

COUNCIL

26 October 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

Does the Leader think it is acceptable for the Council's own developer, Meridian Home Start, to choose to NOT respect the decision of the Council's own Planning Board, by appealing the Planning Board's decision to reject its application for the proposed development at Shepherds Leas?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Meridian Home Start are not the Council's developer. They are independent of the Council. Meridian Home Start is a Community Benefit Society with a separate constitution, governance arrangement and board structure. The decision to appeal was a decision made solely by Meridian Homes and not the council.

In addition to submitting an appeal on Shepherds Leas they are in the process of pulling together a revised planning application that addresses the reason for refusal and reduces the height of the tallest element.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

It has been reported by 853 that the Leader recently communicated to opponents of the Silvertown Tunnel that he is “frustrated by the [Mayor of London’s] Silvertown policy, but we cannot give up. We need to now focus on initiatives to mitigate the consequences. Let us continue to work together, come up with ideas and lobby for these changes. Our work may not always be seen, but it is important and powerful, so let us not give up.”

What direct communication has the Leader of the Council had with the Mayor of London about his views on the Silvertown Tunnel since becoming Leader in May?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Both and I and the Deputy continue to have conversations with the Mayor of London and TfL about the silver town project.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

Can the Leader provide an update on the commitment he reportedly made, to members of Labour Group in his leadership manifesto, to set up a new “consultation and communications unit”? Is this new ‘unit’ being established, and at what cost to the taxpayer?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Engaging residents in shaping council services and policies is essential to making sure what we do fits their needs and requirements – that we move forward together and not as ‘them and us’. As a council we put a great deal of effort into doing this – over the past few weeks myself and my fellow councillors have been out on the streets asking people to input into ‘Our Greenwich’, our new corporate plan.

However, it would be remiss of any Council not to look at how we can improve collaboration, listening and engaging. To become even better at making decisions together rather than leaving residents feeling they have had changed done to them. We have, after all, seen on a national level what happens when elected politicians are out of touch with the views of the very people that they are seeing to serve.

With this in mind, officers are exploring how we can create more capacity and better processes for engaging with residents and when there is more to tell Cllr Hartley I will be sure to let him know.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

Can the Cabinet Member list the changes that were made to the Draft Transport Strategy as a result of the consultation that closed on 25th September 2022, before the final Strategy was put to the 26th October Cabinet Meeting?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

I would also like to thank everyone again that contributed to the Transport Strategy consultation. The number of responses and participation was brilliant to see. Not only through the online consultation survey, but at the various events across Royal Greenwich. It was great to see everyone through the borough having this opportunity to comment on transport issues. The consultation has allowed our communities to provide a rich source of data, opinions and views that is going to really help officers with future schemes.

We have also seen a positive response and support to the policies and objectives that were outlined in our Transport Strategy and there was general support under all the key themes we set.

Regarding the changes made since the public consultation, a separate list will be provided to Councillor Hartley listing all the changes made to date within the Transport Strategy. This includes amendments to also reflect suggestions internally by our community safety, public health, and parking services team.

However, it is important to also note that other suggestions and issues raised during the public consultation, especially the improvement map that formed the Transport Strategy consultation has also been fed into the

various Policy Framework Action Plans - that are there to help support scheme delivery. Therefore, consultation responses have also helped to develop our various Policy Framework Action Plans and not just the Transport Strategy.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

The Council's new 'Active Travel Action Plan' says "specific traffic management schemes, including LTNs, will be considered in areas where issues with motor traffic are preventing or deterring people from walking and cycling through the Royal Borough" and acknowledges that "LTNs are not a one-size-fits-all tool and that they will need to be carefully planned and adapted on a case-by-case basis".

Will the Cabinet Member consider introducing a "Principle of Public Consent" to this element of the council's plans – making a firm commitment that the Council will only proceed with a traffic management scheme where a majority of residents (in both directly- and indirectly-affected areas) are proved to be in favour of the proposal?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

My commitment is that to inform what, if any, changes to traffic management the Council should make to achieve our policy objectives, we will consult widely and consider those responses we receive with an open mind. Schemes designed to make it easier and safer to walk and cycle will balance our policy objectives with the needs of residents and their visitors. Whilst one of my objectives is to achieve a general consensus of support, this is not the same as requiring a majority of respondents to a consultation to support the proposal. As the Active Travel Action Plan says, each scheme will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Active Travel Policy Framework Action Plan includes detail on how we will approach consultation with stakeholders in the 'Partnerships and collaboration' section. The plan recognises the important of high-quality engagement with residents, businesses, and visitors, and that this is undertaken at an early stage in the design process so that any fundamental

issues can be addressed as early as possible. The plan includes the following commitments:

- Where appropriate, collaboratively working with local communities to co-design new traffic management measures and modal filters.
- Proactively reaching out and engaging with lesser heard voices on active travel schemes, such as younger people, and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Proposals will be data led, and the consultation process will set out clearly the problems each scheme is seeking to address and what we think the best solutions are, for residents, businesses, and visitors to provide their views on.

The Transport Strategy and Active Travel Policy Framework Action Plan provide us with the direction we need to address issues across the borough on a consistent basis, while recognising that schemes will need to be tailored to the local context on a case-by-case basis.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

The Council's new 'Kerbside Management Policy Framework Action Plan' effectively scraps the 'Attitude Survey' stage during the implementation of a new CPZ. Given this reduction in residents' input – where currently gives residents the opportunity to share the parking issues they are experiencing before a firm proposal is put to them – how is the Cabinet Member going to ensure that proposals developed 1) are appropriate, and 2) will command public support in the affected area?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

We are all aware of the growing parking pressures we have on our streets, the high car ownership, and the need to help promote alternative modes of transport. We must help drive this change and the attitude now is to be more proactive in our approach. This will help meet our ambitious targets and this includes an accelerated CPZ programme.

To take forward an accelerated programme, the Kerbside plan sets out a new streamlined consultation process, to help members and officers progress parking schemes.

However, this does not remove the importance of public consultation and resident participation. We recognise resident consultation is vital with any scheme design and often the most important feedback is received when detailed plan design are provided for comments at Stage 2 of the process.

Whilst the Kerbside plan proposes to remove the Attitude Survey, informal consultation will remain a key part of the process before any scheme is formally advertised.

The Kerbside plan therefore sets a shorter process to help us all achieve the objectives set in our Carbon Neutral Plan and our eagerness to be proactive and lead in reducing pollution and harmful emissions from our borough.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

The Cabinet Member will be aware of concerns about the integrity of the Mayor of London's ULEZ expansion consultation, after whistleblowers confirmed a Daily Telegraph report that leaked data shows large numbers of responses opposing the proposal are being excluded. It is reported that 66% of responses across London were opposed before these exclusions were applied (and 59% afterwards), with only 24% in favour.

Has the Cabinet Member been informed what the overall % results were from respondents in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, and if not, will she seek to establish this information (both before and after any exclusions are made)?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

I am aware of media reports disputing data contained in the Mayor of London's recent press release concerning the expansion of ULEZ. However, I cannot comment because the results of that consultation have yet to be published. I am advised that the responses to this consultation are being analysed and that Transport for London (TfL) will publish their Consultation Report in due course. The Mayor will consider this report, TfL's recommendations and other relevant matters before making a decision on whether or not to confirm the London-wide ULEZ consultation proposals (with or without modifications) by the end of the year.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

How many requests for larger black bins have so far been made by residents as a result of the Towards Zero Waste engagement campaign, and how many of these have been delivered?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Please see table below for the figures requested.

	Black 240L	Green 240L	Blue 240L	Total
Requested	1757	325	304	2386
Delivered	414	92	71	577

The service is aiming for all the bins to be exchanged prior to the roll-out of fortnightly black top bin collections commencing in February 2023. There is currently no backlog and the exchanges are on track for completion in January 2023 as planned.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on what work RBG has done to support the turnaround of Woolwich Works, since the Leader's decision on 22 August to confirm his original decision to press ahead with up to £2 million in interest-free loans to the Woolwich Creative District Trust?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Woolwich Works is run by an independent charitable Trust.

In addition to the financial facility that the Council has made available to the Trust, it is providing it support it with marketing and audience building as it seeks to establish itself as a cultural destination.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

What was the Council's formal response to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities rent consultation seeking views on a rent cap of either 3%, 5%, or 7% i.e. what position did RBG take in its response to this consultation?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Our response to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities rent consultation made the following key points:

- Of the options consulted on, the 7% rent ceiling was the only option that would allow local flexibility to balance cost pressures on tenants while ensuring basic safety.
- The implementation of a 3% or 5% ceiling would have significant implications our ability to deliver our basic housing management responsibilities, as well as strategic investment priorities (including decarbonisation and building safety), and would require us to reduce revenue spend of between £4m and £9m per year.
- The proposed intervention, following the previous 1% rent reduction policy, would undermine the principles of local sovereignty that underpin the self-financing model, and support would be needed to help address the funding gap caused by this intervention.
- We agree that Specialist and supported housing should also be exempt – and the rental costs covered through welfare and health budgets – to avoid further disincentivising this type of much needed development.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

Following our helpful previous exchanges on the issue of RBG's data collection in relation to empty premises across the borough, in July the Cabinet Member told me "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". Could the Cabinet Member provide an update on this work – is this audit and complete and what were the findings?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

I can confirm that vacancy audits have been completed for all the retail areas in the borough. These audits are carried out as part of a health check of town centres neighbourhood shopping areas, retail parks and parades to better understand any underlying causes where there are high voids or churn. To note the majority of these properties are in private ownership. A summary of the findings is set out in the table below. In comparison to the national vacancy rate of 14% most are doing well. Areas that exceed 14% will be reviewed as part of the ongoing audits.

	Retail Type	Location	Ward Name	Total Number of Units	Number of Vacant Units	Vacancy rate (%)
1	Town Centre	Eltham	Eltham Town and Avery Hill	222	7	3.2%
2	Town Centre	Greenwich	Greenwich Park	358	36	10.1%

3	Town Centre	Woolwich	Woolwich Arsenal	361	42	11.6%
4	District Centre	Blackheath Village	Blackheath Westcombe	13	1	7.7%
5	District Centre	Royal Standard	Blackheath Westcombe	56	0	0.0%
6	District Centre	East Greenwich	East Greenwich	161	14	8.7%
7	District Centre	Lee	Kidbrooke Village & Sutcliffe	92	2	2.2%
8	District Centre	Plumstead High Street	Plumstead & Glyndon	127	15	11.8%
9	District Centre	Thamesmead	Thamesmead Moorings	38	16	42.1%
10	Local Centres	Abbey Wood	Abbey Wood	14	0	0.0%
11	Local Centres	Blackheath Hill	Greenwich Park	80	6	7.5%
12	Local Centres	Charlton Village	Charlton Village & Riverside	33	4	12.1%
13	Local Centres	Gallions Reach	West Thamesmead	7	1	14.3%
14	Local Centres	Herbert Road	Shooters Hill	69	4	5.8%
15	Local Centres	Mottingham	Mottingham, Coldharbour & New Eltham	16	3	18.8%

16	Local Centres	New Eltham	Eltham Town and Avery Hill	44	0	0.0%
17	Local Centres	Well Hall	Eltham Page	53	6	11.3%
18	Neighbourhood Centre	Avery Hill Road	Eltham Town and Avery Hill	21	0	0.0%
19	Neighbourhood Centre	Bexley Road	Eltham Town and Avery Hill	23	0	0.0%
20	Neighbourhood Centre	Brewery Road	Plumstead & Glyndon	14	0	0.0%
21	Neighbourhood Centre	Charlton Church Lane	Charlton Village & Riverside	27	4	14.8%
22	Neighbourhood Centre	Charlton Road	Charlton Village & Riverside	10	0	0.0%
23	Neighbourhood Centre	Charlton Road West	Charlton Village & Riverside	6	0	0.0%
24	Neighbourhood Centre	Conway Road	Plumstead & Glyndon	11	1	9.1%
25	Neighbourhood Centre	Court Road	Eltham Town & Avery Hill	8	0	0.0%
26	Neighbourhood Centre	Eltham Common	Eltham Park & Progress	19	0	0.0%

27	Neighbourhood Centre	Eynsham Drive	Abbey Wood	8	0	0.0%
28	Neighbourhood Centre	Fiveways	Mottingham, Coldharbour & New Eltham	25	2	8.0%
29	Neighbourhood Centre	Frances Street	Woolwich Dockyard	13	1	7.7%
30	Neighbourhood Centre	Hillreach	Woolwich Dockyard	6	3	50.0%
31	Neighbourhood Centre	Holbourne Road	Kidbrooke Park	6	1	16.7%
32	Neighbourhood Centre	Humber Road	Blackheath Westcombe	12	2	16.7%
33	Neighbourhood Centre	Kingsman Parade	Woolwich Dockyard	8	0	0.0%
34	Neighbourhood Centre	Leslie Smith Square	Woolwich Common	7	1	14.3%
35	Neighbourhood Centre	McLeod Road	Abbey Wood	12	1	8.3%
36	Neighbourhood Centre	Middle Park	Middle Park & Horn Park	17	0	0.0%
37	Neighbourhood Centre	Plumstead Common	Plumstead Common	35	3	8.6%

38	Neighbourhood Centre	Plumstead High Street (East)	Plumstead & Glyndon	18	2	11.1%
39	Neighbourhood Centre	Plumstead Road	Plumstead & Glyndon	22	4	18.2%
40	Neighbourhood Centre	Rochester Way	Blackheath Westcombe	12	0	0.0%
41	Neighbourhood Centre	Royal Hill	Greenwich Park	20	0	0.0%
42	Neighbourhood Centre	Shooters Hill	Kidbrooke Park	16	1	6.3%
43	Neighbourhood Centre	Sibthorpe Road	Middle Park & Horn Park	6	2	33.0%
44	Neighbourhood Centre	Southend Crescent	Eltham Town and Avery Hill	14	0	0.0%
45	Neighbourhood Centre	Swingate Lane	Plumstead Common	5	1	20.0%
46	Neighbourhood Centre	The Mound	Mottingham, Coldharbour & New Eltham	19	6	31.6%
47	Neighbourhood Centre	The Slade	Plumstead Common	10	1	10.0%

48	Neighbourhood Centre	Waterdale Road	Plumstead Common	14	2	14.3%
49	Neighbourhood Centre	Westhorne Avenue	Eltham Page	7	0	0.0%
50	Neighbourhood Centre	Westmount Road	Eltham Park & Progress	30	5	16.7%
51	Neighbourhood Centre	Wickham Lane	Plumstead Common	21	3	14.3%
52	Neighbourhood Centre	Woolwich Road	East Greenwich	22	5	22.7%
53	Retail Park	Brocklebank Retail Park	Greenwich Peninsula	5	0	0.0%
54	Retail Park	Gallions Road	Greenwich Peninsula	4	0	0.0%
55	Retail Park	Greenwich Shopping Park	Greenwich Peninsula	15	0	0.0%
56	Retail Park	Icon Outlet at The O2	Greenwich Peninsula	78	23	29.5%
57	Retail Park	Millennium Leisure Park	Greenwich Peninsula	7	0	0.0%
58	Retail Park	Peninsular Retail Park	Greenwich Peninsula	8	3	37.5%

59	Retail Park	Stone Lake Retail Park	Charlton Village & Riverside	7	0	0.0%
60	Retail Park	Thamesmead Shopping Centre	Thamesmead Moorings	31	6	19.4%
	Total – All areas	60		2423	240	9.9%

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

12 Question from Councillor Cathy Dowse, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture and Communities

Could more information be made available to residents regarding the benefits of leaving some areas of our parks to grow wild? Could the information either be placed at the entrance to each part or in the Greenwich Info leaflet. Further, is it possible to make mowing maps available to Friends Groups and Ward Councillors?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Cathy Dowse for her question.

The Council consulted Park Friends Groups when it changed the mowing to create new meadow/conservation grass areas regimes in 16 park sites in 2021. These areas provide habitat and support local biodiversity. In addition, less vehicle movements and machinery usage to maintain these areas means less fuel usage and less emissions.

Mowing maps for the 16 sites where meadow/conservation grass areas were introduced can be found on the Council's website via the following link:
<https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/grasscuttings>

In addition, simple signs with information about the grass cutting and benefits have been installed in the 16 park sites with the meadow/conservation grass areas.

At the start of the next growing season in Spring 2023, we will produce an article for inclusion in Greenwich Info, to provide more information regarding the benefits of leaving these areas to grow wild and encourage residents to view the information and maps on the web link.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

13 Question from Councillor Sandra Bauer, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture and Communities

Will the cabinet member join with me in congratulating officers and friends groups who have been instrumental in organising the borough's massively successful 'parksfest' programme this year in some really challenging weather conditions? Friends groups are volunteers who give up their time to organise this programme of events for their communities? Would he also like to comment on some of the events he and his family visited during the Summer?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Sandra Bauer for her question.

We enjoyed another epic summer of cultural and community festivities in Royal Greenwich this year – something we couldn't have achieved without the support of organisations and individuals across the borough.

Me and the family have attended a number of Parkfest events around the borough, Parkfest is full of great activities for families to enjoy and take part in. A huge thanks to friends' groups and officers in making Parkfest a great success for all our residents. I don't think that any of us would have thought that challenging weather conditions in a British summer would mean extreme heat, but thanks to the hard work of Parksfest volunteers, thousands of residents were able to enjoy free activities and entertainment. They should be very proud of what they achieve for their local communities not just in the summer, but through their year-round dedication to the parks and green spaces they care so passionately about.

I was personally able to enjoy a number of the Royal Greenwich Festivals events, Together 22 and the Platinum Picnic in the Park which were fabulous days out for everyone in the borough. Next year I hope to see even more of our communities getting involved and making all our family fun days even more spectacular.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

14 Question from Councillor Sarah-Jane Merrill, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

What is her assessment of the ongoing impact of the powers given by the Conservative Government in 2020 to train companies to make changes to their timetables without regulation?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Sarah-Jane Merrill for her question.

Firstly I think it is fair to say that Southeastern Train's communication has not been good enough on this matter. Their main reason for this is a circa 40% reduction in commuters since the start of the pandemic. The Department for Transport allowing and approving timetable changes has and will definitely impact our residents and staff and it is clear that their December 22 timetable looks very different to their existing timetable.

The Department for Transport allowed Southeastern to proceed without a formal consultation programme given fluctuating customer demand and to help build back services to facilitate recovery as quickly as possible but surely this must be coming to a close now. We need to have a settled timetable, this government is encouraging us to get out of our cars, and the public transport network is imperative to enable this.

We need to know what their strategy is, I am not clear on this and I need to know. We have already written to Southeastern Trains Managing Director Steve White and I hoping that we can properly engage on this matter, especially following their attendance to our Regeneration, Transport and Culture Scrutiny Panel Meeting on the 20th October, I think it is clear that they have misjudged these changes, I urge them as well as the panel to ensure there is a proper consultation on these changes

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

15 Question from Councillor Sarah-Jane Merrill, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

To ask the Cabinet member for Transport what representations she is making to South Eastern Trains about the dramatic cuts to services planned from Eltham to central London at the end of the year?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Sarah-Jane Merrill for her question.

Question 14 and 15 to be taken together as the questions are similar

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

16 Question from Councillor Sarah-Jane Merrill, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

What assessment has she made of the impact on our transport systems, ie. buses and roads, of these cuts

Reply -

I thank Councillor Sarah-Jane Merrill for her question.

I feel that we are in the process of awaiting responses and outcomes from multiple consultations. We raised our concerns regarding the TfL Bus changes and I have also raised my concerns Southeastern's planned timetable changes.

As I have mentioned above, I don't feel there is a clear strategy from the government on how public transport is going to enable our residents, businesses and colleagues to move around this borough whether it be travel to work, bring children to school.

I have had numerous meetings with TfL, the Deputy Mayor and I hope to also have a similar discussion with Southeastern Trains and Network Rail. I need reassurance that there is a robust Public Transport system, to cater for the future, and assist our targets for car reduction in this borough, an improvement to our Air Quality and enable improve public health.

We need some proper medium long term plans in place and a commitment from our transport providers, including TfL to ensure we have adequate public transport to meet demand, and to future proof for growth.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

Eltham Church Cemetery is currently extremely overgrown, with many graves simply inaccessible due to the density of the vegetation. This can be upsetting for visitors and mourners, and also provides sheltered space for antisocial behaviour to take place.

I appreciate resources are stretched and that there are a lot of competing priorities, but please can you provide an update on the schedule for clearing the graveyard?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Lauren Dingsdale for her question.

Eltham Parish Churchyard is one of six closed churchyards the Council's Parks team maintain on behalf of the Parochial Church Council.

The team aim to keep the churchyard in decent order and its walls and fences in good repair, in the same way that the Parochial Church Council has done in the past.

The Parks Rangers undertake routine inspection and clearance to minimise ASB and the Grounds Maintenance team undertake regular grass cutting and shrub pruning during the growing season.

Delays to this scheduled have occurred and the team have been in discussion with the incumbent and agreed a work programme over the next couple of months to clear the overgrown areas, ready for the new growing season.

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

At July's meeting you agreed that a letter would be sent to Criterion Estates and it was also noted verbally at the July meeting that CEL had been sent an enforcement notice regarding the rear of 356 Footscray Road being overgrown with vegetation. Has CEL responded to this? Has any further enforcement action regarding the disrepair of either of these two properties?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Lauren Dingsdale for her question.

I can confirm that a letter was sent to Criterion Estates Limited, which set out our concerns relating to the properties at 340 and 356 Footscray Road which have been left vacant for a number of years. We highlighted the complaints raised by the community, businesses and elected members regarding the deteriorating condition of these properties and the adverse impact it continues to have on neighbouring businesses, residents and the public realm. Regrettably the owners have failed to respond to the letter.

With regard to the state of the rear of the premises at 356 Footscray Road, Planning Enforcement will be pursuing enforcement action under Section 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (the Act). This regulation provides the local planning authority with the power to take steps requiring land to be cleaned up when its condition adversely affects the amenity of the area.

I remain mildly optimistic that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill introduced to Parliament in May 2022 and now at committee stage, will give councils the new powers it needs to resolve the issue of empty properties, get them back into use and restore pride of place.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

As part of my supplementary question at July's meeting, it was agreed that our Legal team would investigate whether there is any current legislation we could leverage with regards to the empty flats on 340 and 356 Footscray Rd whilst waiting for the Levelling Up Bill. Please can you provide an update as to whether this is possible under current legislation?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Lauren Dingsdale for her question.

The properties at 340 and 356 comprises both commercial and residential units. The Council does not any specific powers to require the owners to bring the commercial units back into use, however in terms of the residential units the Council has the following options, none of which is achievable in the short term and all of which are at cost to the Council.

1. Negotiated voluntary sale by the owners.

2. Compulsory Purchase.

This depends on the Secretary of State to make the order subject to being satisfied that the Council has met the requirements of Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 which allows local authorities to acquire under used or ineffectively used property and land for residential purposes if there is a housing need in the area. The CPO process can be long and involved and costly

3. An Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO)

This is a power in Chapter 2 of Part 4 of the Housing Act 2004 which allows the Council to 'step into the shoes' of the owner of a dwelling that has been unoccupied for at least 2 years. The local authority takes management control of the property and secures its occupation. However, the local authority does not become the legal owner of the property and cannot sell it. There are 2 types of EDMOs Interim and

Final. The Council must apply for authorisation from a Residential Property Tribunal (RPT) which must be satisfied that:

- The dwelling has been unoccupied for at least 2 years
- That there is no reasonable prospect of it becoming occupied in the near future
- That there is a reasonable prospect that the dwelling will become occupied if an interim EDMO is made
- That the Council has complied with its duties in seeking to make an interim EDMO
- That the dwelling does not fall within one of the exception categories
- That the Council has evidence of reasonable efforts to notify the owner that an EDMO is under consideration
- That the Council has provided details of the enquiries made to ascertain what steps the owner is taking to secure the occupation of the dwelling and details of advice and assistance they have provided to the owner.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

20 Question from Councillor Lauren Dingsdale, to Councillor Ivis Williams, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Social Value

At the response to my written question at July's meeting, it was revealed that the two empty shops at 340 and 356 Footscray Road are in business rate arrears totalling £16,360.12. Please can we have an update on the status of this debt recovery?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Lauren Dingsdale for her question.

In respect of the empty shop at 340 Footscray Road a final notice for payment has been issued. This allows 14 days for payment to be received. If payment is not received by this time the business will be summonsed to Court for non-payment.

In respect of the empty shop at 356 Footscray Road, the business has been summonsed to attend a Court hearing on 8th November 2022 and the Royal Borough has added costs of £122.50 to the arrears amount outstanding.

COUNCIL

26 October 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

21 Question from Councillor Sammy Backon, to Councillor Aidan Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration

A cafe operated in the Eltham Centre up until the pandemic, and it was hugely valued by the local community. I understand that a prospective operator has been found, please could I ask for an update on the status of this?'

Reply -

I thank Councillor Sammy Backon for his question.

A prospective operator has been found and heads of terms for a commercial lease have been agreed. Solicitors have been instructed and an agreement-for-lease is being drafted. Once completed this will allow the prospective operator to take occupation and commence their fit out works before Christmas.

Meanwhile, whilst the arrangements are concluding with the café operator, the space is being used temporarily by GLL so it is animated and useful for the community.

COUNCIL

26 October 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

22 Question from Councillor Lauren Dingsdale, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

A number of residents have contacted me about: (i) our Domestic Vehicle Crossover Policy and its depth restrictions; and (ii) the related list of roads for which we are no longer accepting applications for full width crossovers (as a result of wanting to maintain on-street parking).

I am concerned that the policy and application does not adequately take into account the unintended consequence that such residents will be restricted from replacing any petrol vehicles they have with electric vehicles, as they will not be able to charge them from their properties.

Will the cabinet member take this into account when finalising the Royal Borough's Transport Strategy?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Lauren Dingsdale for her question.

Once a vehicular crossover has been built, it will be there permanently with the council having no effective power to remove it or to limit the use to which it is put. Whilst we do enforce against footway parking, an offence occurs only if one or more wheels are parked on the footway; it does not include cars parked on driveways overhanging the footway. At some point in the future, someone who lives at a house with a short off-street parking space will drive a car that is too big to park on it. We cannot know what size that may be, but bear in mind that the eight best-selling cars in 2021 were:

- Vauxhall Corsa 4.1m long
- Nissan Qashqai 4.4m long
- Ford Puma 4.2m long
- Kia Sportage 4.5m long

- Mini 3.9m to 4.3m long
- Hyundai Tucson 4.5m long
- Ford Kuga 4.6m long
- Tesla Model Y 4.8m long

Drivers do not park with the tip of their car touching the front of their house, so half of these cars would not fit in a parking space less than 4.65 metres in length and a quarter on one that is less than 4.8 metres

The outcome that the Council is seeking when specifying a minimum distance from the back-of-path to the building façade is not having a parked car overhang the footway. If this happens, it risks causing an obstruction (which disproportionately affects people with limited mobility) and a hazard (which disproportionately affects people whose vision is impaired).

The UK's best practice document when deciding what length that should be is the Institution of Structural Engineers' "Design recommendations for multi-storey and underground car parks". The current edition, written in 2002, recommends a parking bay being no less than 4.8metres in length. However, due to the changes in car design over the last 20 years, a new version of this publication is scheduled to be published in January 2023. If, as expected, it recommends a longer minimum length then it likely that the many UK highway authorities who also apply a 4.8 metre minimum depth when considering vehicle crossover applications will revise their policy.

The need to switch to an electric car is not justification for increasing the likelihood of parked cars overhanging the footway. With many car-owning households having nowhere to park off street, we will shortly be launching a new electric vehicle charging infrastructure plan to help these residents change to electric power. In the meantime, there are already over 200 public charging points across the borough and more are being installed by commercial operators each month. The private sector is also responding to the increasing demand for residential charging by growing a shared-charging network managed through apps such as JustPark, which already includes a number of off-street parking spaces at private homes with charge points.

One action arising from the new Transport Strategy will be a review of the list of roads for which we are not accepting applications for new vehicular crossovers.

COUNCIL

26 October 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

23 Question from Councillor John Fahy, to Councillor Matthew Morrow, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Can the Cabinet Member confirm :

1. When was the Council aware of the proposal of Boxgrove Primary and Kidbrooke Primary to seek to become an Academy
2. What intervention has the Council had with the Schools in the intervening period
3. Is the Council aware of the lack of consultation with Parents.
4. Would the Cabinet Member agree that the inclusion of two people from the Compass Group was wholly inappropriate .

Reply -

I thank Councillor John Fahy for his question.

1. The Council became formally aware of the proposal at the launch of the consultation on 23 September 2022. The consultation runs to 4 November 2022.
2. The Council has met with the Executive Head of Conatus Federation and the Executive Head of Compass Multi Academy Trust. An error on the length of the consultation made on the schools website was raised and rectified immediately by the Executive Head. The Executive Head was also asked to remove a line from the frequently asked questions which stated incorrectly that the move into an academy trust was supported by the council. An officer spoke with the Chair of Governors on the 3rd October 2022 to discuss the decision making process and the perceived benefits of joining an Academy Trust.
3. The consultation has been shared with Parents of Conatus Federation.
4. We have been assured that the CEO of Compass, whilst on the governing body of Kidbrooke Park and Boxgrove, did not take part in any voting

COUNCIL

26 October 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

24 Question from Councillor Maisie Richards Cottell, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

East Greenwich has chronic problems with traffic. An ‘initial thoughts’ paper and consultation by TFL in 2020 suggested removing the Angerstein roundabout and reducing the slip road access between the A102 and A206 to help reduce the traffic on the Woolwich/Trafalgar Roads. (See link: <https://haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/access-our-older-consultations/widgets/34087/documents>)

Would the Council be able to implement this plan?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Maisie Richards Cottell for her question.

There are no active proposals to remove the Angerstein Roundabout and the discussion to do so has not progressed since the 2020 “initial thoughts” paper. Being part of the Strategic Route Network and a junction with the Red Route network, the Royal Borough and Transport for London would need to work in partnership to make any changes to this junction.

The plans to limit traffic on exiting on the off ramp at Angerstein Roundabout were discussed pre-scheme, and this item will be discussed with TfL. With unstable traffic levels at this junction and upcoming works on the A102, it will need to be modelled by TfL to understand the impact on surrounding roads. , therefore likely to be considered post construction.

COUNCIL

26 October 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

25 Question from Councillor Maisie Richards Cottell, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

The junction at the bottom of Vanbrugh Hill – where the A206 meets the A2203 – is not functioning well. It is not pedestrian friendly and causes delays that have ripple effects across the borough.

How can the Council help to improve this junction?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Maisie Richards Cottell for her question.

The junction of Woolwich Road and Vanbrugh Hill is in the process of being modified to better accommodate the temporary segregated cycle track that was installed as part of the Mayor of London's Covid response. I was sadly unable to secure from Transport for London, as part of those works, the improved pedestrian facilities or better network resilience that we had urged them to include. Nonetheless, TfL have committed to work with the Council on monitoring the effects of the cycle path in an effort to justify these improvements as part of a future road investment programme.

COUNCIL

26 October 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

The large building behind the cafe in Avery Hill Park has recently been renovated . Could the Cabinet member please provide an update on its intended use and give a breakdown of the facilities available and costs incurred during the upgrade ?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

The building you are referring to is the sports changing rooms that are for users of the park. The Council has undertaken a project there to modernise and refurbish the sports changing rooms in order to provide good quality facilities to support future delivery of sport in the park. The works have provided better separation of changing facilities for female and male sport, made the building more energy efficient and installed low carbon technology to significantly reduce the building's carbon footprint which supports delivery of the Council's Carbon Neutral Plan. The total cost of these works was £1.19m and was supported by grant funding from Government via the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

Previous research has shown latent demand for football and other sports in the borough and the availability of the improved and modernised facilities will be marketed and promoted to local sports clubs with the aim of improving uptake. The improvements will provide facilities to support sports tournaments and for groups that want to put on events in the park.

As an example, the building was used in early October 2022 to support an inter-school cross country event, with 13 schools and 435 children taking part and using the building.

Parks staff also use the building 6 days a week as their welfare facility and is their base for maintaining the park and other local green spaces in the Eltham area.

COUNCIL

26 October 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

27 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business and Skills

On the 29th January 2020 our litter motion was agreed by Full Council, and an action plan was put together. One of the actions was establishing 'business charter', a responsible retail agreement. Businesses were to be approached in regard to keeping the outside of their premises clean.

Has this been actioned? And can local businesses be approached to contribute to the cost of High Street jet washing?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

The Love Your High Street campaign (Business Charter) – was launched in March 2022 and aims to improve our high street environment, making it more attractive for shoppers and visitors. Businesses are invited to become a "Love Your High Street champion" by signing up to a voluntary pledge which includes the commitment to the following:

- Keep your shop front and pedestrian areas, directly outside your shop, clean and tidy
- Manage your own waste responsibly in compliance with the law
- Promote the campaign to employees and other colleagues, including street cleanliness and the correct disposal of business waste and recycling
- Encourage customers to dispose of litter responsibly
- Be a Love Your High Street champion, displaying the campaign sticker
- Be vigilant to fly tipping within the area and report any incidents to the council

To date, 28 businesses borough wide have signed up to the campaign, of which 4 are within the Eltham Town Centre. The Scheme is promoted widely through the Councils Business E-Alert service, publications and social

media platforms. Further targeted engagement with businesses in Eltham will be carried out in the coming weeks to help boost numbers.

I am sure you agree, we are facing a cost of living crisis which is impacting on both households and businesses alike. This council is seeking ways to lessen not add to the financial burden facing businesses in order to protect jobs and the local economy. The scheme has attracted the voluntary support of businesses across the borough who are acting in good faith. I do not think it would be right to ask businesses to make a cash contribution at this stage. Could I suggest that in the short-term, councillors may wish to consider using their ward budget to cover the cost of a one off Jet Washing programme in support of businesses in Eltham Town Centre.

COUNCIL

26 October 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

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

Is the annual Christmas parade, which was cancelled last year because of Covid, to be reintroduced this year to Eltham High Street and will the local school children be encouraged to take an active part?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

Eltham Lights up was last held in 2019 before the covid pandemic hit. To make sure that families were still able to enjoy some Christmas cheer within the government's protective restrictions, all our town centre events were repurposed into one event Sparkle in the Park. This year's event will be back in Eltham in Well Hall Pleasaunce.

The popularity of this free event has continued to grow over the past three years, with more than 20,000 people enjoying last year's event in Maryon Park. The format of the event also means that we can offer a quiet session suitable for families with members who have special educational needs and disabilities – who often miss out; we can offer priority tickets to children in our care and care leavers; and we can reach out to community groups and individuals at risk of isolation to encourage their participation.

Schools and community are also invited to participate by performing carols and Christmas songs at the event.

However, we also know how important our high streets and town centres are and we will be putting on Christmas lights switch-on events including in Eltham. The events will include a Christmas market, mascots, entertainers and craft activities.

COUNCIL

26 October 2022

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

29 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business and Skills

During the last administration I raised the issue of the Eltham Wooden Sign which is situated at the top of the High Street. This sign cost £70,000 to build a few years ago. The lighting in spite of being reported many times does not work. At present the sign is regularly used as a public toilet for late night drinkers. Local residents are very angry about this. Can the Cabinet member please meet me on site so that we can discuss this again and find a way forward to resolve this issue?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

The “E L T H A M” wooden sign, which cost approximately £40,000 not £70,000, was one of several features installed as part of the Eltham regeneration scheme to create a sense of place and encourage civic pride. A bespoke piece of street art, its encapsulated architectural lighting has regrettably proven unreliable. I have asked officers to contact the sign’s manufacturer, Woodscape, to establish how this can be rectified and whether the costs of doing so can be recovered under the contracts that the council had with those who designed and constructed the scheme. Until they have that information, I do not consider that a site meeting would serve any useful purpose. In the meantime, the Metropolitan Police and Council Officers continue to enforce the Eltham Town Centre Public Space Protection Order.