearly, unless it is reported – so many collisions are between two cars where they exchange details and off they go and nobody knows about it. We can only work with the information that we have. I would suggest that you look at the collisions map.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Jeremy Adams:

What is the role of the target of 79 on annual basis if, in decision making you are not interested in single year numbers, you are only interested in the rolling five year average? Why do we have an annual target?

Reply:

I never said that I was not interested in a single year, because that shows us what is happening at a particular moment in time. Over a length of time, if you want to look statistically at what is happening and what direction things are going in you cannot do it on a single year or even two years.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Simon Fawthrop:

Is Cllr Bennett aware that in future the Environment PDS will split out the statistics between those that are killed and seriously injured, which is something that will be coming to future meetings. That helps tell a story about how we can concentrate our resources best.

Reply:

Yes, and I welcome it.

(At this point, the Mayor informed Members that the 30 minutes allowed for questions had expired, but it was agreed that the remaining questions should be taken)

10. From Councillor Adam Grant to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

What is the Council's policy for 20mph speed zones & speed deflection measures?

Reply:

20 mph limits at the beginning and end of the school day with flashing lights outside schools, have been placed outside some schools. In exceptional cases, full-time 20 mph limits may be appropriate in certain locations such as High Streets.

Under a previous administration road humps and tables were installed. The police, fire brigade, ambulance service and London Transport have objected to the proliferation of road humps and raised tables because of the increase in attendance times for emergency calls and discomfort and possible injury to their passengers. They can also lead to complaints from residents about increased noise and vibration from traffic. There is a range of alternative measures to encourage lower vehicle speeds, including vehicle-activated warning signs, roadside posters, safer speed campaigns/events and driver/rider training programmes, for instance the young driver traffic education scheme and Driven by Consequences. I will circulate a list of roads with humps.

11. From Councillor Alisa Igoe to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

Reports ES19066 and ES20177. The Secretary of State for Levelling Up has warned councils not to discriminate against older people and the digitally excluded by removing the possibility to pay for parking by cash or scratch card. In consideration of them and any effect on footfall at retail businesses/services, could you please confirm if Bromley Age Concern and the four BIDs were consulted before both these reports came to committee?

Reply:

A full equality impact assessment under the Equality Act 2010 was undertaken and it was independently assessed by an officer in Adult Social Care and found to be compliant.

12. From Councillor Simon Jeal to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Enforcement

Could the Portfolio Holder please summarise actions undertaken within her portfolio in the past year to address and prevent hate crime within the borough, against the national picture of a significant rise in recorded hate crimes.

Reply:

Hate crime is first and foremost a matter for the Police.

However, LBB officers work closely with community and statutory partners to ensure that all hate crimes are captured and passed to the Police who then triage reports and provide support to victims via the CATCH project.

Actions over the last year include the monitoring of hate crime trends, quarterly scrutiny at the Safer Bromley Partnership and local awareness training for partners, members and staff.

Also the multi-agency Channel Panel, chaired by us, assesses the risk to an individual of being drawn into extremism, often fuelled by hate crime and decide whether an intervention is necessary.

Finally Trading Standards prioritise fraud crime against the elderly which is recognised as hate crime by the Safer Bromley Partnership.