

**COUNCIL**  
**26 OCTOBER 2016**  
**PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**I. Question from Ken Jackson, Eltham, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Transport, Economy & Smart Cities**

CPZ Charge - Why are local residents being charged to park their own vehicles in designated areas and what is the money raised being used for?

**Reply -**

I thank Mr Jackson for his question.

The Council, as does every other Council in London, charge residents for permits to park on roads within controlled parking zones during the times when the zones are in operation.

The Council's current charges compare favourably when compared with other London Boroughs including those of Lewisham and Bexley and the Council aspires to remain competitive in our approach going forward.

Charging for permits is an integral part of the Council's arrangements for managing parking in the Royal Borough as set out in our "Parking Strategy". It is all part of arrangements to provide residents with priority to park close to their homes and to encourage everyone to use sustainable transport where they can. The charges are also needed to cover enforcement and permit administration (back office) costs.

Any surplus generated from parking, including the sale of permits, has to, by law, be spent on "transport related) activity. The Royal Borough uses the surplus generated from parking to contribute to the cost of Freedom Passes – the passes which enable older residents to use London's transport system free of charge.

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**2. Question from Ken Jackson, Eltham, to Councillor Jackie Smith  
Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Environment.**

Eltham Park South Cafe Ownership - Why did the previous tenants have to leave given they provided a much enjoyed successfully run public amenity for the benefit of many sections of the local community, what changes will be implemented by the new tenants/owners.

**Reply -**

I thank Mr Jackson for his enquiry.

The lease for Eltham Park South has recently been renewed but there has been no change in the tenant.

The tenant has temporarily closed the café to carry out a deep clean of the building, to undertake some internal re-decoration and to undertake repairs to the electrical system and is planning to re-open in the next 2-3 weeks.

The Royal Borough fully recognises the value that having an active café brings to the local community and parks environment.

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**3. Question from Yusuf Ozkizil, Abbey Wood, to Councillor Averil Lekau , Cabinet Member for Housing and Anti-poverty**

My question is regarding the council's maintenance of the buildings in the Flowers Estate, Abbey Wood.

Two years ago an incident where a child fell through the glass pane of a stairwell window resulted in every single stairwell across the estate being boarded up with wooden panels. This decision and the time since, has resulted in the majority of those boards being graffiti-ed, and most of the glass panes in front of the boards smashed by vandals. This has really brought down the appearance of the area, making it look like a problem estate, especially with the fly-tipping it has attracted.

When will the council remove these boards and restore the windows?

Given the money coming in from housing developments planned for Thamesmead and Abbey Wood, can some of the funds the council will no doubt receive for these be redirected to better maintain its council estates such as the Flowers Estate?

**Reply -**

I thank Mr Ozkizil for his question.

The stock condition survey that the Council has just commissioned to help us prioritise investment decisions across our housing stock will, as a priority, look at the potential permanent replacement of these staircase windows.

In the meantime, I have asked officers to make good these glass panels and remove the temporary timber boards and the broken glass, replacing them with vandal-proof polycarbonate opaque sheets directly screwed into the frames. These replacement works should be complete within the next 3 weeks.

I have to say that the Conservative Government's freeze on rents has resulted in a shortfall of £33m into the Housing Revenue Account, resulting in less money to do repairs and improvements to our properties.

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**4. Question from Frances Hook, Blackheath, to Councillor David Gardner, Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Social Care**

Request that council takes action and to use their 'Statutory Duty' to ensure the residents of Greenwich have a good quality MSK Service.

We request that the Council instructs their Chief Executive to review the process of decision to award the MSK contract to Circle Holdings PLC [ an Off Shore Company] We believe that the CCG did not follow their constitution, that there was not 4 GP's present their for there was not a quorum . We are requesting the council to review the CCG Constitution and to give an opinion on the legality of the voting process.

Has the Council seen the Impact assessment? If not can they request a copy and obtain a legal opinion on it?

**5. Question from Frances Hook, Blackheath, to Councillor David Gardner, Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Social Care**

Has the council seen the MSK 'Alliance Report' which the specification was based on? If not can they request a copy of it; and to give a view and put it into the public domain?

**6. Question from Paul Richardson, Woolwich Common, to Councillor David Gardner, Cabinet Member for Heath & Adult Social Care**

How does the Council and the Health and Wellbeing Board intend to prevent the privatisation of Greenwich health services, such as the case of the musculoskeletal service?

**7. Question from Paul Richardson, Woolwich Common, to Councillor David Gardner, Cabinet Member for Heath & Adult Social Care**

It appeared from the comments made at the Health Scrutiny Committee that the proposed contract between Greenwich Clinical Commissioning Group and Circle for musculoskeletal services has no guarantee of payment of the London Living Wage.

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If this is the case, what actions will the Council, an accredited London Living Wage provider, take in relation to Greenwich Clinical Commissioning Group?

**8. Question from Jenny Dyson, Charlton, to Councillor David Gardner, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care**

With regard to the GCCG decision to award the contract for MSK services to Circle Holdings, does the Cabinet Member agree that in letting contracts organisations should take account of any company's reputation and to any historic performance issue on similar contracts?

**9. Question from Shirley Gibbs, Blackheath, to Councillor David Gardner, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care**

The Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign is submitting this question because we are very concerned about the decision of the Greenwich CCG to award the contract for musculoskeletal services to Circle. Is the Council aware that outsourcing this contract will have serious financial clinical and planning issues for the Trust?

We are pleased that the Greenwich Council Healthier Communities & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel has asked the CCG to provide further information on many aspects of the contract. But we would like to raise with the Council the fact that no impact assessment was made by the CCG board about the impact this would have on the local health economy and, in particular, Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust.

Dr Louise Irvine chair of our campaign submitted an FOI to Greenwich CCG asking whether they had carried out an Impact assessment, they replied that they had done no assessment but that one had been done by NHSE. According to the L&G NHS Trust there has been no approach from NHSE asking for information.

We are also concerned that the CCG Board meeting lacked Greenwich GP presence and was potentially inquorate by their constitution. We have written to the chair on this.

Is the Council aware that outsourcing this contract will have serious financial, clinical and planning issues for the Trust?

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Will the Council support the call for the CCG to re-evaluate this contract award after completing a full and relevant impact assessment?

**Composite response to Public Questions 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9**

Thank you for your questions.

The process of tendering and letting the contract for MSK is a process initiated and managed by Greenwich CCG. The Council is not a party to the Contract. However, the Council has taken a very keen interest in this issue and its implications through the Council's Scrutiny process.

There was extensive public scrutiny of the decision at the Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel on 27 September. There is a further exceptional meeting scheduled to look specifically at the MSK issue on 3 November, which is open to the public.

These meetings have looked at many of the questions raised in these questions and there is the opportunity to further explore the issues on 3 November.

The Scrutiny panel has been concerned by both the process of letting the tender and the implications for the local Health system and, most importantly, for local people.

The Council shares many of the concerns represented in these questions. The Council has sought material from the CCG, including the background papers, including the Alliance report. The Scrutiny process will seek to put all this material in the public domain, provided it is not commercially sensitive and therefore confidential. Councillor Denise Hyland, Leader of the Royal Borough wrote formally to the NHS Greenwich CCG setting out our concerns.

The Council does believe there are fundamental questions about the level and rigour of public engagement, about the weight given to the sustainability of the local health economy and to what extent the CCG fully evaluated the track record of the bidders, and the associated risks.

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The issue of whether the CCG decision making process was robust is one that has concerned the Scrutiny Committee, but the process of the tender award has been agreed as appropriate by NHS England.

The Council would take the view that staff providing the services should be paid the London Living Wage. The likelihood is that staff in the proposed Circle service would receive the LLW is high, but the Council will confirm this through the Scrutiny process.

The Council shares the concerns about the track record of Circle Holdings PLC and the overall point of privatisation of the NHS. This was embodied in the motion agreed by full council on 28 January 2015 <http://committees.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=151&MId=3417&Ver=4>. However, the approach to allowing private companies to tender for NS contracts is one that the NHS required as part of central Government policy. As such the Health and Well-Being Board comprises members from the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG), the NHS, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Lewisham & Greenwich Trust (LGT), Oxleas and Healthwatch. It has no delegated power to prevent the award of NHS contracts to private companies. The Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel does have powers to escalate their concerns to the Secretary of State in certain circumstances and the Council is considering this and will review this possibility following the Scrutiny meeting on 3 November.

The issue of the impact of letting the contract to Circle has been and remains of interest to the Scrutiny Panel and to the council corporately, particularly the impact on the NHS system locally.

The Council has consistently taken a strong interest in supporting and protecting the local NHS most recently through the Council resolution of July 2016. The Council continues to support staff across the local NHS who are working under huge pressures and doing so much for local people.

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**10. Question from Maria Freeman, Plumstead, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Sustainability**

While welcoming the renewed commitment to consultation with residents and users of the Warehouse and Plumstead Library, in the shape of the Plumstead Forum (and hopefully other mechanisms of engagement) will the Council now agree that before decisions are taken on the shape of the new "civic centre/gymbrary", that it would be inappropriate to proceed with any property sales in the vicinity while proposals - presumably for buildings and services - are under discussion?

For example the Kinara building which, as a community amenity building could be used to house a temporary library while works are carried out.

**Reply -**

I thank Ms Freeman for her question.

This is not a renewed commitment. The Council has encouraged and will continue to encourage stakeholders to engage with the Council on the plans for Plumstead.

The Council is committed to the regeneration of Plumstead and, to that end, has adopted the Plumstead Urban Framework to guide delivery of a range of civic improvement and public realm projects. As a demonstration of that commitment, the council is investing £11.2 million in the redevelopment of the Plumstead library and leisure centre, which will provide a state-of-the-art modern facility which respects the important heritage character of the building. Hawkins Brown Architects are leading a multi-disciplinary design team to develop proposals for the library. The existing library services can be maintained in the building during re-development.

Following consideration of the Framework, Cabinet agreed to the disposal of the Abery Street Car Park, the former Kinara Building, and the Warehouse Leisure Centre site, the capital receipts from which would be ring-fenced to fund the redevelopment of the library. The Council had previously agreed to the disposal of the former Housing Office (256-258 Plumstead High Street).

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The Kinara Building and ex-Housing Office have been marketed and bids have been received. The sale will enable the properties to be brought back into use and to contribute to the general improvement of Plumstead High Street.

The Council has undertaken consultation on both the Urban Framework and the redevelopment of the leisure centre. People who attended the consultation on the Urban Framework were supportive of the broad proposals for improvements to Plumstead. Some participants in particular were appreciative of the level of investment being made by the council in the redevelopment of the library, recognising its potential to act as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of the area and to stimulate private investment.

The Council will continue to consult with stakeholders and residents, including holding regular area stakeholder forums.”

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**11. Question from Maria Freeman, Plumstead, to Councillor Jackie Smith Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Environment**

In view of the on-going concerns about the state of Plumstead High Street public realm, particularly as regards litter and general cleanliness, can the Council confirm what deep cleaning has taken place on the high street this year, (and when), and what monitoring of the impact of any cleaning has been undertaken?

Given that residents haven't noticed any marked improvements over recent months; can the Council confirm they are going to step up the cleaning programme, with scheduled deep clean/jet washes forthwith?

**Reply –**

I thank Ms Freeman for her question

The Council recognises there are challenges in Plumstead that the normal scheduled cleansing arrangements have not been able to address fully, such as excessive fly tipping and late night littering. In response, the Council has created an additional, dedicated team that works seven days a week to tackle these issues. The team consists of a waste advisor, an enforcement officer and two cleansing operatives. Its work includes removing dumped waste and furniture and also engages with landlords, businesses and residents to inform them of the services available as well as taking enforcement action, where necessary.

Furthermore, we have reintroduced two “barrow beats” operated by street sweepers in the roads surrounding the High Street to further alleviate the problems. We have also have changed the working hours of the street cleaning operatives assigned to Plumstead High Street to start earlier to address the problem of overnight littering.

A “deep clean” (washing with high pressure jetting equipment) of Plumstead High Street was undertaken over June and July 2016. This was carried out in the early hours of the morning to cause minimise disruption to the general public and local businesses. Both sides of the High Street from Bannockburn Road to the Mosque on Plumstead Road were deep cleaned.

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I would urge all residents to be vigilant and report any incidents of flytipping to the Council and to use the Council's bulky waste collection service and/or take items to the Reuse and Recycling Centre in Nathan Way, which is free of charge. The Council condemns all aspects of Anti-Social Behaviour and this includes flytipping and littering.

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**12. Question from Eileen Glover, Eltham, to Councillor Maureen O'Mara, Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Anti-Fraud**

When will we see an improved and up-graded Greenwich Council Web Site especially in relation to information on the work of the Scrutiny Panels?

**Reply -**

I thank Mrs Glover for her question.

The design of the Council's public website will be reviewed in late 2016 and early 2017.

Any design changes will take into account the online behaviour and top tasks of our residents and businesses, as well as using good practice from other local authorities. We are proud to hold 4-star status for our website in a national annual review and will be ensuring that all website changes create a more accessible and usable website for the future.

Over the next 12 months all of the content on our website will have been reviewed and updated - including information relating to the work of Scrutiny Panels.

In the meantime, we will examine what is currently published about Scrutiny, with a view to making improvements where we can.

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**13. Question from Eileen Glover, Eltham, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Transport, Economy & Smart Cities**

Has the work program to rectify the problems of flooding in Avery Hill Road in the location of the new Toucan crossing been completed and did it include drain clearing?

**Reply -**

I thank Ms Glover for her question.

Yes, works to improve the drainage arrangements in the vicinity of the toucan crossing, located where Anstridge Path joins Avery Hill Road, have been completed. In addition, the road gullies along Avery Hill Road, between Bexley Road and Halfway Street have been cleaned. Officers will be inspecting the area over the next few weeks to verify that the works have improved the situation as envisaged.

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**14. Question from Philip More, Kidbrooke North Residents Association, to Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Culture, Creative Industries and Community Wellbeing**

There have been a large number of objections to the disposal of the Hervey Road Sports Field to Blackheath Rugby Limited by residents living in the area around this site. It appears most residents were unaware of the original tender process with the only publicity being an advertisement in Greenwich Time, despite the specification saying the site was the subject of considerable local interest. The tender process produced only one interested party but was not re-tendered with more publicity. Publicity for objections was two advertisements in a paper that rarely circulates to houses in the vicinity. The terms of the lease have not been provided to the public. The site is having around one million pounds of public money spent on it with no guarantee of public access to a field that is currently used by residents as a public park.

Given this background will the council confirm that the terms of any lease granted for the Hervey Road Sports Field will be discussed by our elected representatives and be subject to public scrutiny and that the lease will include strict restrictions on the hours that the operator can use the field strictly for its own purposes (team/club/students), restrictions on the number, size and nature of events in the pavilion and guarantees on the right of the general public to access the site for recreational purposes at all times during opening hours and with community oversight to ensure that the operator abides by the terms of the lease.

**Reply -**

Thank you for your question.

As you may know the Council in agreement with the community ensured that the playing field is now covered by a Deed of Dedication agreed by the Council and Fields in Trust that ensures the Field is protected in perpetuity.

The Council is committed to bringing the Hervey Road Playing Field back into use, as there is evidence that there is demand in the local area for space for the provision of a variety of different sports.

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With regard to the tender process for an operator for the Field, the Council carried out a publicly advertised procurement process in line with EU regulations and placed an advert in Greenwich Time to promote the fact it was doing so. Any club or organisation could have bid to operate the site, as it was an open tender process.

The tender documentation was publicly available and included details of the heads of terms for the lease and headline service agreement conditions. The Council had to be mindful of appointing an operator who was able to demonstrate a financially viable and sustainable business plan.

The future use of the Field will take place within the terms of the planning consent, service agreement and lease between the Council and Blackheath Rugby Club. The planning application has been subject to full public consultation and all responses received will be taken into account by Members in reaching a decision on the application. The advertisement of the Council's intention to dispose of the site, by way of granting a lease, was advertised in the Mercury newspaper. This publication contains the notification of planning applications received by the Council and is now the main publication for items that the Council wishes to bring to the attention of Borough residents.

Responses to the intention to dispose notice will be reported to Members to take into consideration before a final decision is taken on whether to proceed with the grant of the lease. The terms of the lease will link with those of the service agreement and planning consent.

The Club is registering as a Community Trust and is committed to working with the local community, and reinvesting any profit it makes into the Field. The Club has specifically committed to providing the following activities, which will be open to all members of the local community:

- Provision of rugby, cricket, wheelchair rugby, football, tag rugby, multi sports on the MUGA including disability sessions and coaching.
- Supporting schools through the provision of specialist support in education and coaching to aid in the delivery of BTEC Level III Sports Science Diplomas.
- Provision of a community café and nursery (subject to demand).

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- Access to bookable space in the pavilion which can be used to provide well-being activities for the local community e.g. Tai Chi, yoga etc.

The Field will be open for public use and the only restriction will be that the Club will ask that members of the public do not intervene or use the areas marked out as pitches while matches are taking place.

The Council recently convened a public meeting with local residents to discuss the scheme and to gather feedback from the community on specific areas of concern and the details of the meeting will be fed into the development of the service agreement. Ward Members attended the meeting and have been advising officers about the concerns of the local community. The Council will be working in partnership with the Blackheath Rugby Club to mitigate the concerns of local residents. The aim of both the Council and the Club is to develop an excellent community facility that will enable many more local people to engage in sports and recreation, and make the Field accessible to all.

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**15. Question from Dr Carol O'Toole, Blackheath, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Sustainability**

Protection of Habitat on Hervey Road Sports Field in Relation to Proposed Development by Greenwich Council - Request for Survey of Bats and Their Roosts on entire site.

The recent planning application I6/0544/F by Footscray Rugby Club for additional building, floodlighting and car parking was submitted with an extended phase I Habitat survey and Bat survey. The planning application for new buildings, floodlighting and car parking at Hervey Road Sports Field was submitted in September. During the 3 months leading up to this the local residents provided detailed evidence to Greenwich Council that bats are present at this site and use the boundary areas for foraging - including where the building and floodlights are proposed. They repeatedly requested a bat and tree Roost survey prior to the submission of this planning application but this did not happen.

Can the council now confirm, that as the Freeholder of Hervey Field, is aware that it has a Legal requirement to protect the conservation status of bats and their roosting sites, in compliance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, that the Greenwich Biodiversity Plan applies to all parts of the borough, including Kidbrooke, and that a phase I Habitat and Bat roost survey using recommended methodology will be carried out at the Hervey Road Sports Field prior to any consideration of this planning application?

**Reply -**

I thank Dr O'Toole for her question which helpfully focuses on the Council's legal responsibilities as a public authority to the natural environment.

I believe the 'legal requirement' she makes reference to is that set out in Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). This places a duty on all public authorities in England and Wales to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. As a public authority Royal Borough of Greenwich of course recognises its statutory obligations and fulfils these as part of its policy and decision making.

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But more than that, it recognises the importance of minimising the loss of biodiversity and integrating biodiversity because it is the right thing to do.

A bio-diverse environment is a strong indicator of a healthy, quality, valued environment that can be enjoyed by our communities and which contributes to their health and well-being.

I would also refer to the London Plan, Greenwich Biodiversity Plan and Greener Greenwich supplementary planning guidance, which set out the policy context for how this Council will consider the impacts of proposed developments.

Turning to Dr O'Toole's specific area of interest, the Hervey Road Playing Fields, I must first acknowledge that this is the subject of a current, live planning application. As such there is only so much I can say on the matter as Members involved in the decision making on a planning application must keep an open mind. However, what I can say is that the NERC Act's obligations extend to the Council's function as a local planning authority. The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity. A local planning authority must consider how a development might affect protected species.

Dr O'Toole refers to bats that are evident in and around the Hervey Rd area and which can be seen flying over the playing field. In determining the planning application therefore the Council will need to have regard to Natural England's advice in relation to assessing the impacts of the development on bats. This will involve the applicant, which in this case is Royal Borough of Greenwich, undertaking survey reports and providing mitigation plans.

Although the results will be part of the detailed consideration of the planning application I can advise that an ecological assessment including a phase I habitat survey for the whole Hervey Road Sports Field site has been commissioned. Additionally there will be bat surveys undertaken of the whole site and a flood lighting design report submitted to support the planning application. There will also be ecological mitigation and enhancement measures proposed as recommended by a suitably qualified ecologist.

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I am grateful to Dr O'Toole and the Kidbrooke Resident's Association for having submitted information relating to bat activity on the site and I hope she and they understand that Royal Borough of Greenwich take its obligations to protected species and biodiversity very seriously.

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**16. Question from Kevin Gilligan, Kidbrooke, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Sustainability**

With reference to the proposed Hervey Road Sports Field development, Greenwich Council requested a traffic/parking survey to be done on a Friday and Saturday at the height of the summer holiday season, when it states clearly in the Royal Borough of Greenwich guidelines and national guidelines that it should be done during normal working hours of peak traffic.

Can the council confirm who instructed this and what were the costs and which source of public funds were used to pay for this survey and if a replacement survey will be carried out, as confirmed by Denise Scott McDonald at a recent residents meeting on the 17th of October and what are the likely costs and who will pay for the second survey and will the council now be resubmitting their planning application on this project as the data provided by the first traffic survey provides misleading data?

**Reply -**

I thank Mr Gilligan for his question.

Ecology

An ecology survey was carried out in March 2016 covering the proposed construction site area. The survey highlighted the need to be sympathetic with the use of external lighting in relation to any foraging bats; it did conclude that the proposed works would not impact upon the ecological functionality of the local landscape. Our externally appointed Ecologist has subsequently reviewed the case law in respect of Local Planning Authorities and European Protected Species, which states that the LPA should only consider refusing planning permission where there is a breach of Article 12. Article 12 prohibits;

- a. All forms of deliberate capture or killing of specimens of these species in the wild;
- b. Deliberate disturbance;
- c. Deliberate destruction or taking of eggs
- d. Deterioration or destruction of breeding sites or resting place.

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The proposed development will not involve any form activities defined under sections (a), (c) or (d).

On the question of Point (b) we are not planning to undertake any deliberate disturbance of species

In summary the proposed development is not significant in terms of scale or extent and consequently based upon advice from our ecologist it has been assessed by officer that no further surveys are required at this stage. Notwithstanding this having had further discussion with the Royal Borough of Greenwich Sustainability I intend to commission an additional survey to cover the rest of the site (field and trees).

Traffic

The survey carried out in August highlighted surplus street parking spaces of 411 and 398 on a Friday and Saturday. We intend additional parking counts which will be commissioned to take place outside of the summer holiday period and this data will be made available. The anticipated peak times of activity for the playing fields will not coincide with weekday and evening peak transport periods.

Costs

The cost of surveys is met from the project budget;

Ecology survey £1,050

Transport survey and assessment £11,315

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**17. Question from Kevin Gilligan, Kidbrooke, to Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Culture, Creative Industries and Community Wellbeing**

With reference to the proposed Hervey Road Sports Field development:

The Assistant Director, Community Services, confirmed at a public meeting on the 27th of September that even though the planning permission for the Hervey Road Sports Field planning application has not been granted, the council will proceed with drainage improvement works very soon. Local residents do not believe the field is in need of drainage improvements. Will the council confirm what the costs of this drainage work are and that it will not be proceeding prior to planning agreement?

**Reply –**

Thank you for the question.

The project budget has £30K allocated for the drainage works and the provision of a cricket square.

The work was programmed for completion in the September/October growing season however in light of public opinion and local sensitivities it was decided to postpone this work until the next growing season following the planning period.

A survey of the field was completed by specialist turf consultants in Oct 2011. This identified a significant clay element and increased wetness within the topsoil and subsoil at the southern end of the site and hence the need for improved drainage.

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**18. Question from Anna Townend, Blackheath, to Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Culture, Creative Industries and Community Wellbeing**

Would it be possible to improve the access for residents to the planning documentation at the Woolwich Centre?

Currently files of planning applications are stored in filing cabinets near the entrance to the library opposite Love Lane. The larger table on which the files could be opened has gone, the space now being occupied by a large yellow cabinet against the wall. The small circular tables remaining are usually occupied by school children and parents engaged in school work, or by students from language colleges. Provision for both these sections of the community is already elsewhere in the library satisfactorily.

**Reply -**

Thank you for the question.

We always welcome feedback from library users. Woolwich library is one of the busiest libraries in the Country and receives over 1 million visits per year. Due to the high usage, many areas of the library are busy with people, reading, studying or taking part in activities. I will ask GLL, as the library operator to look in to this issue with a view to ensuring there is suitable space to review planning applications going forward.

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**19. Question from Anna Townend, Blackheath, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Sustainability**

The former Woolwich Library had full research and planning documentation facilities now no longer available. Current community participation across the age groups, and therefore protection of the Borough's built and natural environment would be enhanced, would it not, by improved facilities and access?

**Reply –**

I thank Ms Townend for her question.

The new Woolwich Library is one of the most successful in the country, receiving over 1 million visits per year. Library usage in Royal Greenwich is increasing whereas the national trend shows a decline. Our family-friendly approach to delivering library service tries to ensure that we provide spaces and places to meet the needs of our all our residents. With specific regard to Woolwich, this library is very busy and we have significant demand for a range of activities and computers and study space is often at a premium. When reviewing the usage of the library we have found that there is not a similar demand to reinstate the previous research facilities that previously existed in the former Woolwich Library. However, we will request that GLL review the current space to ensure that planning applications are easily accessible.

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**20. Question from Paul Callanan, Charlton, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Housing and Anti-Poverty**

In June you the council sent notices out to all local council tenant threatening rent increases under the Pay to Stay provision of the 2016 Housing and Planning Act.

The government have not yet published the regulations governing means testing. Bodies such the National Federation of ALMO's have said that this means that the act will be ready for implementation by April. Theresa Pearce, shadow housing minister and local MP also urged councils to pause on the implementation of the act to consider the effects on council and social tenants. This position was accepted by Labour Party conference.

In light of all this does the council not think it was massively jumping the gun by sending out that letter?

**Reply -**

I am grateful to Mr Callanan for providing me with another opportunity to state the Council's position that we are fundamentally and vehemently opposed to the Housing and Planning Act.

Overall the Royal Borough will only implement those aspects of the Act where there is no discretion to do otherwise. We have not implemented the Act nor will we do so until the regulations have been received and considered.

The Royal Borough's Housing Service has over 11,000 tenants who are not in receipt of benefits and could be potentially affected by the legislation. Officers have written to those tenants advising them of the implications of the Act insofar as they are known at present.

As a responsible social landlord we have a responsibility to notify our tenants of legislative change affecting them and would be doing them a disservice if we failed to do so. A number of Local Authorities have taken the same course of action. However, officers are clear that they must interpret the regulations, when they are published, with the aim of lawfully excluding as many households as possible from the provisions of Pay to Stay.

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I would urge households to co-operate with officers, when the time comes for the implementation of Pay to Stay, in order to protect their own interests. Officers will seek to minimise the impact of the Act, through the provision of advice and support and by use of their discretion when allowed to do so. The Council has provided a telephone information hotline which has been well received.

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**21. Question from Paul Callanan, Charlton, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Housing and Anti-Poverty**

In Islington the council sent letters to tenants calling them to a public meeting. At the meeting the Councillors outlined ways in which they could avoid implementing parts of the act like pay to stay. They also stated they would continue to issue secure tenancies. Councillors also said they would be active in building a mass campaign against the bill. Furthermore many council members have got involved in campaigning against the act. Would Greenwich council now consider following this example?

**Reply -**

I thank Mr Callanan for his question.

The Cabinet and Labour Group believe that the Housing and Planning Act and the programme of welfare reforms implemented by the Government represent an unprecedented attack on social housing and are regressive; punitive policies which disadvantage the poorest sections of our community.

My colleagues and I know from our casework the hardship and stress experienced by residents and these difficulties will be exacerbated by the Housing and Planning Act.

We remain fundamentally and vehemently opposed to the Housing and Planning Act and have set out our position throughout the consultation period, making representations to the DCLG and through London Councils. We have said that the timescale for implementation is unrealistic and the cost of implementation is likely to be more than the Government can expect to receive in revenue, certainly in the first year. The Government is in no doubt about our view and that of other Labour Authorities.

There is a legal duty on Local Authorities to introduce Pay to Stay and a clear indication from the Government that it will be from April 2017. However, as you state the regulations which were due to be published in the summer are yet to be issued. These regulations will provide the detailed statutory guidance for local authorities on the implementation of the Act. I sincerely hope that the delay along with the appointment of a new Prime Minister will cause the Government to revise its position.

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Any campaign that we as Members may wish to support must be distinct from the action officers have to take, in order to prepare for the implementation of the Act

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**22. Question from Jenny Dyson, Charlton, to Councillor David Gardner, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care**

With regard to Sustainability and Transformation Plans, is the Council aware that these can have a disastrous effect on the residents of Greenwich?

**Reply -**

I thank you for your question.

The Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) are a vehicle that the NHS has adopted to help to plan for improvements and financial sustainability. Across England, there are plans being drawn up on sub regional foot prints, larger than an individual CCG or Council. There are no parallel governance structures and the STP planning process does not have any statutory organisational footing. There are potential opportunities for looking at issues at this scale; e.g. improved workforce planning, greater population based approaches, more localised handling of tertiary care. However, there are potential risks too, where local preferences and differences are obscured in attempting to save money and rationalise services. Councils across the six boroughs of South East London are working together to engage in the STP process, although this has not been completely successful so far.

South East London starts from a more advanced position, because of the adoption of an over-arching strategy in 2014 “*Our Healthier South East London*” with its focus on community care and local networks, which was subject to extensive scrutiny by the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee of the six Boroughs and by the Health and Wellbeing Boards. The STP develops this adding a financial plan. The council believes that the local NHS requires greater investment as outlined in the motion carried by full Council on 27 July 2016. We also believe that the STP process should be more transparent and that the draft STP should be published and subject to full pre-decision scrutiny. Royal Greenwich will always put the needs of its residents first and will seek to ensure that local people get the best outcomes from the Health and Social care system, regardless of the chosen planning mechanism.