

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

I **Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council**

Residents will be deeply concerned by the Council's referral to the Regular of Social Housing (RSH) after the discovery of significant levels of non-compliance in the areas of Electrical (EICR) standards, Asbestos surveys and following up on Fire Risk Assessment actions in the council's housing stock. The Cabinet Paper concludes these problems have been ongoing for at least the last 10 years. When did the Leader first become aware of this problem in his previous role as Cabinet Member for Housing?

What broader lessons has he drawn, as Leader of the Council, for the way risk is managed across the council?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Firstly, as a point of correction, the cabinet paper reports that RBG has not had a regular programme of completion for EICRs for the last 10 years; the issues with asbestos surveys and FRA actions are more recent. I make this point of detail because it is important that all RBG members and officers report these issues neutrally and factually, as they are obviously of concern to our residents living in council properties. It is very important that residents get a balanced view of the current safety of their home, and where safety checks or actions are overdue, what the Council is doing to put things right.

I am pleased that we have reported the current situation transparently and publicly because the Assurance Framework that I proposed to Cabinet in December established this approach, and I believe it is the best safeguard for resident safety. If Cllr Hartley reviews that December report, he will see that I put in place a series of improvement works and audits to give residents and members the assurance needed that our homes were fully compliant with current safety regulations. I was briefed by officers on 12th May 2022 on the results of these audits, as set out in the July Cabinet report, and of the need to approach the Regulator for Social Housing.

Going forward, my three lessons are:

- The need to invest in systems and data collection to capture accurately the full picture of risk. In this instance, the work of the corporate digital team with the housing service has been invaluable.
- The need to recruit and retain permanent staff in the specialist professional areas that involve risks to people or property
- The need for the right internal and external assurance frameworks to be in place to take a balanced and accountable view of risk

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

2 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council

Can the Leader confirm that it will now be at least September before any actions resulting from the new administrations Cost of Living ‘engagement exercise’ are taken? Secondly, how will any resulting actions be funded?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

There is already extensive support being provided by the Council. There has been a 50% increase in applications to our Emergency Support Scheme between April – June 2022, compared to the same period in 2021. Significant work is also being undertaken to maximise take up of the Council Tax Rebate payments.

During the summer, the Council will be undertaking a range of actions to promote sources for support to residents to help them during the cost of living crisis. This will include contacting residents who we think are underclaiming benefits which they are entitled to, expanding the advice hubs to additional locations, and promoting the provision and routes for support which already exist. Significant promotion will also be made through Greenwich Info which will outline support which is already available.

In addition to the above, engagement with residents will be conducted through an online survey and a range of in-person events. Residents can share the impact of the rise in prices, and what further actions the Council could take to support them. Any new actions will be developed from this and costed to determine if they are possible given the additional pressures which are also being faced by the Council’s finances.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

3 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council

What contact has the Leader had with the Mayor of London since his election as Leader?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Both myself and my office are in regular communications with the Office of the Mayor of London. Just some examples of this include.

Hosting the Mayor in Woolwich to open our Elizabeth Line station – which we can all agree is a crucial step in our continued improvement and regeneration of the Woolwich area.

Welcoming the Deputy Mayor for Transport, Seb Dance, to the Borough to discuss the extension of the DLR to Thamesmead and sustainable travel in the Borough

In the coming weeks I will be welcoming the Walking and Cycling Commissioner, Will Norman, to Greenwich to discuss how we can work with Mayor's Office to increase opportunities for Active Travel across the Borough which will be driven forward through our Transport Strategy.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

4 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

The cross-party Motion that was passed in June 2019, as amended to call for the introduction of a Carbon Neutral Plan, mandated that an Annual Report produced every January. Can the Deputy Leader confirm that an Annual Report will be put to Full Council in January 2023?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

I can confirm that an annual report on the progress made against the Carbon Neutral Plan will be put to Full Council in January 2023.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

5 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

As part of the implementation of the Towards Zero Waste strategy, can we have a categorical assurance from the Cabinet Member that all residents who want to upgrade to a larger black bin will receive their larger bin BEFORE the Council's switch to fortnightly black bin collections commences in February 2023?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Street Services launched the Towards Zero Waste campaign w/c 27/06/2022 and part of this communication to residents includes information on how to request larger bins if required (online form or via the contact centre).

We will continue to collate this data until the end of August. We will then plan our delivery programme and we anticipate that bins will be delivered before the collection changes come in place in February 2023.

The majority of our residents already have our standard size 240 litre bin and so far, we have received 291 requests for larger bins. We will continue to communicate the option of larger bins in future communication to residents between now and February 2023.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

6 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

The Deputy Leader will be aware of London City Airport's resurrected plans to allow more flights on Saturday (until 10pm rather than the current 1pm) and increasing the number of early morning and late evening flights. Will the Council oppose these proposals?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

London City Airport's recently launched a 10-week consultation on potential changes to its existing planning permission.

The consultation invites views on a range of proposals, including: additional flexibility to operate on a Saturday afternoon and evening; and additional flexibility in the first and last half hour of daily operations (06:30-07:00 and 22:00-22:30).

This could have a significant effect on Royal Greenwich. We will consider the proposals carefully, respond to the consultation and continue to engage with London City Airport as it progresses.

The airport suggests that only cleaner, quieter, new generation aircraft would be allowed to fly in these new operating periods. As in previous consultations, it will be important to note that technological gains should be 'banked' to reduce emissions and benefit residents, not just used to allow air travel to grow within its current level of impact.

I encourage everyone with an interest to have their say:

<https://consultation.londoncityairport.com>.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

7 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

At the last Council meeting the Cabinet Member, in a written reply to my question on whether the Council is aware how many vehicle owners in Greenwich will be impacted by the Mayor of London's proposed ULEZ expansion, said that "as an indication of scale, only 18 per cent of vehicles in outer London are not already ULEZ compliant". Does this mean the specific figure for Greenwich residents is not known by the Council? Has the Council requested this information from Transport for London?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

I used the term 'indication of scale' because, as I suggested in my previous answer, the issue is both complex and fast moving.

The data suggests that only 18 per cent of vehicles in outer London are not already ULEZ compliant - but it is forecast that by 2023 this figure will have dropped to 8 percent (before any further ULEZ expansion). Therefore, the number of people affected can be described in a number of ways – what is most important to understand is that the scale of this 'newly affected' group is relatively small.

The data published by TfL considers the levels of compliance with ULEZ standards of vehicles *driving* in the proposed zone, not just vehicles *registered* within it. Given the level of cross-borough-border travel, this is the best way to look at the impact on Royal Greenwich: as the travel of people working in or visiting Royal Greenwich needs to be considered too, we will continue to engage on this matter.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

8 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Pat Slattery, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness

How will the actions being taken to address the Council's non-compliance with Electrical (EICR) standards, Asbestos surveys and the backlog of Fire Risk Assessment Actions be communicated to tenants and leaseholders?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Key to our success in being able to deliver these programmes will be well informed residents who are able to collaborate with us in continuing to improve the safety of their homes and buildings.

We have a communication plan, which we will build upon, to ensure that residents are aware of the issues which have been raised and what we are to do about them.

A letter has already gone to all residents and should be hitting door mats now. It explains the current situation, answers some FAQs, and provides details of who they can contact if they require further information.

We are also running a digital meeting on the 25th July which all residents are able to attend, and we will be holding a meeting of the Boroughwide Housing Panel on the 27th July for Housing Panel representatives.

You will see that there is information on our website, and this will be kept updated.

We will continue to engage with residents to let them know what we are doing, how we are improving safety and how they are able help to keep their homes safe.

Residents should feel safe in their homes, however if they have specific concerns they should contact us.

ITEM NO: 8

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

9 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Pat Slattery, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness

What metrics will the Cabinet Member to measure the required turnaround in the performance of the Repairs Service? Can she provide a list of the specific measures that will be used?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

As Members may be aware, Housing Repairs, as well as obviously being a key priority for me as Cabinet Member, is also very much a priority for the Leader of the Council.

We are currently running two intensive “diagnostics” of the housing repairs service: one to increase the productivity and output from the Repairs Direct Labour Organisation and another to look at the end to end service and customer journey. These diagnostics will not only look at service improvement and efficiencies but will also design the key metrics which will track improvement in the services over time. The diagnostics will be reporting back over the next months and I expect to share more details with Members in the Autumn.

However, this is not to say that I am not already looking at improvements in the interim and I will be looking at metrics such as call answering time, independent customer satisfaction data, timeliness of completion of works and the overall quality of the works completed.

Senior Officers and I have regular meetings regarding service delivery, and I will continue to support them in achieving improvements to the service.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

10 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Ivis Williams, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Social Value

Can the Cabinet Member share details of how she plans to consult residents on the council's Budget for 2023/24? And what arrangements will be in place for Pre-Decision Scrutiny during the Budget-setting process?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

As with previous years residents will be consulted ahead of the budget for 2023/24 being set in February 2023. Also, in line with previous years, the Medium Term Financial Strategy, will be reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

11 **Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Aidan Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration**

How does the Cabinet Member intend to ensure that developers build out planning permissions in a timely fashion?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

The Council is committed to ensuring new homes are built and that communities have quality places to live. As you know local authorities do not have effective powers to force applicants to build out their permissions and the current government has not as yet brought forward sufficiently robust proposals to enable us to do more on this. It was explored in the White Paper and now in the Levelling Up Regeneration Bill under development commencement orders, but again stops short of powers to insist a consent is commenced.

Often the reasons for slow implementation are complex and varied.

Under the government's Housing Delivery Test, the council is required to produce an Action Plan where housing delivery falls below 95% of its housing target over a 3-year period. As current delivery levels are at 80%, an Action Plan was produced last year and will be updated again this year. The Action Plan acknowledges that the build-out of planning permissions is largely outside the council's control; however, it does commit the council to a number of actions and responses which seek to improve delivery rates. These include collaborative working and maintaining regular dialogue with developers, ensuring swifter grant of planning permissions through the council's pre-application and Planning Performance Agreement services, joint working with infrastructure providers to unlock development sites, the use of compulsory purchase powers to aid site assembly, and ensuring an up-to-date planning framework through the review of the council's Local Plan.

Officers have done a recent review of major applications to establish which ones have not yet been implemented. The owners of the identified sites will be contacted and their plans for implementation will be discussed. In addition to this, where residential permissions are granted an early stage review is captured to incentivise the developer to implement the permission in a timely manner before the viability has to be reviewed.

What is clear is that where the council has control of housing delivery, we have made very successful in roads to securing permissions and then building out those permissions. Greenwich New Build, the council's own delivery programme, has secured planning consent for 710 new Council homes which are in various stages of delivery and is formulating plans for 1000 new homes in phase 2.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

12 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business and Skills

At the last council meeting the Cabinet Member provided figures showing that in 2021 only 24% of the Apprenticeship Levy was reclaimed, and that over the last three years more than £4.7m of the Levy went unclaimed by RBG. How do these two figures compare to other London authorities? Can the Cabinet Member provide any other benchmarking data against other London boroughs?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

London Council's data indicates that a total of £58,100,387 in levy funds was available to boroughs in between April 2019 and March 2021, of which £20,747,260 was spent. This means that boroughs managed to spend an average of 36 percent of their available apprenticeship levy between April 2019 and March 2021.

Following the introduction of the apprenticeship reforms, the Council's priority was the development of the direct employment entry level programme (Greenwich Direct Apprentices - GDA) which is ringfenced to local residents. GDA apprentices are paid the London Living Wage and in the same reporting period, RBG was the 3rd and 4th (respectively) highest payer of entry level apprentices across London Councils. It should be noted that many of the GDA lower grade posts are attached to lower cost apprenticeships. For example, Business Administration or Supported Teaching and Learning costs between £2,000 and £5,000. Therefore, while valuable in their output, they do not make a significant impact on recovering levy funds.

The development of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD-upskilling existing staff) programme is attached to higher cost apprenticeships that enable larger sums to be recovered from the levy. For example, through the launch of the Leadership and Management

programme in summer 2019, as well as other cross-cutting training programmes, RBG has been able to recover levy funds more quickly from higher cost apprenticeships whilst offering meaningful programmes. For example

- Level 3 with ILM accreditation at cost of £4,500
- Level 5 with ILM accreditation at £7,000
- Level 7 MBA at £18,000.
and launched in November 2020
- Level 4 Associate Project Management at £6,000

Work is ongoing to develop the CPD and also importantly Trainee / Career Grade programmes to address skills shortage areas, most of which involve higher cost apprenticeship programmes. Examples include the start of two Building Surveyor Apprentices (**£24,000 per apprentice**) in Housing and Safer Communities and two Social Work Apprentices (**£23,000 per apprentice**) in Health and Adult Services.

London Councils provide benchmarking data with regards to the public sector target, apprenticeships by level, age, ethnicity and pay. The October 2021 Overview and Scrutiny Report 'Apprenticeships and Workforce Planning' (link below - section 6 and appendices 2 and 3). This will be updated as part of the next Overview and Scrutiny report.

<https://committees.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/CalendarofMeetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2393/Committee/87/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

13 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business and Skills

At the last Council meeting the Cabinet Member kindly agreed to look into ensuring the Council collects data on empty shops in the borough's smaller shopping parades, and not just the Town Centres. When will this data be available?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Indeed, the Government's Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, talks about giving new powers to local authorities to run High Street Rental Auctions for shops that have been empty for over a year. From what I can tell the Bill focuses primarily on designated high streets and town centres where the authority considers that the area is important to the local economy because of a concentration of high-street uses of premises in the area.

As I said in my response to your supplementary question previously, this Chamber would of course be interested in understanding the picture more broadly and I would hope that any new powers would extend to the borough's smaller neighbourhood parades.

Officers do collect some data on empty shops beyond the main town centres which is set out in the table below:

Area Vacancy Rates (Qtr.I Vacancy data April – June 2022)

Area	Total number of units	Number of vacant units	Vacancy rate %
Blackheath Standard	62	7	11.3
Charlton Church Lane	29	8	27.6
Charlton Road Parade	10	0	0
Charlton Village	33	6	18.2
East Greenwich	178	26	14.6
Eltham town centre	222	7	3.2
Greenwich town centre	356	36	10.1
New Eltham	44	3	6.8
Plumstead	131	6	4.6
Woolwich town centre	358	42	11.7
Total	1423	203	14

As you may be aware, there are 52 retail centres in Royal Greenwich including, town centres, district centres, local centres, and neighbourhood shopping parades so a borough-wide audit would be extensive. There are also 8 Private Retail Parks making the total number of all shopping areas within the Borough 60. However, I have asked officers to commit to undertake an annual vacancy audit across all our retail centres and set out a timetable to finalise these audits by Autumn 2022.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

14 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business and Skills

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the proposed Living Wage Zone in Thamesmead? What specific actions will the Council take as part of this measure?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

The Council has been a long-standing supporter of the London Living Wage, securing accreditation in 2013, establishing a business rate relief scheme in 2015 and being among the first London Boroughs to sign up and secure the Mayor of London Good Work Accreditation in 2019, which has fair pay at its heart.

Energy bills have soared by 54% and are set to rise further, inflation is at a 40-year high, and wages have not risen in real terms since 2010. Increasing the number of local employers paying the London Living Wage of £11.05 per hour, will go some way to help tackle the cost-of-living crisis many of our residents are facing.

The Council is working with the Living Wage Foundation, who have produced a very helpful toolkit and clear actions which is being used to develop a place-based approach to increasing the number of people earning a real Living Wage. Under the umbrella of 'Living Wage Place', we are not only exploring a Living Wage Zone in Thamesmead but Living Wage Buildings in other key locations.

Living Wage Zones in a geographical area where there are lots of existing businesses is challenging, however engagement with businesses in Thamesmead is underway and off to a good start. The council is working closely with Peabody who are also a Living Wage Employer, to ensure this work dovetails with the community and economic regeneration work they are doing in the area which includes, championing the LLW and encouraging

their contractors and suppliers to also become LLW accredited employers during contract negotiations and at enterprise / business events like the South London Business Forums.

Please see link for more information to the Living Wage

Place <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/sites/default/files/LWP%20Low%20Pay%20Local%20Actions%20Report.pdf>

The Council will update on this further, as part of our planned activities during Living Wage Week November 14th – 20th 2022. This will include progress on working with key Anchor organisations and businesses to champion this work locally, mapping the challenges of low pay in the local labour market and establishing an action plan which sets out our collective effort to tackle this area of work in the next 3 years.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

15 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Ann-Marie Cousins, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Enforcement

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on her meeting this month with the BCU Chief Superintendent, including what issues were discussed?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

The meeting with the BCU Commander and members of the wider police Senior Leadership Team is yet to take place so I am unable to update you at this stage.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

16 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Ann-Marie Cousins, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Enforcement

Based on her experience in her new Cabinet Role so far, what is the Cabinet Member's view of the Metropolitan Police's tri-borough arrangements?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Although still early into my tenure, my experience of local policing so far has been positive. It is clear that the Council and the Police have a strong working relationship and are committed to working together to resolve local issues. This relationship also enables constructive challenge where required and mutual accountability – this is both healthy and good to see.

The BCU are fully committed to our joint Integrated Enforcement approach where operational and tactical issues are discussed regularly, and we are able to request additional police support to help progress resident concerns and other Council priorities. They have also invested additional officers into boosting the Council funded Integrated Enforcement (IE) Policing Team, neither Bexley or Lewisham have this capability nor provide the same level of support to the BCU that Royal Greenwich do.

Officers have advised me that the IE Policing Team has not only won the Safer Neighbourhood Team of the Year at the Met Excellence Awards last year but have been shortlisted again this year. This is in testament to the partnership working that has been developed over the last three or so years in particular. Both the Council and the BCU are extremely proud of these officers, but also of all the staff who work hard to keep Royal Greenwich safe each and every day.

When I meet the BCU Commander later in the month, I will look to build on our relationship. With the support of officers and scrutiny colleagues, I will continue to monitor the performance of the BCU and ensure Royal

Greenwich is receiving fair and appropriate levels of policing. I would point out to the Councillor that the BCU model was introduced to help manage budget cuts under the current government. It was not something that any of us particularly wanted to happen.

I would also urge him to continue making the case for additional police resources to the Home Secretary.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

17 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture and Communities

Can the Cabinet Member provide assurances that the future of all current libraries are secure, and that all smaller libraries will remain in their current sites, under the new administration?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

The Council currently operate 12 libraries, which are managed on our behalf by GLL.

We have seen over the years a number of libraries co-located with Leisure which has proved to be an excellent cross-over of services and greater through put of visitors using the service.

There is no intention to further relocate library services at this time.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

18 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Aidan Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration

Can the Cabinet Member provide details of future rounds of the Greenwich Neighbourhood Growth Fund? When will community groups have the opportunity to submit bids?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Plans are currently being finalised for the next round of the Greenwich Neighbourhood Growth Fund. The intention is to launch the three-month application window at the beginning of September 2022. I will email all members when the exact dates are confirmed.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

19 Question from Councillor Lauren Dingsdale, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business and Skills

There are two shops on Footscray Road which have been empty for over twenty years (Hungry Tums and Touchwood Pine). Above these shops are also two empty flats. The properties are owned by Criterion Estates Limited and previous attempts by local councillors to get these properties back into use have failed.

Thank you for coming to view the shops with me and Councillor Backon earlier this month. Will the Cabinet Member commit to working with us, council officers and local residents to try to find a way to get these shops and flats back into use?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Lauren Dingsdale for her question.

I am aware of the tremendous efforts Members, residents and indeed officers have made over the years to get these premises and flats re-let and back into active use. This has been an ongoing concern, especially in view of the number of enquiries and business interest in the space over this same period.

As you say, the owner Criterion Estates Limited (CEL) has not responded to enquires, appears to have no interest in letting the property and have been unresponsive to calls from Council officers. The Council currently has no powers to force the owner to let the commercial space.

Both the respective properties at 340 and 356 Footscray Road are subject to non-domestic rates. There are currently business rates arrears totalling £16,360.12 on these premises, for the financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23, which is actively being pursued in line with the Council's debt recovery procedures.

In January 2022, environmental health issues were raised by Members, and officers undertook to inspect the premises. However, the evidence obtained from the inspection was insufficient to determine that the condition of the building is of a state that crosses the threshold for legal enforcement. However, officers continue to keep this matter under review.

I and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness, will certainly commit to working with ward councillors, residents, and officers to continue to explore what emerging policy levers and powers we could potentially adopt to bring these empty properties and flats into use. Our ability to address issues such as these will be through the future Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and will be a litmus test of its effectiveness.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

20 Question from Councillor Lauren Dingsdale, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture and Communities

Since being elected in May, Councillor Backon and I have held many meetings with local stakeholders regarding the Avery Hill Winter Garden. This is a much loved and important cultural building in Avery Hill Park and residents are very keen to see it back in use again.

Can the Cabinet Member confirm:

- That the bid for levelling up funding to help restore the Winter Garden has been submitted?
- That the University of Greenwich has completed the repairs that the Council's conservation team raised with them?
- Whether the University of Greenwich will be reopening the doors to the public and, if so, when that is scheduled to be?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Lauren Dingsdale for her question.

Members will be aware that we submitted a bid for Round 1 of the Levelling up Fund which was unsuccessful.

Since then, we have produced a business plan and updated the bid and are now ready to submit for the Round 2 funding. The bidding portal was due to open on 31 May 2022 but was delayed by Government citing technical difficulties, however it finally opened on 15 July 2022. We therefore will be submitting a bid prior to the closing date on 2 August 2022.

The Winter Garden remains in the ownership and responsibility of the University of Greenwich. The Council's Planning Conservation team have been monitoring the works to repair the roof and these are making progress but are not yet complete. We understand that the works are due to complete in the Autumn of this year and then the Winter Garden is due to reopen. As with any project of this nature the timescales can change because there can be unforeseen issues and additional work identified.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

21 Question from Councillor Sammy Backon, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business and Skills

A branch of Bexley foodbank operates at the Avery Hill Christian Fellowship in Eltham Town an Avery Hill Ward, twice per week. In 2020/2021 they fed 1275 Greenwich residents, this rose to 1587 in 2021/2022 and in the first 11 weeks of this financial year they have fed 458 Greenwich residents. Estimating this at the present rate only, this would give the 12 month total to an estimated 2,290, not accounting for any more increases in demand.

Councillor Dingsdale and I have both visited the foodbank this month and, as you are aware, the Conservative cost of living crisis is causing food bank demand to increase. It is also causing donations to decrease, as some regular donators also are experiencing hardship.

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that she will explore with officers whether there is any financial support the Council can give to this foodbank?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Sammy Backon for his question.

The Council is increasingly concerned at the rise in residents experiencing food insecurity and food poverty. In response, the Council has established a Cost of living Taskforce which is building on the existing work which has already been undertaken during the pandemic and in the last few years.

Where possible, the Council promotes a cash first approach for residents in financial difficulty, which encourages residents to contact the Emergency Support Scheme and Live Well so that direct financial assistance can be considered first. Residents are also referred into Welfare Rights from these routes to ensure that their income is maximised. A referral to the foodbank is the next step, where needed.

The Council is also investing in more sustainable alternatives to food banks, through food clubs which enable residents which provide good-quality food at low cost. Residents can purchase £10-15 worth of food for £3.50. Four food clubs are currently established in the borough, and discussions are ongoing to expand these.

Recognising increase in food costs, and the impact this is having on donations and available surplus food, the Council utilised some of the Household Support Grant funding to fund direct provision to Greenwich Food bank and the Food clubs. We are currently waiting for the guidance and allocation for the next Household Support Grant funding, from which consideration can be given to continuing this support and including Avery Hill foodbank with this.

The Council has also recently established an advice outreach pilot, opening new hub locations throughout the borough to increase accessibility to advice provision for residents. We have already reached out the Avery Hill foodbank, to ensure that they are able to refer residents when needed to the closest advice hub in Eltham.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

22 Question from Councillor Sammy Backon, to Councillor Pat Slattery, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness

The installation of electric charging points to the council's housing stock with car parking is extremely important and will help encourage a modal shift to electric vehicles. This is necessary because of the Government's plan to end the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 and Greenwich Council's target of reaching net zero by 2030. I have received a number of questions from council tenants requesting electric vehicle charging points. In particular, those in blocks of flats, such as Strongbow, are unable to install their own charging points and are reliant on the council to do so before they can move to electric vehicles.

When will the Council install electric vehicle charging points to its Council homes with car parking?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Sammy Backon for his question.

Housing & Safer Communities (H&SC) recognise that there will be a growing demand to have Electric Vehicles charging points on Royal Greenwich housing estates.

From the estate parking consultation last year, we obtained some early data around electric vehicle ownership. We plan to use this data to help us identify particular sites where we might begin with some pilot schemes for EV charging.

To support this work, H&SC are currently in discussions with DG Cities to consider our sustainable transport offer to tenants. This will include consideration of EV charging points, access to walking and cycling and more car clubs etc. Part of the work will include more detailed engagement of our residents to evidence their needs and aspirations. At this stage, we are preparing a decision report with a proposal to target 5 estates initially.

We hope that this report will be brought forward by the end of the Summer/Early Autumn.

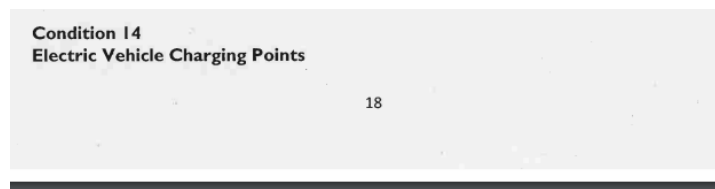
You mention Strongbow estate and we can confirm that Strongbow is on our radar for inclusion in our partnership work with DG Cities.

Greenwich Builds are delivering a number of EV charging point across the programme to meet Planning requirements and deliverer Net Zero-Carbon homes.

Many of our schemes are 'car-free', but where public transport is not easily accessible, we include parking spaces and always on major application where disability parking is required. We use parking surveys, garage audits (on garage sites) and the PTAL rating to make a judgement on whether or not to include parking provision.

Of these parking spaces we include, we are required to install EV charging points in line with the London Plan / Planning requirements – which states that Active charging points must be 20% of the total car parking spaces we are providing. For information, Active is fully connected and Passive is where we have provided the infrastructure (cabling, draw wires, ducting etc.) for future connection to the actual charging units when purchased in the future.

Current Planning guidance:



- a. Prior to the occupation of the residential units, details of the electric vehicle charging points (EVCP) shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority.
- b. Up to 20% of the total number of car parking spaces shall have active charging provision. All other spaces should have passive provision to enable these to provide electric vehicle charging in the future.
- c. The submitted details shall thereafter be implemented in strict accordance with the details approved under (a), prior to the occupation of the development.

Reason: To minimise carbon dioxide emissions and to comply with policies T6.1 and SI 2 of the London Plan (2021) and Policies E(a), E(c) and IM4 of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (2014).

Please find below a table of what is being delivered within Phase One of the programme, which will be handed over to H&SC:

Site	No of active points		No of passive provisions	
	Single	Double	Single	Double
Alderwood	0	1	0	3
Anstridge	0	1	0	2
Strongbow Crescent	0	0	0	0
Strongbow Road	0	0	0	0
Ridgebrook	6	0	13	5
Bournbrook	0	1	2	2
Halsbrook	0	1	1	2
Well Hall	0	1	0	1
Sam Manners	0	0	0	0
Orangery Lane	0	1	0	0
Palmerston	2	0	0	0
Barnfield Hall	0	1	1	0
Greenway	1	0	0	0
Thanington	0	0	0	0
Gillbourne Road	0	1	1	4
The Triangle	0	0	0	0
Robert Street	2			
Speranza Street	3		11	
Riefeld Road	2			
Kidbrooke Park Road South	10			
Kidbrooke Park Road North	10			
	36	8	29	19

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

23 Question from Councillor David Gardner, to Councillor Ivis Williams, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Social Value

Given our signing up to the Fair Tax declaration in October 2019 and that still some £37.5bn in UK public sector contracts are allegedly awarded to companies with links to tax havens, what assurance can you provide that we have met our commitment that "we use our spending power in favour of those companies that pay their taxes and signalling that we are refusing to go along with off-shore tax dodging when buying or selling land and property"?

Reply -

I thank Councillor David Gardner for his question.

Royal Greenwich was the first London Council to adopt the 'Councils for Fair Tax Declaration'. A strategy will need to be developed to embed the Fair Tax agenda going forward, which will be a key piece of work for the New Head of Procurement who starts on the 1 August. This will include working with Fair Tax to influence the Government's proposed Procurement Green Paper. Indications are that the Government intends to enhance supplier beneficial ownership transparency under the new rules. The current Standard Selection Questionnaire asks that UK companies disclose beneficial ownership above 25% to the contracting authorities. The Green Paper proposals would go beyond this, by requiring public disclosure of the beneficial ownership of all suppliers (overseas contractors as well as companies registered in the UK) so creating a more level playing field.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

24 Question from Councillor John Fahy, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Can the Cabinet Member provide some assurance about improvements in Bin Collection which seem to have increasing problems in meeting collection schedules in recent months?

Reply -

I thank Councillor John Fahy for his question.

Our Street Services staff are hardworking and dedicated team that has worked through the Covid 19 period and ensured the Borough is maintained very well. While they always try to do their best, there are occasions when stretched and limited resources are tested like surge in Covid 19, annual leave that has been built up during the Covid emergency period, increased workload or operational obstacles that stop service serve a specific street on the specific round

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

25 Question from Councillor John Fahy, to Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council

Can the Leader of the Council comment on the growing impact on the cost of living crisis orchestrated by Government and its impact on Greenwich residents. What is the likely impact longer term as a consequence of Government failures?

Reply -

I thank Councillor John Fahy for his question.

The Council is increasingly concerned at the rise in living costs which all residents are facing and are being particularly felt by residents on low incomes.

Through the Cost of Living Taskforce, the Council is utilising the data it has available to better understand the impact on residents. We are working to promote existing provision of help and support for residents to mitigate the impact as far as we can and engaging with residents to fully understand the impact is having on them to influence what further interventions may be needed.

Some of the initial feedback we are getting from residents is around the spiralling cost of food, fuel and utilities, and anxiety on how they will manage as bills rise further. Government funding for this local authority has fallen in real terms over the last decade, and this limits what additional support can be provided. So, we will continue to campaign for fair funding for our Borough and for Government to fund public services.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

26 Question from Councillor Issy Cooke, to Councillor Aidan Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration

Can the Cabinet Member advise what the Council is doing to tackle the over concentration of HMOs in areas such as Plumstead?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Issy Cooke for her question.

In respect of Planning powers, the Council has introduced the Article 4 for small scale HMOs which requires any new HMO to apply for planning permission. This gives the Council the ability to manage HMOs and alongside the Licence regime control their quality.

Going forward the Council has embarked on reviewing and updating its Local Plan. The review will look at the policies around housing need, conversions, loss of family homes and standards and how these can be applied to HMOs. It will also look at the distribution and clusters of HMOs in the borough as collated by the Licence scheme to see if there are areas that would particularly benefit from policies dealing with concentrations of HMOs for example. There would need to be robust evidence to support any policies brought forward in a revised local plan that could stand up to the scrutiny of an examination in public.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

27 Question from Councillor Issy Cooke, to Councillor Ann-Marie Cousins, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Enforcement

Can the Cabinet Member confirm what procedures the Council have to investigate unregistered HMOs?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Issy Cooke for her question.

Investigation of unregistered HMOs is an integral part of the Council's HMO enforcement and licensing regime. The team uses a range of tools to identify unregistered HMOs including, complaints from tenants, referrals from partners, Councillor's casework, open-source intelligence gathering, joint databases analysis and days of action with partners. These days of action are carried out in line with our integrated enforcement programme and targets high risk areas, where officers knock on doors to establish the tenure of property, record information for future use and carry out enforcement activities on site where necessary.

The service also has an anonymous 'report it' function on the web page This can be accessed on the link below.

[Tell us about an unlicensed house in multiple occupation \(HMO\) | Report a HMO | Royal Borough of Greenwich \(royalgreenwich.gov.uk\)](#)

Members of the public can also check if an HMO is licensed here

[Greenwich | Royal Greenwich | Licence Register](#)

(instructions

Click on the top left hand drop down box (type of Licence) and select either HMO Mandatory or HMO Additional

Enter Issue date from (right hand column) 1 October 2017)

It is an offence under the Housing Act 2004 for a person (e.g., a landlord) to operate an unlicensed HMO.

For all unlicensed HMOs, a full investigation is carried out by Intelligence and enforcement officers to determine ownership and occupation, including site visits. Owners/managers are contacted to advise a license is required and an assessment is carried out to determine the period of time the premises have been unlicensed. Enforcement action for failure to license is implemented resulting in the issue of a civil penalty notice where fines can be up to £30,000 per offence. Receipt of valid applications is monitored, and further action may be taken if an application is not received.

Offences are recorded on the Greater London Authority (GLA) Rogue Landlord Register and information from that register is considered when assessing whether or not a landlord is a fit and proper person to hold a licence.

[Check a landlord or agent | London City Hall](#)

Two or more relevant Housing Act offences within a twelve month period results in the matter being recorded on the National Rogue Landlords register. This register is currently under review.

[Database of rogue landlords and property agents under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

28 Question from Councillor Issy Cooke, to Councillor Ann-Marie Cousins, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Enforcement

Can the Cabinet Member explain what the Council is doing to ensure high standards for registered HMOs to ensure that all our residents have a decent, high quality home?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Issy Cooke for her question.

All HMOs in the Borough are required to be licensed. There is a mandatory requirement for HMOs with 5 or more occupants and smaller HMOs are licensed under the Council's Additional Licensing scheme. There are also Regulations relating to the management of HMOs.

Licensee's must comply with certain conditions which include both mandatory and local requirements relating to the following standards: -

- Compliance with Housing Health & Safety Fitness Rating (HHSRS) including repair, heating, water supply, freedom from damp etc
- Fire protection
- Gas and electrical safety
- Carbon monoxide
- Kitchen and bathroom facilities
- Space standards to prevent overcrowding
- Furniture to be fire safe
- Refuse arrangements
- ASB management
- Energy efficiency

The team carry out compliance visits to all licensed HMOs to ensure conditions are met and maintained. All HMOs are required to be free of any HHSRS Category I (most serious) hazards.

The authority may serve improvement notices under the Housing Act 2004 which require the landlord or those in control of the premises to rectify any deficiencies. Failure to comply is a criminal offence and the landlord and/or agent may be prosecuted or issued with a civil penalty notice issued with fines of up to £30,000 per offence.

As part of the licensing regime, information relating to tenants and their security of tenure is also obtained to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and prevent illegal eviction.

In addition to HMOs, the Council will also be introducing Selective Licensing from October 2022 to help drive higher standards across the wider private rental sector.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

29 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council

Does the Leader of the Council plan to resurrect Better Together events?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

The last round of Better Together was brought to an abrupt halt with the first lockdown, but at the final event councillors and staff vastly outnumbered residents. Despite changing venues, the time of day, day of the week and the month sessions were held, and offering childcare facilities, free lunches and incentives such as free swim vouchers, residents simply did not have the appetite to engage with Better Together meetings.

However, something that did emerge through the pandemic was a new digital connectivity between and across communities. The council held numerous online Ask Greenwich sessions, with residents able to ask questions in advance and live via social media. Instead of connecting with 20 people, 1,000s of people were able to engage online either during the sessions or by watching them afterwards.

The council also continues to engage with residents face-to-face, our engagement areas at Together 21 and Together 22 saw councillors from across the borough able to talk directly to people from the borough, many who would never usually have spoken to their local council member. We also have an active group of ward councillors who hold surgeries and advocate for their local communities throughout the work of the council.

However, we continue to strive to improve all the ways in which we engage with individuals and communities. I have ambitious plans to invest in how we listen and consult and recognise that one size will never fit all when it comes to engagement. We will be working on an engagement strategy that encourages more face-to-face meetings, but in a format that residents want to be part of.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

30 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Pat Slattery, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness

At the recent briefing on the Council's Housing Capital works programme I was assured that leaseholders will be included in consultations. How will the Cabinet Member ensure that the cost implications to leaseholders are arrived at via a fair process?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

Any major works undertaken and recharged back to Leaseholders (LH) is based on the Capital Programme drawn up by Repairs & Investment (R&I), which in turn is shaped by stock condition surveys, cyclical refurbishment/upgrade regime, health and safety requirements, feasibility reports, planning, etc.

Any major works due to be recharged back to the LH involves statutory formal consultation which the Home Ownership Service (HOS) undertake with the LHs affected. In addition to the statutory consultation, Council officers are looking at what additional consultation may take place to ensure that leaseholders are informed at the earliest opportunity of potential works/costs as part of the Council's Housing capital works programme.

Leaseholder costs and charges are calculated using the prescribed method in the lease agreement. This is using Rateable Values of individual properties and blocks and is recognised by the First-Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) as a fair and reasonable method of apportioning service charges. To support LH with their bills, the HOS offers the following:-

- Offer payment options which are lenient, flexible and offer extended periods of repayment for those experiencing financial distress, and or large bills;
- A soon-to-be-updated handbook which will include greater clarity and transparency on the recharging process and payment options;

- Work to adopt a revised Service Level Agreement between R&I and HOS on joint procedures which will incorporate most of what has been outlined here; and
- Benchmarking with other local authorities to identify any good and innovative practices, particularly around major works, LH bills and payment options including considering things such as cost capping options and sinking funds.

Because major works and the resulting costs to LHs are entirely based on the R&I capital programme, R&I will work closely with HOS on the following:

- Transparent, comprehensive information, assurance and clarity on the full evidence base for any major works and recharges including specifications, feasibility and technical reports, surveys, and photographic evidence;
- Ensuring that LH affordability is taken into account within emerging Capital Programmes; and
- Provision to HOS of full sight of the Capital Programme and resulting major works contracts as early as possible to ensure both informal and formal consultation can be completed in a timely manner, and prospective right to buy applicants are fully cognisant of any future major works.
- Final accounts to be issued by R&I in a timely manner to ensure any debit/credit reconciliations are completed for LHs upon completion of the major works.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

31 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Last year I raised concerns regarding the very busy traffic light system at the junction of Avery Hill, Southwood and Footscray Roads, New Eltham. It causes massive tailbacks of traffic on these roads and is a highly dangerous junction for both drivers and pedestrians. Will the Cabinet Member agree to meet on site with the relevant Council officers, Transport for London representative and the ward councillors for Eltham Town & Avery Hill ward, and also Mottingham, Coldharbour & New Eltham ward, to discuss this issue?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

Whilst I would be happy to meet ward councillors to discuss their concerns, we invest in measures to reduce road danger where it will have the greatest effect on reducing the number of people who have tragically been killed or seriously injured. In the three years ending January 2020 the police have no reports of someone having been killed or seriously injured at this junction. One serious injury is recorded on Southwood Road, south-west of the junction. With this excellent record of road safety, it would be difficult to make this a location a priority for investing in road safety improvements. Whilst queuing at this junction can be considerable, this is not untypical for the borough. Officers advise that there are no opportunities to increase the junction's traffic capacity without significant road widening or worsening the pedestrian crossing environment. I will not be prioritising either.

Part of the Transport Strategy will be the Road Safety Action, this will help prioritise our investment and reduce road danger.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

32 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on what the Council is doing to address the problem of idling car engines, particularly in the hot weather when drivers are keeping engines running for the purposes of air conditioning?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

Greenwich, like all London Boroughs welcomed the much publicised legislation in 2020 which allowed Local Authority Civil Enforcement Officers to issue Penalty Charge Notices to cars that left engines idling unnecessarily.

We began the process of taking on this power. Unfortunately, that legislation relies on the Department for Transport producing an approved¹ sign, which to date they have not done.

In the absence of this sign unfortunately we cannot enforce the legislation.

London Councils have on behalf of all London Local Authorities made representations to the DfT on this matter and are planning to do so again.

In the interim, all officers can do is to request offending motorists to switch off their engines but cannot issue a PCN if they refuse.

¹ Approved in this context means Approved under the TSRGD (The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions). The last update was 2020 and an appropriate sign was not included in that refresh. DfT have the power to approve signs for national use between updates but so far have not. The next update is unlikely to be before 2024/25.

COUNCIL

21 JULY 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

33 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture and Communities

Residents have raised concerns regarding neglect of our local woodlands and gardens. In particular in Oxleas woodlands, many fallen trees are being left, with some lying over paths, and other areas covered by brambles. What is the Council doing to address this problem?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

The Council does care for and works closely with resident's groups to improve our parks, woodlands, and gardens.

A recent residents survey identified that 81% of residents were either fairly or very satisfied with the condition of the Council's Parks and Open Spaces and whilst this level of satisfaction is high, we continue to work to improve our parks and open spaces as we recognise that there are some areas that still need improvement.

In terms of Oxleas Woods we work closely with the Friends of Oxleas Woods to care for and improve the woodlands. We carry out regular tree surveys and works, remove invasive species and support volunteer workdays. We are aware that there are a number of fallen trees across pathways and have a schedule to remove them.

In woodland areas like Oxleas we leave lying and standing deadwood that are not causing access issues to provide habitat for insects.

We are also working with the Friends of Oxleas Woods to identify priority path improvements and have allocated approximately £50k to support delivery of these improvements and in the last couple of years we have also improved the condition of the main access routes to the Castle and main café.