

# COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS

### I **Question from Stella Bye, SE10, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

Residents on the streets most affected by huge volume of rat racing in West Greenwich are very thankful for the Council's support over the years. As well as the increasing levels of noise, property damage, pollution and injuries to pets suffered on these streets over the years and due to its unique location next to Greenwich Park, pedestrian, cyclist, school children safety are at the forefront.

The West Greenwich Modal Filter scheme was implemented on 20th August to a tempered reception and a rather disruptive first day as is typical for any change. Since then, there has been a marked improvement in the safety and quality of life for visitors and locals and rat racing traffic is now more balanced throughout the Greenwich West Ward area and with many remaining on the A-roads where they belong.

This scheme is unique and certainly expected to be challenging as it is one of the few brave schemes which seeks to address issues in the area as a whole rather than on a piecemeal basis which would have push the problems fully onto neighbouring streets.

Please can the Cabinet Member clarify how the Council will weigh the views of residents on the streets most impacted by rat racing volumes in the six-month and 12-month consultations against those less affected.

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Please can the Council confirm that the West Greenwich Traffic scheme will be excluded from any reviews of traffic measures implemented since March 2020 as it is a scheme which has been through three engagement events in 2017, 2018, 2019 with the latest event being a Council-wide online and local consultation, evidence of community and business engagement and consultation are a 900+ response on-line engagement, workshop at the Woolwich Centre, four public engagement sessions at a local school, a public meeting attended by councillors at the Greenwich fan museum, a petition from Maidstone Hill deliberated at Highways Committee and a network of

street co-ordinators have contributed to development of the options for engagement and trial implementation.

**2 Question from Bob Yates, SE10, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

The Steering Group of the Hyde Vale Residents Association thanks the Council for its concern for the safety and quality of the environment for residents of the Hills and Vales, and its readiness to take prompt action in support of this.

How will the benefits and issues arising from the scheme and any desirable changes, be evaluated over the next twelve months?

**3 Question from Tony Butler, SE10, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

May we congratulate our Councillors, Mehboob Khan, Aidan Smith and Maureen O'Mara for their success in arranging for Maidenstone Hill/Dutton Street to become a low traffic neighbourhood, and ask what representations the Council have received in support of that action?

**4 Question from Mike Sixsmith, SE10, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

In its consultation on the West Greenwich traffic reduction measures, how will the Council give due weight to feedback from residents on the streets that have been affected by through traffic? Neighbours in Winforton Street, Point Hill and West Grove have told me how pleased and grateful they are that, since 20th August, they have not been at the mercy of surges of speeding traffic and abusive drivers. They are desperate to retain the benefits of a safer, healthier and quieter environment (which should in due time encourage more residents to walk within the area). However, they are apprehensive about the weight of objections, partly from residents who are unaffected by rat-running and partly from people from outside this area, who wish to avoid the main roads and who believe that their own convenience gives them a right to blight our residential streets.

**5 Question from Pip O’Byrne, SE10, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

As a resident on Maze Hill I am concerned on the increased levels of traffic we are seeing. Traffic is backed up in the mornings to the Westcombe Park Road circle, right down to the Trafalgar Road lights. It is static to very slow moving up to 10.00-11.00 every week day. Frustrated drivers are often speeding down the wrong side of the road as are frustrated drivers driving up the hill - unable to pass due to parking and static cars. I have seen motorcyclists using the footpath on the park side of the road. It is often hazardous for pedestrians and cyclists alike. Pollution levels must be rising with the increase of traffic volume. It is not a safe walking or cycling space for children going to and from school. Maze Hill is a main walking route to John Roan school. I urgently request a review and an explanation of the Council’s traffic management scheme in the East Greenwich area. I would like to know how the council is monitoring the situation. I would also like to know if the Council plans to engage and consult with Maze Hill and residents in the surrounding streets.

**Composite Reply (Questions 1 - 5) -**

I thank the questioners for their questions

Following extensive engagement with local residents, including 855 responses to the public meetings and online survey late last year, a trial traffic reduction scheme was developed and implemented on the residential roads to the west of Greenwich Park on 20<sup>th</sup> August. This has been enabled by the availability of DfT’s Emergency Active Travel Funding.

The trial scheme is implemented under an experimental traffic order, meaning that consultation is undertaken post-implementation when stakeholders can comment in light of actual benefits and impacts. The online consultation ([www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200266/roadworks\\_and\\_traffic/2075/greenwich\\_liveable\\_neighbourhood](http://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200266/roadworks_and_traffic/2075/greenwich_liveable_neighbourhood)) is the means by which all stakeholders are requested to comment on the scheme. During this six-month consultation period the measures will also be reviewed based on surveys and site observation by the Council.

Traffic counts before and after implementation are being undertaken on the roads of West Greenwich and Westcombe/Maze Hill. The latter are to assess the level of traffic displacement. It is noted that roads in this area are

currently experiencing significant congestion. However, this is likely to be due to a combination of causes, including traffic levels returning to pre-Covid levels, trial traffic reduction measures in West Greenwich and Greenwich Park and congestion on Trafalgar Road, arising primarily from TfL's current construction of the temporary Greenwich to Woolwich cycleway.

The best solution to congestion in Maze Hill and Westcombe Park is for the Council to secure TfL funding in October to develop and deliver a traffic management scheme that reduces through traffic rat running through the area.

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### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**6 Question from Andrew Blundy, SE18, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

In 1936 there was a serious traffic congestion problem in New York. The then Mayor, Fiorello La Guardia, opened three motorways saying they would solve traffic problems “for generations”. Three weeks later the motorways were gridlocked, so the Mayor pledged to build 45 more miles of motorway. The Wantagh motorway extension opened in December 1938 but was soon jammed bumper-to-bumper. Traffic experts could not understand where the extra traffic had come from; the other Long Island motorways were as jammed as ever. When the Mayor opened the Triborough Bridge, traffic was estimated at 8 million vehicles a year. Within 3 months, this estimate was revised upwards to 10 million vehicles a year. Road builder Robert Moses built another bridge, the Bronx-Whitehorn bridge – whose four lanes were immediately jammed. There were 6 million extra journeys. Four bridges had connected Long Island with the rest of New York; now six bridges were as congested as the previous four.

In 1967 a second bore was built at Blackwall “to relieve congestion”. Road traffic doubled within a year, and adjoining roads were gridlocked within a decade.

In 1989 an earthquake in San Francisco destroyed two elevated motorways. Within three months traffic had adjusted itself to the new reduced capacity. In June 2020 a report was published, *Silvertown Tunnel: Stop Digging*. It concluded that the Silvertown scheme should be scrapped. Its conclusions – supported by 67 environmentalists (including 4 Greenwich Councillors) – were that Silvertown was inconsistent with the mayor and Greenwich Council’s declaration of a climate emergency, will increase traffic congestion and pollution and will have a disproportionate health impact among the poorest and most disadvantaged in society.

How do you reconcile this overwhelming evidence with Greenwich Council’s refusal unconditionally and unreservedly to condemn the scheme and lobby the Mayor to scrap it?

## **Reply –**

I thank Andrew Blundy for his question.

It is widely accepted that just creating unmanaged new road space results in the release of suppressed demand, leading to more traffic. This affect is known as induced demand.

However, it is equally well accepted that there are various ways to manage new capacity to avoid inducing new demand – supported by evidence from a similar range of experts.

In the case of the Silvertown Tunnel, this is to be achieved through the tolling mechanism. The Development Consent Order that allows Transport for London to develop the tunnel requires it to set tolls at a level that prevents additional traffic from being ‘induced’.

By monitoring this requirement and through its role on the ‘Silvertown Tunnel Implementation Group’ the Royal Borough will work to ensure Transport for London manages its tolls (and any other necessary mitigation measures) to prevent induced demand. The Royal Borough is committed to ensuring TfL delivers on this requirement.

## **COUNCIL**

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**7 Question from Robert Keeling, SE7, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Leader of the Council**

Can Councillor Danny Thorpe confirm that he has the fullest confidence in the Greenwich Islamic Centre (GIC) to run support services for the Syrian families on the Home Office Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) programme in the borough and has he got any concerns?

**Reply -**

I thank Robert Keeling for his question.

Royal Borough of Greenwich have successfully delivered the commitment to resettle 20 Syrian families in the borough. Greenwich Islamic Centre (GIC) are one of the partners involved in providing the resettlement support essential to ensuring families are given the chance to integrate and achieve their goals. GIC are commissioned to provide a range of support to the families that include greeting and settling in to accommodation on arrival; assisting with access to health , education, employment services and ESOL classes for adults; helping with access to legal and advisory services: and encouraging wider integration of the families into the community through a programme of orientation, social and leisure activities .GIC's Service Level Agreement with RBG is monitored on a regular basis by the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) team in conjunction with RBG Legal services and Senior Managers.

## **COUNCIL**

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**8 Question from Alex Economou, SE18, to Councillor Chris Kirby, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources**

Can the Council give an indication of its thinking about the measures it can take to protect its workforce from redundancies in the event that the government imposes a new period of austerity on local government?

**Reply -**

I thank Alex Economou for his question.

The Royal Boroughs primary focus will always be on preserving employment and avoiding the need to make redundancies where possible. Royal Greenwich will initially explore various avenues to achieve savings before consideration is given to reducing the workforce. Royal Greenwich is committed to avoiding redundancies where possible, as such before any decision for redundancy is made consideration will be given in relation to measures for minimising or avoiding redundancies which may include retraining, recruitment freeze and redeployment.

## **COUNCIL**

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**9 Question from Julian Wells, SE3, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Leader of the Council**

Given the expectation of an increase in hardship for many Greenwich residents as a consequence of the deepening recession, has the Council made any plans to develop the mutual aid networks that have come into existence during the Covid crisis into a robust and sustainable community support response?

**Reply -**

I thank Julian Wells for his question.

Greenwich residents responded magnificently during the Covid-19 lockdown period from mid-March to July 2020. A number of formal and informal support groups were established, and new and existing networks were developed, extended and strengthened.

The Council established a highly effective first line response system via a Community Hub utilising staff from across the council and working with community partners such as CACT and GCDA supported by many other organisations including Volunteer Centre Greenwich and MetroGavs.

Greenwich Mutual Aid made early contact with the council and all through the lockdown we worked closely together. In fact Greenwich Mutual Aid made referrals to our Community Hub and they supported GCDA with deliveries amongst other forms of support.

The Community Hub is undergoing a period of review and change as it adapts service delivery to the new normal and this will include working with the full range of excellent local support groups Greenwich is lucky to have on its own doorstep.

There is ongoing work to support the development of resilience in our communities and in our third sector partners including exploring the option of working with our community centres to further develop them as hubs of services, support and advice.

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## PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**10 Question from Victoria Rance, SE3, to Councillor Sarah Merrill,  
Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth**

Has the Rose Garden on Blackwall Lane been sold? What are your intentions with it?

**Reply -**

I thank Victoria Rance for her question.

No, the Rose Garden has not been sold.

The Council does not intend to sell the Rose Garden. Please see the statement [published on Monday](#).

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**11 Question from Giona Fiorentino, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth**

The current climate emergency and recent Covid-19 pandemic have highlighted the dire need to preserve green spaces. Indeed, not only climate catastrophes are happening everywhere in the world as we speak, but as we enter a new phase of the pandemic, to protect small patches of green will help to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of people. Locally and nationally the government is selling the future of the country to property developers as opposed to ensuring accessibility to people who lack communal areas.

Will the Council stand on the side of the local community, maintaining the Rose Garden as a green local asset and the wellbeing of local residents, or will they be complicit in the sale to benefit private interests?

**Reply -**

I thank Giona Fiorentino for her question.

Please see response to Question 10.

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### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**12 Question from John Palmer, SE8, to Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills**

Has the Council undertaken an assessment of the impact of the deepening economic recession on residents of Greenwich, in particular in relation to the expected increase in unemployment?

**Reply -**

I thank John Palmer for his question.

The Council continues to monitor and assess a number of key economic indicators including those that relate to employment and unemployment both at a regional, sub-regional and local level.

The Office for National Statistics show modest changes to headline employment and unemployment rates across the borough, owing to the Government schemes delaying the impact. For the example, the employment rate for Greenwich currently stands at 80% (159,500), headline claimant count unemployment 2020 in Greenwich is 8.3% (16,060) which is an increase from 8.1% (15,405) in July 2020. For the same period in 2019, claimant count in Greenwich was 2.9% (5,730) in August 2019 and 2.8% (5,540) in July 2019. The experimental data on UC (Universal Credit) show London's claims increased by 275,000 (148%) compared to 112% across the UK - showing London has been hit hardest for the period April – June. COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities with women, young people and low-income Londoners disproportionately affected. In Greenwich 12% (2,845) of 18-24 year olds are claiming Universal Credit in August 2020 compared to a lower rate in London of 10.3%. In Greenwich, females have a lower rate of economic activity 76.1% (77,500) than males 84.1% (82,000) and this mirrors closely the London trends, London males are 84.4% economically active and females 73.3%.

Also, in relation to the number of employees in the borough – data available for August show there are currently 41,700 employees in Greenwich that are furloughed on the Job Retention Scheme, which will be phased out in

October 2020. This is an increase on 38,500 furloughed in July and 31,400 in June of this year.

An assessment on those sectors likely to be most impacted due to significantly high number of staff being furloughed include accommodation and food sectors which has been the hardest hit affecting over 75% of staff. This is followed by Arts and Entertainment at 69% - furloughing staff. An increase of 5% for both sectors from July to August 2020. In preparation for the likely surge in unemployment and deepen economic crisis, the council has:

- Established a new Integrated Employment Advice Service which will providing pro-active job brokerage support to those at risk at the end of furlough and provide access to other key services such as Welfare Rights and Housing Support.
- Established a Financial Emergency Taskforce to ensure our we bolster the capacity of our frontline services to enable officers to respond to increase demand and economic needs of residents
- Secure additional Adult Skills Funding from the GLA to enable us to provide training and skills support for people that have recently become unemployed.
- Maximising the availability of external funding and realigning existing to align with COVID recovery priorities
- Supported the governments Job recovery plan, including increasing access to apprenticeships – launching a funding for local employers, support to businesses to create temporary jobs through the Kickstart scheme and JET – building on our Work and Health Programme

Officers continue to work with the Mayor of London, London Councils and our Local London sub-regional partnership area which covers 8 London authorities in North and South East London to assess impact and plan for recovery. The emerging London Recovery Plan has a series of missions to help Londoners access good work, use the green economy to drive inclusive growth, to revitalise town centres and high streets and support digital inclusion for all. This will be delivered by maximising Government support and existing programmes, and where additional funding is required, to lobby Government for additional resources to support London's recovery.

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**13 Question from Majella Anning, SE8, to Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills**

Given the Council's commitment to Community Wealth Building strategies and the Cooperative innovations model, can it give an indication of its view on how these approaches can be used to strengthen a community response to the deepening recession?

**Reply -**

I thank Majella Anning for her question.

The Council is a strong advocate for Community Wealth Building and the Cooperative movement as models for strengthening the local economy by ensuring that local spend is retained in the borough to support local businesses and benefit the wider community in ways that support jobs and inclusive growth.

The Council is ensuring that its spend on regeneration, capital programmes and Greenwich Builds – new council house building 7 is retained locally where possible. We are helping local businesses to win contracts through the Building Legacies Programme which aims to make small, medium, and micro sized enterprises more competitive by improving their knowledge of procurement and supply chain requirements. In the last 12 months this programme has supported 114 businesses and created 30 jobs. Local businesses have secured a total of £2,300,600 worth of contracts, including contracts for the Woolwich Estates programme; Thames Tideway Tunnel, and Kidbrooke Primary School and Shop Front Improvement Scheme.

Our successful E business Programme (EB2) provides a flexible and responsive programme of e-business support for businesses to improve their knowledge, skills and application of digital business tools. This has been particularly important during the pandemic as more businesses have taken to home working and switched to online services to boost and supplement lost revenue due to temporary closures during lockdown. From January 2018, this programme has supported 271 business and supplied 432 consultancy

days, 440 training days resulting in an increase in turnover for businesses of £10,072,500 creating 125 jobs and safeguarding a further 747 jobs.

More recently the Council has joined forces with Visit Greenwich and South East London Chamber of Commerce to plan and the “Its Time” programme of events aimed at bringing our communities together again and encouraging residents into our high streets and local tourist attractions, taking advantage of offers from businesses across the borough. This joint initiative is enormously helpful for an important sector of the local economy badly hit by the lockdown.

Community wealth building is a key focus of the work officers are undertaking with partners and stakeholders to develop a new Economic Development Strategy and recovery plan for the borough. As the economic crisis unfolds, this work is increasingly important and will look to ensure the spend from our anchor institutions, businesses and community and voluntary sector partners is retained in the borough to support local businesses, create jobs and strengthens the local economy.

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### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**14 Question from Simon Pirani, SE18, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

Given that the borough councils of Newham, Hackney, Southwark and Lewisham (but not yet Greenwich) have publicly opposed the Silvertown tunnel project; that the tunnel would aggravate air pollution problems in Greenwich, and is incompatible with carbon emissions targets needed to prevent dangerous global warming (see the *Stop Digging* report by the Transport Action Network); that the crisis in TfL's finances and reduced long-term traffic projections, caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, make the reasons given to build the tunnel even more perverse than they were before; and that the MPs Matthew Pennycook and Lyn Brown have called on the Mayor to institute a "comprehensive review" of the tunnel – is it not politically urgent for the Council officially to vote to oppose the tunnel, and urge the GLA to cancel it without further delay?

**Reply –**

I thank Simon Pirani for his question.

The Development Consent Order that allows Transport for London (TfL) to develop and operate the Silvertown Tunnel was made by the Secretary of State for Transport. There is no legal avenue for the Council to oppose the Tunnel at this stage.

The decision to continue the development of the Tunnel does not lie with the Royal Borough. That decision is made by the Mayor of London. The Labour Group wrote to the Mayor of London, asking him to pause work on the Silvertown Tunnel, and review the alternative options to reduce congestion and pollution around the Blackwall Tunnel. The Mayor did not agree.

He explained the range of road-user charging, public transport and other options appraised. He reiterated his view that the Tunnel is the best option to address significant existing disruption, congestion and environmental impacts in the area.

The Development Consent Order places binding requirements on TfL to manage and mitigate the Tunnel's traffic impact. TfL is also required to run at least 20 buses per hour in each direction through the tunnels during peak periods.

The existing problems of disruption, congestion and public transport connectivity will only get worse. A walking and cycling only solution would not address these issues.

We will continue to call TfL to minimise the negative impacts of the Silvertown Tunnel, and to maximise benefits for walking, cycling and public transport use.

The affordability of the Silvertown Tunnel in the current environment is a question for the Mayor of London and TfL. However, TfL has appointed a consortium to design, build, finance and maintain the Silvertown Tunnel. TfL will only start paying the consortium once the tunnel is open and it expects the user charge to fund those payments. If TfL stopped the Tunnel's development this would leave TfL with contractual and financial liabilities towards the consortium: it would not release the funding for other projects. As such, the financial impact of COVID-19 does not appear likely to affect the financial position of the Silvertown Tunnel.

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### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**15 Question from Karen Janody, SE18, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

As I fell to pieces watching David Attenborough's #ExtinctionTheFacts, which makes it explicitly clear that our destruction and exploitation of nature is leading to the extinction of flora and fauna that we had assumed were a part of our present and future, and which threatens our very existence, I couldn't help feel a similar sense of despair at the continued loss of mature trees and green spaces in Greenwich. I take as an example the proposed sale of Rose Garden, Blackwall Lane, London on the Greenwich Peninsula.

If the solutions of today and tomorrow lie in our decision making now, why is the Council not taking their own declaration of a climate emergency seriously and acting at every opportunity to right wrongs? Or was it merely a marketing fad?

**Reply -**

I thank Karen Janody for her question.

To build on the commitment made in the Climate Emergency declaration, the Council has commissioned an expert review of borough's emissions, and published an [evidence base report](#).

Although the emissions arising from 'Land use and Land Use Change' have not been quantified for the borough, the evidence base report states that the Council should where possible take action to preserve green spaces within the borough and consider expanding or creating new green space. The Council has undertaken additional tree planting in recent years and are working on proposals for further additional tree planting meadow creation in our parks and open spaces. This is alongside our street tree planting programme and for example our programme of pocket parks in East Greenwich.

This does however need to be considered alongside the pressing need for new affordable homes to meet the unprecedented demand from our waiting list and those living in temporary accommodation. On this basis each case is considered on its merit.

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### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**16 Question from Karen Janody, SE18, to Councillor Chris Kirby, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources**

With Council finances being under increased duress coupled with the need to maintain, protect and develop services, would the Council have the leadership to let residents participate in the allocation of the Council budget?

Examples of successful participative budget and active citizen democracy can be found in Torres, Venezuela, or again Porto Alegre in Brazil and even Leicester east in the UK ( Nesta: Your Local Budget [https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/your\\_local\\_budget.pdf](https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/your_local_budget.pdf) )

A good pilot would be citizen assemblies to make public use of the £1M park and open spaces budget in the borough (not just respond to an online consultation).

**Reply -**

I thank Karen Janody for her question.

The Council is committed to engaging all residents with how the budget is spent. Plans for the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy, include public consultation on the proposals later this year. This is a vital part of the budget setting process and we encourage views and comments ahead of setting the budget for 2021/22 in February 2021.

As well as top level budget setting, resident opinion is integral to smaller spending decisions. For example, the £1 million parks investment scheme referred to in the question has not just been consulted on via online survey, but also by paper-based response and in face-to-face forums. More than 2,500 people responded to share their views, many more than could be accommodated through a single method of consultation. The Council has also recently consulted on changes to bin collections, detailing the financial implications of reduced collections and improving recycling rates. More than 4,000 residents responded to this survey, which was again conducted online,

through paper-based responses and by engaging with community groups. Their opinion guided the proposals which were then approved by Cabinet.

The Council is continually looking to increase engagement with residents in the budget process and will consider other options in the future.

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### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**17 Question from Jessica Currie, SE18, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

How long will it take to rectify the glaring mistake of the LTN planters on Aberly Street (Plumstead SE18) being wrongly placed forcing drivers to drive around in a square in order to access the High Street car park?

**Reply –**

I thank Jessica Currie for her question.

The modal filter on Aberly Street is deliberately located at the junction with Plumstead High Street so as to create a traffic-free waiting environment, in particular for less confident cyclists, at the western end of the 2km traffic-calmed cycleway running all the way to Abbey Wood.

At this location cyclists need time to wait before manoeuvring across traffic on Plumstead High St to either turn right to travel westbound on the High St (in heavier traffic) until they can join the cycleway outside Plumstead station or cross the High St to access the quieter road network starting at Galloson Road.

Signage is installed to direct drivers to access the Aberly Street car park via Garibaldi St, just a short detour for drivers.

The modal filter is therefore located to prioritise cyclist safety over driver convenience. The results of the ongoing consultation in regard to the experimental traffic order will be reviewed in due course to decide whether the measure is amended or made permanent.

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### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**18 Question from Jessica Currie, SE18, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

On my commute to work from Plumstead to Lee I have seen about 30 of the small trees planted this year dead or nearly dead including nearly the whole avenue of trees planted in Sutcliffe park parallel with Eltham Road. Can I ask how much has been spent on these trees and why a regular watering scheme is not in place? For information: I have been watering 3 trees near my house to keep them alive.

**Reply -**

I thank Jessica Currie for her question.

The Council recognises the significant contribution trees make to our borough and we have hundreds of thousands of trees in our parks and woodlands. We also manage and maintain over 14,000 street trees borough wide.

Last year the Council planted over 500 new street trees (which is higher than normal as a result of a successful bid for external funding).

Each year, following planting, arrangements are in place to help ensure trees establish. This includes regular watering and also inviting nearby residents to help water young trees outside their properties. This scheme is successful and I appreciate all the help residents can give and thank Ms Currie for watering the tree near her home.

Overall the level of establishment is high. Typically, over 80 % of new planted street trees are established but, in some cases, planting shock or other reasons may mean a tree dies.

This year the watering arrangements were disrupted in the early stages of Covid-19 pandemic whilst teams adjusted to new ways of working and to some extent, staff shortages. This combined with a period of very warm and dry weather placing additional stress on new trees. I do therefore expect a

higher level of early life losses will occur this year but it is still too early to tell the full extent.

The planting scheme in Sutcliffe Park was undertaken in partnership between the charity 'Trees for Cities', the Park Friends Group and the Council. Although initially maintained and watered, temporary reduced staffing levels caused by Covid 19 meant that watering was disrupted, which, in conjunction with the extremely hot weather earlier in the year has unfortunately meant that a number of these trees have failed. I am not in a position to provide costs for this scheme as the majority of costs were incurred by our partner organisations.

The Council does have separate plans to plant a number of larger standard trees along the boundary of the park car park later this year. These will be included in the general watering programme until they are established.

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### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**19 Question from Maria Freeman, SE18, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities**

In the summer, a [survey](#) was held asking residents about how to spend £1m on parks. When will the results of the survey be made available, and how will the results inform the expenditure plans, given that survey completion rates may not correlate to the parks of most need of investment, such as those in the east of the Borough e.g. Plumstead Gardens and Bostall Gardens?

**Reply -**

I thank Maria Freeman for her question.

The results of the survey will be made public with the Council's Cabinet papers for the Cabinet meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020. We will also provide information on the results of the survey on the Council's Website and in Greenwich Info at the same time.

The results of the survey (that also includes feedback from the Greenwich Parks Forum and Park Friend Groups) will help inform how the £1m investment will be allocated, along with other factors including professional knowledge and advice from Council officers, demographics and indices of multi-deprivation. The consideration of these various factors will help ensure that sites that are in most need are included for consideration for investment.

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### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**20 Question from Maria Freeman, SE18, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

As part of the [Cycleway for Plumstead to Abbey Wood](#), planters (modal filters) have been installed outside the small Plumstead High Street Car park (in Abery Street), which means that drivers have to go all the way round the block to access the car park. This is increasing emissions, adding traffic to the back streets and contributing to more traffic at the junction. Feedback was given on this issue last month but no action has yet been taken. When will the planters be moved back a few metres in order to support access to the High Street, which helps our High Street businesses and will the Cabinet Member confirm his support for the Car Park, given its importance to our local traders?

**Reply -**

I thank Maria Freeman for her question.

Please see response to Question 17

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**21 Question from Karin Tearle, SE10, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

The Silvertown Tunnel is incompatible with the Labour party's proposals for a green recovery and the boroughs of Lewisham, Southwark, Hackney and Newham have publicly opposed the scheme while Matthew Pennycook and Lyn Brown MPs have publicly called on the Mayor to carry out a comprehensive review of the project, will you now unite with them and make Greenwich Council's opposition public and do what is right for the people of Greenwich?

**Reply -**

I thank Karin Tearle for her question.

Please see response to Question 14

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23 SEPTEMBER 2020

### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**22 Question from Karin Tearle, SE10, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

I have written letters voicing my concerns about the Silvertown Tunnel and it took you over 2 months to respond when time is of the essence. There is clear evidence that Covid-19 is exacerbated by pollution and that this new tunnel will further aggravate health problems. In such a health crisis I ask if you have yourself written to the Mayor of London as you advised me to do and will you now respond to my letter of the 7th August?

**Reply -**

I thank Karin Tearle for her question.

I apologise for the delay in my response to your letters. Responding to the Coronavirus COVID-19 emergency has been a huge challenge. The Council has been working hard to adapt its services and help people all over Royal Greenwich. In transport terms, we have delivered a huge range of schemes at high speed: to make our town centres safe for social distancing; and to encourage walking and cycling as an alternative to public transport at this time. As well as responding to the current health crisis, these measures have focused on active travel, and will help to fight the ongoing threat posed by pollution and inactivity. I apologise if our responses have been slower at this difficult time. Please be assured that all correspondence will be responded to.

As I have said in answer to previous questions, the Labour Group wrote to the Mayor of London, asking him to pause work on the Silvertown Tunnel and review the alternative options to reduce congestion and pollution around the Blackwall Tunnel. The Mayor refused this request, restated his commitment to the scheme and completed the contract to deliver the Tunnel.

At this point the best thing for Royal Greenwich is to ensure the implementation of the scheme reflects our needs. We have maintained our close engagement with the project throughout the emergency period. We will continue to ensure Transport for London (and its contractor) meet the

requirements placed upon them to minimise any negative impacts on Royal Greenwich.

## **COUNCIL**

**23 SEPTEMBER 2020**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**23 Question from Shaun Slator, SE18, to Councillor Sarah Merrill,  
Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth**

How many uninhabited properties has the Council compulsorily purchased in the last 24 months and how many are still uninhabited?

**Reply -**

I thank Shaun Slator for his question.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has not compulsorily purchased any properties in the last 24 months.

## **COUNCIL**

**23 SEPTEMBER 2020**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**24 Question from Shaun Slator, SE18, to Councillor Jackie Smith, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Enforcement**

Why is the Greenwich Council Noise Team advising residents to dial 101 to deal with residential noise problems when Section 80 of the EPA 1990 clearly states it is the Council's responsibility?

**Reply -**

I thank Shaun Slator for his question.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 does allow the Council to take formal action if satisfied that a statutory nuisance exists, and in these circumstances, we are the most appropriate enforcement authority to contact. However, every individual service request must be dealt with on its own merits and a duty officer will assess the circumstances based upon the information provided by the resident.

In most cases this will involve a visit by an officer to carry out an assessment to determine if the noise is deemed a statutory nuisance. On the first occasion that the existence of a statutory noise nuisance is established we will contact those responsible in writing to bring the matter to their attention. If this initial action is unsuccessful and further instances of unreasonable noise are witnessed, enforcement action can then be taken. This approach is in accordance with our escalating enforcement policy.

Many residents are seeking an immediate response and resolution to the noise problem that they are experiencing, unfortunately this is not always possible as the Council does not have resources to provide a 24-hour service and therefore focuses on times of peak demand. Currently the Noise team offer a visiting service during normal office hours (9-5) and additionally in the evenings on Thursday (8pm - 1am), Friday and Saturday (8pm - 2am), and Sunday (8pm-1am).

Residents may sometimes be advised to call the police for assistance and some examples are included below:

- Where the noise is emanating from a large scale Unauthorised Music Event, or on the street/public place. In these circumstances both the Police and Noise Team will need to work in partnership and a protocol is in place to manage this.
- Limits on the number of people that can meet socially have changed. From Monday 14 September groups of more than 6 meeting socially (when meeting friends and family that do not live together, or are not in a support bubble) is against the law. The police have the powers to enforce these legal limits. If the noise is a result of a gathering that does not comply with this new guidance the Police will be the main enforcing authority but may work with the Noise Team.
- If the offending noise gives rise to concerns that someone may be at risk, for example shouting or the sounds of objects being thrown or breaking (such that you might believe domestic violence is occurring).

I note that you have recently engaged with the Noise Service. If you would like to follow up on an individual case, you can contact Mr Stephen Lewis to assist you. Stephen is the Team Manager and can be contacted at [Stephen.lewis@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.lewis@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)

## **COUNCIL**

**23 SEPTEMBER 2020**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**25 Question from Dr Carol O'Toole, SE3, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth**

In view of the borough wide Climate Emergency, Covid Pandemic, and the illegal levels of Air Pollution in East Greenwich, will the Council place a moratorium on the disposal and development of all Public Green Open Spaces?

**Reply -**

I thank Dr Carol O'Toole for her question.

I would like to assure Dr O'Toole that the Council recognises the tension between new homes and green spaces and our Council house building programme has built on brownfield sites wherever possible, including many sites of mainly disused garages.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich values its green assets and the importance of these to community life and to biodiversity.

## COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**26 Question from Patrick Ives, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth**

The Rose Garden on Blackwall lane is important to the health and well-being of the residents of East Greenwich. The Royal Borough of Greenwich's recent document '[Towards a Greener Royal Greenwich - Green Infrastructure Study 2017](#)', highlighted Peninsula Ward as an area 'deficient in access to a range of open space' (Open Space Findings, paragraph 1.23)

In the light of this, will the Council now reconsider the attempt to sell-off the Rose Garden and instead invest some of the large amount of CIL money that has been generated locally in improving this neglected green space?

**Reply -**

I thank Patrick Ives for his question.

Please see response to Question 10

## **COUNCIL**

**23 SEPTEMBER 2020**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**27 Question from Paula Pearson, SE10, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

There has been much publicity around the fact that the the Silvertown tunnel will increase pollution in Greenwich, an area with already high pollution levels. In addition it's clear that many residents, four other boroughs and our own MP are opposed to the tunnel. Given the harm this could do to the health of Greenwich residents, when will our own Council vote to oppose the tunnel and urge for its cancellation? Practically, morally, financially, it makes no sense

**Reply -**

I thank Paula Pearson for her question.

Please see response to Question 14

## COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**28 Question from Sheila Keeble, SE10, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth**

The current attempt to sell-off the Rose Garden in Blackwall Lane has highlighted the Byzantine nature of the procedure for objectors. Could Councillors assure residents of the Borough that the following aspects of the process will be re-examined urgently:

- Any future proposed disposal of public land will be publicised in *Greenwich Info* as well as *Weekender* and that proper Site Notices are put up in the surrounding area?
- Objectors can submit responses by email, not only by post and that The Woolwich Centre will accept hand delivered submissions?
- There is clear information about who is making the final decision?
- The outcome of the process is also properly publicised including any decision not to dispose of public land so that local residents know whether they can make better use of neglected spaces?

#### **Reply –**

I thank Sheila Keeble for her question.

Taking the points in turn

- The Council used to publish notices of this sort in '*Greenwich Info*' but the government forbids us now from doing this. It is government policy that Local Authorities have to publish notices in an independent newspaper.
- Objectors can submit responses via email as well as by post usually. Submissions by post has been preferred because it ensures that all correspondence is correctly received and recorded. There is always a risk that emails can be lost in electronic transmission which can occur with spam & content filters.
- The notice is the first step in the process for consideration by elected Members. This is standard Council procedure. In the event a disposal had been progressed it would have been a Cabinet decision.
- The decision has been published on the Council's website in the usual way.

## COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**29 Question from Charlie Rome, SE7, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

Work has commenced on the controversial Silvertown Tunnel project, a scheme that proposed to put two tunnels worth of traffic down the single set of approach roads that run through this borough. The southbound roads already filled to capacity near Eltham in the evening rush hour - a capacity/traffic volume issue, NOT a tunnel resilience issue.

Almost all mitigations that were initially suggested to prevent an increase in the volume of road traffic (e.g. DLR extension) have been cancelled, and the only remaining mitigation, tolling both tunnels, this Council has no oversight of, and can be removed by an incoming administration in City Hall.

Need I remind councillors that the best case scenario for traffic predictions has no overall improvement to air quality across the whole project, but actually worsens pollution in several parts of Greenwich Borough, including in areas near our schools.

With MPs of affected areas, including Matthew Pennycook, formally writing to the Mayor of London to seek an urgent review of the project in light of the impact of the Covid19 crisis on TfL finances, isn't it also time for Royal Borough of Greenwich Council to also formally oppose this expensive and polluting project, and to also use all available measures to bring pressure on City Hall to commit to review it before anymore construction takes place?"

**Reply -**

I thank Charlie Rome for his question.

I have answered the element of your question about the Council calling for the Tunnel to be reconsidered in my response to previous questions.

However, I would like to respond to the element of your question about the oversight of traffic monitoring and mitigation separately here.

There are a number of safeguards in place to ensure traffic impacts are properly managed:

- The Development Consent Order that allows Transport for London to develop the tunnel requires it to set tolls at a level that prevents significant additional traffic from being generated by the Tunnel.
- The Monitoring and Mitigation Strategy set out by Transport for London is designed to ensure that traffic, and the associated congestion and pollution, are not significantly affected. This includes providing further mitigation where necessary.

These documents cannot be changed by the Mayor or Transport for London without formal approval by the Secretary of State.

The Royal Borough has a formal role on the 'Silvertown Tunnel Implementation Group' which will allow us to help ensure Transport for London delivers on these requirements.

These are important and fixed safeguards. We will continue our work to ensure Transport for London meets these requirements.

## COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**30 Question from Kate Middleton, SE10, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

Will the Council follow Matthew Pennycook MP's lead and raise a formal motion asking Sadiq Khan to halt the Silvertown road tunnel until it is properly reviewed in the light of recent events and research findings? The review to include:

A re-examination of the financial case, in light of changing travel patterns.

The negative impact the tunnel will have on greenhouse gas emissions and climate change in the light of recent research findings (Transport Network Alliance, *The Tunnel is in a Hole so Stop Digging*, June 2020 . Simon Pirani, Senior Research Fellow, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies)

The substantial contribution to air pollution, especially particulate matter from the large trucks using the new tunnel, to the severity of Covid19 (ref *Exposure to air pollution and COVID-19 mortality in the United States: A nationwide cross-sectional study*. Authors: Xiao Wu, Rachel C. Nethery, Benjamin M. Sabath, Danielle Braun, Francesca Dominici. There are several other reports on this issue in preparation). The particulates will also contribute significantly to other respiratory health issues notably lung capacity development in the many children whose schools and homes are closest to the proposed road tunnel and heavy construction traffic.

#### **Reply –**

I thank Kate Middleton for her question.

I have answered the element of your question about the Council calling for the Tunnel to be reconsidered in my response to previous questions above.

However, I would like to respond to the element of your question about air pollution separately here.

The Development Consent Order (DCO) that allows the development of the Tunnel places a number of requirements on TfL and its contractor (Riverlinx) to manage the Silvertown Tunnel's air quality impacts.

This includes it developing - and consulting the Royal Borough on - an Air Quality Management Plan. This must include TfL installing Nitrogen Dioxide monitors three years before the expected date of opening and producing annual monitoring reports. These reports must be reviewed by a firm of independent air quality experts. If they determine the Tunnel has caused a material worsening of air quality, at locations where there are exceedances of national air quality objectives, TfL must consult the Royal Borough on a scheme of air quality mitigation measures.

There is also a requirement to monitor and manage the impact of the Tunnel's construction on air quality. The Royal Borough's officers have been engaged with Riverlinx as it develops this monitoring, and some baseline data is already being collected.

The Royal Borough will also continue to scrutinise the performance of these requirements through its role on the 'Silvertown Tunnel Implementation Group'.

## COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**31 Question from Stewart Christie, SE18, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth**

Recent planning applications for mobile masts in the Borough have identified that the Council, unlike many others, does not have a specific Telecoms policy or Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to ensure suitable siting and design of this essential equipment.

Given the often contentious nature of these applications, why has the Council not implemented a policy before now, will you consider it, and what measures can be put in place if the current “Planning for the Future” proposals go ahead?

**Reply –**

I thank Stewart Christie for his question.

The Council DOES have a specific telecoms policy in our Local Plan. Policy DH(c) Telecommunications Development of [Core Strategy](#) (adopted July 2014) applies to all planning applications for telecommunication development. This policy requires that any proposal is sited, designed, coloured and landscaped so as to minimise visual impact on its setting and local environment.

However, a lot of the installations fall under Permitted Development (PD) rights. PD Rights for telecommunications equipment are indeed subject to conditions/limitations to control impacts and to protect local amenity and prior approval is required, but the matters that can be considered in assessing applications for prior approval are set out in the regulations, and we cannot consider any other matters (e.g. Local Plan policy) when determining a prior approval for telecommunications equipment.

The prior approval process considers the siting and appearance of the equipment, and, so far as practicable, the equipment must be sited so as to minimise its effect on the external appearance of the buildings. The Council will, and does, refuse prior approval for telecommunications equipment where it does not meet the requirements of the regulations.

## **COUNCIL**

**23 SEPTEMBER 2020**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**32 Question from Nicholas Hadziannis, SE18, to Councillor Jackie Smith, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Enforcement**

Rather than blame gaming and buck passing between the Council and the Police on anti social behaviour, when will cameras be deployed to hotspots identified through local reports of disturbances to capture evidence of said activities to reduce the pressure on reporting functions in the respective organisations through providing the evidence necessary to address issues/ locations that generate volumes of reports?

**Reply -**

I thank Nicholas Hadziannis for his question.

The police and the council work closely in partnership to reduce instances of ASB and associated criminality wherever possible. This is coordinated under the banner of Integrated Enforcement - Love Your Place meetings chaired by the Assistant Director for Community Safety & Environmental Health. These take place on a monthly basis and are where the rapid deployment of a small number (3) of mobile CCTV cameras is actioned. These deployments are based on ASB intelligence, crime reports and casework but primarily they are risk-based taskings and deployed accordingly. Several individuals causing ASB have been identified using these cameras and we have been able to take robust joint enforcement with police colleagues against them. This has resulted in a reduction in anti-social behaviour and criminality in the tasking areas.

The Safer Spaces CCTV team proactively monitor hotspots for both the mobile and the static CCTV across the borough and feed through information to the Safer Spaces - Community Safety Enforcement Team (CSET), who, where able, will provide reactive patrols to increase visibility as well as use Community Protection Warnings/Notices if appropriate or Fixed Penalty Notices for breaches to Public Space Protection Orders under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 or environmental offences under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

## **COUNCIL**

**23 SEPTEMBER 2020**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**33 Question from Matt Stratford, SE9, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth**

On behalf of Greenwich and Bexley Green Party, we would like to ask how selling off green spaces for housing – such as the Rose Garden at Greenwich Peninsula – is consistent with its own Core Strategy. We remind the Council of its own commitment to the presumption of retention of mature trees, and the protection and enhancement of natural and ecological features, and indeed its commitment that new development shall only be allowed where it will not adversely affect the local environment and where residential amenity space shall be maintained. Does the Council truly believe that disposing of the Rose Garden is consistent with its own stated ambitions?

**Reply –**

I thank Matt Stratford for his question.

Please see response to Question 10

## COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**34 Question from Ania Brogowicz, SE10, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

Given that the borough councils of Newham, Hackney, Lewisham and Southwark have publicly opposed the Silvertown tunnel project; that the tunnel would worsen the already existing air pollution problems in Greenwich, and is incompatible with carbon emissions targets needed to prevent, or at least slow down global warming; that the widely known crisis in Transport for London's finances and reduced long-term traffic projections, caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, make the reasons given to build the tunnel even more unacceptable, irresponsible and invalid than they were before; and that the MPs Matthew Pennycook and Lyn Brown have called on the Mayor to demand a comprehensive review of the tunnel; that no local resident on both sides of the river is in favour of this tunnel - is it not politically and socially urgent for the council officially to vote to oppose the Silvertown tunnel, and urge the Greater London Authority to cancel it without further delay?

The residents of Greenwich are against it and we have spoken up many times, but nobody is listening to us. It is time for the Greenwich Council to finally serve the public and work on our behalf. You managed to oppose the ill-thought cruise ship terminal, it is time to act again and oppose this badly designed project.

**Reply -**

I thank Ania Brogowicz for her question.

Please see response to Question 14

## **COUNCIL**

**23 SEPTEMBER 2020**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**35 Question from Ferdi Suleyman, SE2, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth**

Blackwall Lane (sale of Rose Garden). Whatever the revenue returns, has the Royal Borough of Greenwich carried out an impact assessment on the loss of this green space with mature trees, in an area where traffic is poised to increase astronomically following the construction of the Silvertown Tunnel?

**Reply -**

I thank Ferdi Suleyman for his question.

Please see response to Question 10