

Council

16 October 2023

Questions from Members of the Public for Written Reply

1. From Steve Wehrle to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

I am concerned about the number of empty premises in Orpington High Street. Some retail premises have been unoccupied for more than 5 years. What is the Council's position regarding the 'compulsory purchase' of these premises please?

Reply:

Compulsory Purchase Orders are expensive and used only as a last resort generally to enable public infrastructure and regeneration works to proceed. The Council has very little power in relation to empty commercial premises. The Council will continue to work with Orpington BID and provide whatever support it can to ensure Orpington High Street remains vibrant.

2. From Richard E Hart to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

Can you please supply details of the Council's policy about the use of compulsory purchase orders as a way of bringing back certain long term vacant properties into use and explain why the Council will not use such powers to reduce the number of long-term empties.

Reply:

Compulsory Purchase Orders are expensive and used only as a last resort generally to enable public infrastructure and regeneration works to proceed. In relation to empty residential properties, a report will be coming forward shortly with recommendations for encouraging landlords to bring their properties up to standard and make them available to the Council for local people in need of housing.

3. From Thomas Murphy to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

Please produce a table by ward of plots of land that the Council owns, in and outside Bromley and show how the Council intends to develop these sites to increase the number of homes built and to reduce expenditure on temporary accommodation.

Reply:

The Transparency data for Estates Management - Land and buildings data is public available on the council website here -

<https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/download/140/land-and-property-asset-list>

The full list extends to 1,346 plots. The vast majority of these are not available for development or of a suitable size or designation for residential developments. All holdings are regularly reviewed and where surplus to requirements undergo a full options appraisal. Where suitable and viable for the development these sites will be brought forward within the Council's affordable housing development programme, which has already included developments on Council land in Chislehurst, Anerley, Burnt Ash Lane, Orpington and West Wickham.

4. From Kathryn Heller to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

Please produce a table by ward showing a list of residential properties that the Council owns in its list of assets, whether in or outside the borough by bedroom size, whether they are currently occupied, and how long they have been empty for.

Reply:

Below is the list of residential properties identified by ward area. Where these relate to individual street properties it is only possible to identify the area rather than address:

No of units	Bed sizes	Address	Ward	Designation	Status
25	1&2	Chris Whitty Place	Chislehurst	Affordable rented	Fully Let
10	1&1	Georges Grove Road	Crystal Palace & Anerley	Affordable rented	Fully Let
25	1&2	Burnt Ash Lane	Plaistow	Affordable rented	Fully Let
10	2	Ethelbert Road	Bromley Town	Temporary accommodation	1 unit vacant
5	2	Individual street properties various addresses	St Pauls Cray	affordable rented temporary accommodation	Fully Let
1	3	BR1	Bromley Town	affordable rented	Fully Let

Historically, the Council did own a small number of tied units – usually school or park caretaker cottages. These were not suitable for residential lettings once the need for tied accommodation had ceased and so have either been repurposed, sold or are in the process of disposal (see question above).

5. From Duncan Shrubsole to the Portfolio Holder for Environment

High Elms Country Park is much used for exercise and as a place for families to get together. The public toilets are only open Monday to Friday 8am – 4pm. Why are they shut at weekends and evenings when the park is busiest and can they be opened then asap?

Reply:

The toilets are to be open at the weekends and we are looking at options to extend the hours.

6. From Jeff Royce, Chairman, Friends of Bromley Town Parks & Gardens, to the Portfolio Holder for Environment

Will the Council ensure that good public access to the retained park is provided, during both the construction phase of work and beyond, on the former Civic Centre site?

Reply:

Yes, although there may be some safety restrictions during any construction work.

7. From Tony Banfield to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

The Churchill Theatre and Library are purpose built, valued cultural assets. In view of the public concern over their future will the Council commit to preserving these facilities either in the present building or to the same quality of facility in any new development?

Reply:

Reports about plans for the Churchill Theatre and Central Library are being considered at the October meeting of the Executive. The Council is in discussion with the Trafalgar Theatre Group, who operate the Churchill Theatre, about them acquiring the whole Churchill tower building, which would enable full redevelopment of the site including a new theatre and potentially a more significant cultural venue. Additionally, plans to relocate the Central Library to the former Topshop building on Bromley High Street are being brought forward which will represent a significant investment in our flagship library provision.