

## **COUNCIL**

**24 NOVEMBER 2021**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**I Question from Shaun Slator, SE18, to Councillor Anthony Okereke, Cabinet Member for Housing**

How many residential properties does the Council own which are currently uninhabited?

What is the capacity of these properties if they were inhabited and what is the market value of these properties?

**Reply –**

I thank Shaun Slator for his question.

Currently the Housing Department have 351 “void” uninhabited properties that are residential. This is higher than the pre-pandemic number and driven by both internal staff and contractors having to leave sites over lockdowns. There is a service improvement plan in place to reduce this number and over the next 12 months we will be looking to bring this back to under 250 empty properties, which was the pre-pandemic level.

The properties all have different capacity, although the majority of our homes are one or two bedroom properties.

We do not hold a market value for all these homes. We would not normally look to dispose of homes and any valuation would take into account that they were let at social rents, however a number of disposals do take place.

We are aware that there have been a number of properties that have been uninhabited for some time whilst decision were made on whether it was more viable to dispose or refurbish these properties. Given the significant housing crisis that we face within Greenwich, Officers have made recent decisions and will be proceeding to refurbish these homes.

I am aware through case work that Mr Slator has been specifically affected by this delay in decisions making and I will ask Officers to contact him directly with action that they are looking to take and timescales for this to happen.

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## PUBLIC QUESTIONS

### 2 Question from Leanne Gellel, SE18, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Environment Sustainability and Transport

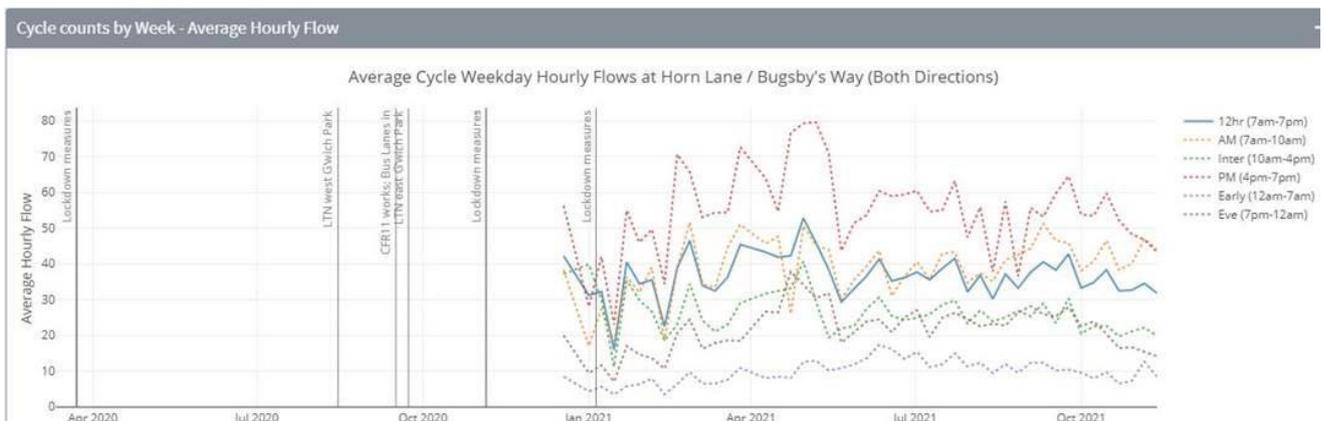
Can you provide the statistics regarding the use of the cycle lanes recently installed in the Charlton area and to what extent the use of cycles has increased compared to before they were installed?

#### Reply –

I thank Leanne Gellel for her question.

New routes like this need evaluating over a long period (years not months) to see how people's behaviour changes. The Greenwich to Woolwich cycleway was opened between December 2020 and April 2021. At this early stage TfL is still processing data and analysing how it changed over the (unprecedented) Pandemic period.

However, initial monitoring shows that between July and October, on average, 30-40 cyclists were using the route each hour (between 7am and 7pm), with up to 80 per hour at the busiest time..



Flows are likely to be affected by poor weather and seasonality, and we are continuing to monitor cycle numbers as new travel patterns and behaviour emerge following Covid-19 travel restrictions. Cycle demand along the A206

corridor is also expected to grow over time as new residential properties and employment opportunities are realised as part of Charlton Riverside and Woolwich developments.

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**3 Question from Dave Picton, SE7, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Leader of the Council**

My question is about the future of the residential outdoor education centre at Margaret Macmillan House at Wrotham which was passed to Greenwich in Trust when the ILEA was abolished. It has been shut since 2018 when the charity Widehorizons, then running the centre on behalf of the Council, went into receivership.

In April this year, two established providers of outdoor education, The Education People and the Mountain Training Trust both wrote to you offering to work together to reopen and run the centre. They received no formal reply. Last month, The Education People again sought urgent discussions, making it clear they were ready to look at initial investment and keeping the centre in a good state of repair. They have received no reply, other than to indicate it would be passed on to the Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills directorate.

Why are you not prepared to even discuss their proposals, which could allow Greenwich schools to once again organise school journeys to the centre as they have done for at least 70 years?

**Reply –**

I thank Dave Picton for his question.

I am aware of a joint letter from Mountain Training Trust and The Education People. I also received an enquiry from Lord Alan Haworth representing the same interest. A reply was sent to Lord Haworth and I assumed that would have been fed back to the interested parties.

The response explained that The Margaret McMillan Trust has approved a sale of the property. As the Margaret McMillan Trust is also a charity there are a number of processes to go through including securing Charity Commission consent before the decision of the Trust to sell the property can be implemented and the property made available for marketing.

All expressions of interest already received will be reviewed alongside any other options thereby allowing the Trust to consider what best delivers the charitable objectives of the Margaret McMillan Trust.

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### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**4 Question from Paul Billington, SE18, to Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Good Growth**

In October 2019, Plumstead High Street was awarded a total of £5.2m where the Good Growth Fund, an initiative of the Mayor of London in conjunction with the London Economic Action Partnership were contributing more than £2.5m and an equal amount was matched by RBG.

In July 2021, it was reported that the amount allocated to Plumstead High Street was reduced down to £4.4m; £800k less than the original award.

Can the Council confirm if the amount has been reduced? If so, what is the reasoning behind this and has £800k been allocated elsewhere in the borough?

**Reply -**

I thank Paul Billington for his question.

Having checked with both the Regeneration and Finance teams I cannot identify any reduction or the reporting of any reduction in the agreed funding with GLA.

As set out in Cabinet report 21st March 2018 the Council successfully secured £2.5m of GLA funding which was then to be matched funded by the Council.

Perhaps Mr Billington could provide the source of the £800,000 and I can ask the teams to look into the matter further.

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**5 Question from Paul Billington, SE18, to Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Good Growth**

Please could the Council provide an update on how the Plumstead High Street improvement works are progressing; in particular the works concerning the Plumstead Power Station.

**Reply –**

I thank Paul Billington for his question.

The Plumstead Good Growth Fund is a programme of two distinct phases, that uses up to £2.5m funding from the GLA and match funded by the RBG:

- High Street improvement works – this includes public realm and shop frontages around Plumstead High Street. The public realm work is currently underway and is due to be completed Spring 2022. The works to the first phase of the shop frontages have recently started and I look forward to seeing the transformation this will bring, with the 2nd phase commencing early 2022.
- The creation of new workspace at the White Hart Road Depot (Power Station) - the Council remain in negotiations with Crossrail to take back the land now that Crossrail have finished using the site. The Council is in negotiations with a potential occupier for the site.