

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

I Question from Councillor Nigel Fletcher, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth

Could the Cabinet Member list which property developers or landowners have made financial contributions towards developing planning briefs or other planning policy in the Borough, and outline the Council's policy on the acceptance of such funds.

Reply -

I thank Councillor Nigel Fletcher for his question.

SGN is the only developer or landowner that has contributed to a planning brief or planning policy in the Borough to date. They contributed £54,750 towards the brief and the Council funded the remainder. Independent consultants were appointed to do this work and were commissioned by the Council alone and every step of the process was transparent. The brief was developed following extensive public consultation, and the Council has made sure it complies with all local, regional and national planning policies. In fact, rather than dictating how the brief should look, the landowner objected to aspects of it.

In respect of the Council's policy on this issue, the Borough would review each individual case on its merit.

A decade of government cuts has meant that planning departments do not have the resources to self-fund all their services. Planning Policy including briefs such as this are critical in identifying and providing robust, well thought out advice to ensure that quality development is brought forward. This is even more pertinent given the proposed government reforms of the planning system seek to take the power away from the community and diminish the quality controls that serve to deliver acceptable forms of development within those communities.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

2 Question from Councillor Nigel Fletcher, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities

Can the Cabinet Member outline the process for allocating funding from the Parks Fund, and give an overview of the responses received to the consultation.

Reply -

I thank Councillor Nigel Fletcher for his question.

The Council received over 2600 responses to the online public consultation and also consulted directly with the Greenwich Parks Forum and Park Friends Groups.

Some of the priorities that came out of the public consultation included maintenance of basic park facilities and infrastructure, removal of redundant/derelict features, investing in tree planting and meadow/conservation grass areas improving park grounds and improving park sports facilities.

The results of the survey 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.

Proposals regarding which park sites should receive investment from the £1m will be made to Cabinet in October 2020.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

3 Question from Councillor Nigel Fletcher, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Leader of the Council

Why has the Council listed the Rose Garden on Blackwall Lane for disposal, and why only written objections to the proposal were permitted?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Nigel Fletcher for his question.

The Council had previously agreed to dispose of this site at its Cabinet Meeting on 22nd July 2015.

The Council is facing huge challenges. Over 1200 people are in temporary accommodation due to not having a home. More than 20,000 people are on the Council's housing waiting list. In response the Council is doing lots of different things to meet housing need such as its own housebuilding programme; the first for over a generation.

The Council recognizes the tension between new homes and climate change. All new Council homes in our programme aim to be zero carbon. In addition, the Council has been retro fitting some of its existing housing stock with Ground Source Heat pumps which is having a huge positive benefit on reducing carbon.

It is therefore necessary for the Council to consider all land in its ownership to meet the housing need and the Rose Garden was one such site. However, having concluded the consultation last week, it was decided not to proceed with a disposal.

In common with other councils, comments and objections are required by post to ensure that all correspondence is correctly received and recorded. It is imperative that no correspondence is lost in electronic transmission which can occur with spam & content filters. The Council will also take into account comments that are submitted by email.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

4 Question from Councillor Nigel Fletcher, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities

Could the Cabinet Member give for an update on the development of a business plan and proposal for Avery Hill Winter Garden, following last year's public consultation.

Reply -

I thank Councillor Nigel Fletcher for his question.

Since the end of the consultation, officers have been liaising with the university to agree the sale. That is essential ahead of any investment in producing a business plan, as the Council must be assured that the costs will be covered from the sale, and that the Council has a legitimate right to invest in a business plan for a building that it doesn't yet own.

Officers have also been discussing the best way to take forward business plan development with Historic England. The advice had been to base updated plans on the original proposal from the University of Greenwich. Given changes in personnel it has taken time to track down the previous plan.

A full engagement plan will be an essential part of the next stage of agreeing the business plan.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

5 Question from Councillor Charlie Davis, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth

At the last meeting of full Council, the Cabinet Member mentioned that the updated Site Allocations Local Plan would be brought to members in September. Is the Cabinet Member able to provide an update on when this can be expected? And does the Cabinet Member envisage further delays in terms of carrying out consultation on the Plan given the need to put place a physical copy 'on deposit'?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Charlie Davis for his question.

The Site Allocations Local Plan is currently going through the appropriate internal checks before it is brought forward for consultation. The aim is to have the final consultation version ready for decision by Cabinet and Full Council in November 2020. This version once agreed will undergo a final round of consultation before it is submitted for Examination in Public to the Planning Inspectorate.

The Government has recently temporarily amended its requirement to place on deposit hard copies at their principal office and in places such as libraries, so this issue will not cause further delay to this document. The Council is still committed to placing a hard copy on deposit in the Woolwich Centre and libraries, but should there be the necessity for these to temporarily close again it will not impede the progress of this document.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

6 Question from Councillor Charlie Davis, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport

What correspondence has the Cabinet Member and Officers had with their respective counterparts at Lewisham Council regarding the Lee Green Low Traffic Neighbourhood since the last meeting of full Council in June?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Charlie Davis for his question.

The Leader of the Council wrote to the Mayor of Lewisham in July in relation to the Lee Green Low Traffic Neighbourhood, to express his disappointment that Lewisham Council did not agree to the Council's alternative traffic management proposal to Lewisham's modal filter on Upwood Road.

Since July, officers have met with their Lewisham Council counterparts to discuss various matters including the Lee Green Low Traffic Neighbourhood. Officers have asked for clarity from Lewisham Council regarding if or when the project will be transitioned from a temporary scheme to an experimental one, so that public consultation can take place. Lewisham Council has not yet answered that question. I wrote to my counterpart on 25 August along the above lines. Blackheath & Westcombe members had input into the letter and were sent a copy of the final version. I received a response yesterday (22nd September), which I am currently reviewing. Officers will continue to meet regularly with Lewisham to discuss the project.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

7 Question from Councillor Charlie Davis, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport

Can the Cabinet Member confirm what assessments the Council is carrying out on the impact of the Lee Green Low Traffic Neighbourhood on:

- i) Greenwich residents who live in the roads near the Lewisham border
- ii) Congestion and air quality on the roads in the immediate vicinity to the LTN (including Eltham Road, Sidcup Road, and the South Circular)

Reply -

I thank Councillor Charlie Davis for his question.

The Council has carried out before and after traffic monitoring on its roads adjacent to the Lee Green Low Traffic Neighbourhood, to understand how the project has affected traffic on Greenwich's residential streets. The data shows an overall reduction in traffic on our streets.

Eltham Road, Sidcup Road and the South Circular are part of the Transport for London road network. I understand that TfL is also in discussions with Lewisham Council regarding the impact of the Lee Green Low Traffic Neighbourhood on its network.

The area in question is not covered by the Council's extensive air quality monitoring network. At present the Lee Green Low Traffic Neighbourhood is a temporary scheme. The Council does not have the resources to invest in robust air quality monitoring for a scheme which may not remain in place for a significant period. The Council will review what monitoring is appropriate if Lewisham Council notifies us that it intends for the scheme to become a longer-term experimental or permanent scheme. Nevertheless the overall reduction in traffic volume indicates an improvement in air quality on Greenwich's residential streets.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

8 Question from Councillor Charlie Davis, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities

I was pleased to join the Cabinet Member earlier this month at a meeting of Bowls Clubs in the Royal Borough. Given the increased importance of active and healthy lifestyles, and the Council's own commitment against loneliness, does the Cabinet Member agree that any financial saving by the Council should be directly contrasted with the social cost this will have on the lives of some of the Borough's older residents?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Charlie Davis for his question.

The Council has got to make difficult decisions due to reduction of funding from the Government and as a result has been forced to make tough choices. It is perhaps time for Cllr Davis to be honest with residents about the political party he supports and the pain they have inflicted on communities with a decade of austerity.

I do agree that an active and healthy lifestyle has a benefit on a number of factors including loneliness and isolation.

Officers have been meeting with club representatives to find out the best way forward. The Sport & Leisure team are putting a programme of support to help all clubs to be self-sustainable in the future.

All members will be provided with the latest information regarding other sport and physical activity opportunities locally to them via the [Greenwich Get Active](#) activity finder digital platform as well as information from the public health team regarding the [Live Well Greenwich](#) support offer.

Part of the club support offer which is to be finalised includes:

- Supporting clubs and increasing participation –
 - Running a borough wide Get into Bowls campaign
 - Marketing and promotion support
 - Recruitment and retention support
 - Widen the bowls delivery offer
 - Connecting clubs to Bowls England and Bowls Development Alliance to access their support offers

- Club Finance support –
 - Funding and fundraising support
 - Sponsorship planning
 - Other sources of income

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

9 Question from Councillor Charlie Davis, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities

Does the Cabinet Member have figures for the number of senior women's football, rugby, cricket, hockey, and netball teams that operate within the Borough? Additionally, does the Cabinet Member have figures for how many of these teams currently regularly use Council facilities, and how the both the figure for total teams and for usage of Council facilities compare to when the figures were published in the Playing Pitches Strategy in 2015?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Charlie Davis for his question.

There are number of Senior Women's Teams operating across the borough in Football, Rugby, Hockey and Netball.

Women's football has seen a growth from five teams to nine including Greenwich University and all play at Community sport club grounds, including Long lane, Coop Ground, Foots Cray Sports Club and Sparrows Lane

Women's Rugby has seen a growth from four to six teams including Greenwich University and again play at community sports clubs, including rectory Field, Brockleians Rugby club and Eltham College.

Women's Hockey has also grown from four to 8 including Greenwich University but again play at community sport venues, Colfe school and Eltham college

Netball has eleven teams including Greenwich University and use more RBG facilities including Waterfront and Coldharbour leisure centres but also community sports clubs.

Unfortunately, senior cricket teams have folded from the original 2 teams back in 2014. However, girls cricket is having a resurgence due to 20:20 and England winning the World cup back in 2017. There is also new adapted

format of 'Softball' cricket 6 – a side games so it is envisaged that senior women's cricket will develop in the next couple of years.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

10 Question from Councillor Charlie Davis, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities

Can the Cabinet Member confirm how many the Council is performing against the Priority Actions included in the RBG Playing Pitches Strategy? Can the Cabinet Member also confirm so far how many opportunities have been identified to 'include playing pitch facilities with capacity for intensive use' in the Greenwich PCA and Woolwich & Thamesmead PCA?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Charlie Davis for his question.

The Playing Pitch Strategy of 2015 did highlight a number of actions short, medium and long term. There is a need to revisit these and undertake a review of the full Action plan which I have asked officers to undertake.

In relation to opportunities identified to include pitch facilities for intensive use, as Cllr Davies will know takes lots of resources and funding, but we have seen the investment at Millennium school and St Mary Magdalene with Astroturf pitches.

I will seek further information in due course and report on the review.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

11 **Question from Councillor Charlie Davis, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport**

Residents on Eltham Park Gardens were first asked about the introduction of a Controlled-Parking Zone in December 2016. Residents responded that they did wish for the introduction of a CPZ which was first earmarked to be implemented in April 2018.

It is now almost two and a half years later, and the proposed implementation has been beset with delays even prior to Covid. Will the Cabinet Member confirm when residents can finally expect to see the CPZ implemented?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Charlie Davis for his question.

The Transportation team are progressing with the delivery of the Eltham CPZ this financial year. The Traffic Management Order (TMO) consultation commenced on the 18th March 2020, in accordance with the statutory process.

A single objection was received as a result of this process. A report outlining the details of the objection has been drafted and is currently being reviewed in accordance with the Council's legal governance process.

If the recommendations outlined in the report are agreed, it is intended that the CPZ will be implemented at the earliest opportunity and residents will be advised of the proposals.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

12 Question from Councillor Geoffrey Brighty, to Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills

At the June meeting Council unanimously agreed to develop a “Buy Local” campaign to help our local businesses. Could the Cabinet Member provide an up-date on what progress has been made ?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Geoffrey Brighty for his question.

The Council through the ‘It’s Time’ campaign has been successful in helping to kickstart the recovery of the visitor economy and deliver a successful programme that brings our communities together again and encourages residents onto our high streets and into our tourist attractions. This has included offers from businesses across the borough. The campaign has also helped to promote and generate trade for local businesses and this has been well received by local businesses. There has been an increase in footfall onto our main town centres and in turn spending onto our high streets.

The campaign landing page, visitgreenwich.org.uk/its-time, attracted 1,781 users and the Social media campaign’s reach figures are summarised below

Twitter	71,716
Facebook	12,512
Instagram	39,930

Campaign Hashtag

The campaign **#ItsTimeRG** Reach figures are summarised below

Twitter	194,511
Facebook	26,474
Web	139,986

Paid-for Social Media Facebook & Instagram Activity

The Facebook and Instagram paid-for advertising targeting options allowed the campaign to effectively target locals in the Greenwich community with an awareness and offer led campaign in carousel image and video formats.

A boost campaign for remaining 'opportunity to visit with offers' was run from 14th -30th Sept. The campaign served approx. 200,000 impressions, reached 85,418 people and had just over 1,500 link clicks.

Buy Local QR Code

Officers are continuing discussions with Visit Greenwich to build further on the success of the campaign to promote buy local QR code that will be used by local business and residents.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

13 Question from Councillor Geoffrey Brighty, to Councillor Chris Kirby, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

Greenwich Council was allocated £1.863 million from central government for the COVID-19 Discretionary Grant scheme. Could the Cabinet Member advise on how these funds were used ?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Geoffrey Brighty for his question.

In line with Government's guidance on the use of the scheme, the COVID-19 Discretionary Grant funding has been used to support local businesses with ongoing fixed property costs, businesses that are crucial to the local economy and businesses that were unable to access support through previous business rate based grant schemes:

- The Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) Scheme and
- The Retail Leisure and Hospitality Grant (RLHG)

Government guidance asked councils to prioritise funding for the following categories of businesses:

- Small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces, such as units in industrial parks or incubators
- Regular market traders
- Bed and breakfasts, paying council tax instead of business rates
- Charity properties receiving charitable business rates relief, and therefore not eligible for the small business rates relief or rural rate relief

Councils also had discretion to prioritise allocation of funds to meet the needs of the local business base and priorities for the local economy, which in Greenwich has included:

- Cafes in Parks,
- Suppliers to businesses in the Hospitality, Retail and Leisure Sectors and

- other businesses who were able to demonstrate both high fixed ongoing property costs, a reduction in income and the potential to safeguard jobs.

The fund has been significantly oversubscribed with 843 applications made to the fund. To date, £1,662.00 of the budget has been allocated and grants paid to 201 businesses. The remaining budget of £201,000 is likely to be fully committed and grants will be paid before the closure of the scheme on the 30th September 2020

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

14 Question from Councillor Geoffrey Brighty, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport

A month on from the implementation of the so called “Hills and Vales” road closures in west Greenwich residents east of Greenwich Park, especially Maze Hill and Vanbrugh Hill, as predicted, are still being subjected to unacceptable increases in traffic as a result. Will the Cabinet Member order an urgent review ?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Geoffrey Brighty for his question.

Officers and I are aware of the significant traffic congestion in your ward, particularly on Maze Hill and Vanburgh Hill. This is due to a number of concurrent issues including traffic levels returning to pre-Covid levels, trial traffic reduction measures in West Greenwich and Greenwich Park and congestion on Trafalgar Road due to social distancing measures in Greenwich town centre and disruption caused by the temporary cycleway construction being undertaken by TfL. We are taking measures to mitigate congestion on Trafalgar Road, as set out on the Council’s website, hence allowing traffic to discharge more quickly from Maze Hill and Vanburgh Hill.

Traffic surveys undertaken in the area before and after the implementation of the West Greenwich Low Traffic Neighbourhood Trial will indicate the level of traffic displacement. Results for these surveys will be available soon and will help inform any review.

However, it would not be appropriate to resolve an issue in this area by simply returning rat running through traffic onto the narrow roads in the “Hills and Vales” area. Instead this survey data will help us develop options seeking to create a lower traffic environment in Maze Hill and Westcombe in a planned way.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

15 Question from Councillor Geoffrey Brighty, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport

There continues to be a delay in progressing the outcome of the Westcombe area CPZ satisfaction survey carried out in late 2019. Can the Cabinet Member say whether an outcome recommendation is ready and also confirm that the delay has at least in part been caused by TfL funding issues ?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Geoffrey Brighty for his question.

Officers had hoped to have released the outcome of the recent satisfaction survey sooner, however Covid-19 restrictions have delayed this process.

Typically the Transportation team would include the outcome of the first stage consultation in a members briefing paper. This document is currently being finalised and officers will be in contact with ward members to discuss the outcomes and recommendations by the end of October.

As you know TfL funding issues have resulted in the reallocation of resources to encourage active travel as part of the Streetspace programme, this has in turn lead to delays and funding uncertainty for the CPZ programme. Other funding streams are however being explored.

There is currently an extensive list of Controlled Parking Zone delivery commitments and the next stage of delivery for the Westcombe area will be scheduled for implementation in the next financial year.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

16 Question from Councillor Geoffrey Brighty, to Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth

67a Shooters Hill Road, a property owned by the Council, still stands empty and decaying. The Council has prevaricated and dithered over it for several years. Can the Cabinet Member provide an assurance that this housing asset will be brought back into use either by the Council or via the market in the near future ?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Geoffrey Brighty for his question.

Councillor Brighty will recall the Cabinet decision of February 2020 to adopt a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Empty Property Asset Disposal / Re-development Policy, ensuring that decisions to dispose or re-develop HRA properties are underpinned by a rigorous assessment process. In applying the assessment criteria to Flats 1 and 2, 67a Shooters Hill Rd, it was concluded that the property was uneconomic to maintain and Cabinet accordingly agreed to its disposal.

The imposition of lockdown in March 2020 made it difficult to carry out the necessary physical inspections prior to disposal, but officers have now done so, and have also assembled the required documentation for disposal of the site by auction. Subject to the necessary approvals and the property meeting the reserve price, it is anticipated that the property will be disposed of by auction at the end of 2020.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

17 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Matthew Morrow, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

When do you intend to hold the meetings with Headteachers and will we as Councillors be informed of the outcomes of these meetings?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

We had a meeting with Headteachers on 17th September. This focused on Covid-19 and the current situation that schools find themselves in. It was led by Public Health. Councillors Thorpe and Morrow attended this meeting.

There are further meetings set up for the 29th September with all Headteachers. The Director and Assistant Director are also communicating with Heads on a daily basis when concerns are raised. This is normal practice in Children's Services.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

18 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Matthew Morrow, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

How have the children in our care coped with the Pandemic and it's restrictions?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

Overall the children in our care and our care leavers have coped well. They have benefitted from regular virtual or where needed face to face contact with their social workers. They have been well supported by the virtual school. The RGB fostering service has been providing a high level of support to the in-house foster carers and placement stability for this group has been maintained.

We have seen some increase in placement breakdowns with our teenagers in both agency foster placements and in agency residential homes. Many of these were due to the young people not adhering to the lockdown restrictions and placements giving notice. Many of these young people were placed in the emergency children's home we opened as a response to Covid, and were subsequently moved on in a planned way to long term placements.

Foster carers and residential workers have reported that older children have been quite frustrated during lockdown and at times this has manifested in destructive behaviour mainly towards property. It is harder to keep children engaged and occupied without fun activities outside of the placement.

A few of the children in our care and care leavers have suffered a deterioration in their mental health and in the main this has been where there have been pre-existing concerns. Where needed, children and young people are being supported to access appropriate support with their mental health.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

19 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Matthew Morrow, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

There are times when circumstances are such that a family may have to rely on their children to help them with day to day living and support. Do we have regular contact with doctors, schools etc to alert us of these young carers and what help do we offer them?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

I share Councillor Pat Greenwell's concern regarding this issue and recognise the crucial role that young carers play, and how vital it is that we support them, particularly considering the many challenges Covid-19 presents; many young carers have had increased caring responsibilities during the pandemic, suffered from bereavement or the fear of passing Covid-19 on to those they care for, felt trapped inside the home and faced many other issues.

Our focus is the safeguarding and welfare of these young people - and our young carers assessment process determines whether it is appropriate for the young person to care for someone else, taking into consideration whether they want to take on the caring role, as well as their education, training, leisure opportunities and future plans. Young carers, who are 16 or over and not in full-time education, may be eligible for a carer's allowance.

It is vital that we understand the needs of young carers and we have been consulting them to hear their views on the best ways to address these challenges.

We work very closely with our partners, specifically:

- Regular contact with GPs and schools, which can directly refer young carers for an assessment and council support. In fact, schools are our main referrer and we frequently meet with schools and other providers such as CAMHs where young carers are discussed where identified.

- Some schools run lunchtime and homework support groups for young carers, and teachers can help young carers manage their workloads. Young Greenwich nurses also provide guidance where they are engaging with a young carer, allowing them to open up about their situation and look at how to help.
- There is ongoing work with Primary Care to improve the identification of carers, address carers' bereavement needs and update GP websites to provide more self-referral options, such as for carers support.
- There are extended hours at GP Hubs to provide appointments for young carers, and the provision of online emotional health and wellbeing counseling is available from Kooth outside school hours.

The Greenwich Community Directory details support channels available for young carers, such as Wellbeing Workshops (specifically for Young Carers), Young Greenwich activities and health advice and the CHICKS programme, which is a residential programme that the Early Help Service has helped young carers onto, providing them with respite and the opportunity to meet other children in their situation.

We also have a Young Carer's Register and are in the process of pulling together a quarterly bulletin for service users which outlines the range of positive activities and opportunities that young people can get involved in. We are also making the sign up processes for this clearer and more accessible.

During and after lockdown, the council has provided more frequent respite for carers, and other means of support, including online activities. The Community Hub has also developed pathways, such as the mental wellbeing pathway, helping support those in need, including young carers.

The Council Communications Team are raising awareness about young carers support to further reach those who are not aware of the support available, or do not self-identify as a carer, sometimes due to stigma attached to the idea of being a carer. We are also in the processes of updating the content for a dedicated page for children and young people who care, on the Royal Greenwich website.

Officers have been working on ways to enable the Community Hub to develop appropriate and sensitive questions to ask people, helping improve our identification of adult and young carers, and increasing referrals for carers assessments. The Community Hub also has a carer's pathway, which includes a referral for young carers to the Children's Service's Front Door to identify any wider support that may be needed.

We are reviewing how to improve awareness of the range of services that are available for young carers and will be working with colleagues across the voluntary sector, education and health to achieve this.

We are working extremely hard to support our young carers, and this will remain a priority, especially whilst Covid-19 continues to present great challenges.

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MEMBERS QUESTIONS

20 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport

During the Pandemic the increase of litter in our parks, streets and open spaces has increased and shocked us all. It has to be stopped and individuals need to take responsibility for their actions. I spoke to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport earlier in the summer and we discussed the problem at length. Has anything been done since to address this massive problem?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

I agree that litter is a huge blight on the environment and an issue that is challenging to manage. During the pandemic Street Services continued to promote our Environment Champion scheme via our newsletters and social media tools. As a result, we have seen a huge increase in residents signing up to this scheme with a desire to help litter pick their local park or street. In March 2020 we had 175 champions and since then have signed up over 375 additional volunteers. We have issued litter picking kits, bags, gloves, support and advice to every volunteer and have been overwhelmed with requests.

We have also used our twitter and facebook accounts to show photos of heavily littered areas, dumped PPE and tried to prompt residents to use the bins provided or take litter home with them. Our communication team have also supported us for articles in Greenwich Info and we have featured a full advert as part of our 'Don't be a tosser' campaign along with some smaller articles, call to action and to get involved in the Great British September Clean and to become an Environment Champion,

Page 6: <https://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=&edid=39fd72f7-19f9-40b7-a051-58190202a03e>

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Page 4: <https://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=&edid=19376209-94ff-4640-afd4-8e29786edc84>

Street Services had to suspend many of their services during lockdown to use these staff to enable essential services to continue. Whilst some of our staff were required to shield, many of our street cleansing staff were taken off their normal duties, re-trained and were out emptying bins. Without us doing this, we would have not been able to continue to empty bins, resulting in a build-up of domestic waste around the borough. We are one of very few Councils that have managed to maintain a full waste collection service during these exceptionally challenging times.

In terms of street cleansing, we continued to litter pick and clean areas with the highest footfall, such as town centres and shop fronts. All street litter bins continued to be emptied daily and fly-tips removed as quickly as possible. We have now reinstated cleansing in our residential roads and it will take us a few more weeks to bring all of our roads back up to a good standard.

Street Services and Parks, Estates and Open Spaces continue to support littering campaigns such as the Keep Britain Tidy 'Great British September Clean' 11th – 27th September. This was delayed in March due to Covid and we've had to scale back activities to comply with government guidelines on social distancing. However, we have still encouraged all of our environment champions and park friend groups to take part and are supporting litter picks and have provided equipment to each environment champion group. This has been supported by a suite of social media messaging to promote this national litter picking campaign.

Also, during lock-down we received significantly increased visitor numbers to our parks and open space as these were one of the only places residents were allowed to visit. During the early stages this also occurred with reduced parks staff numbers due to staff shielding and self-isolating. Like Street Services and to help address the littering problem in parks we used new anti-littering notices and put these up in parks across the borough, used the Council's social media outlets to encourage people to take and dispose of their litter at home and increased the number of bins at the worst affected park sites.

Park staffing levels are now back to normal and the combination of measures mentioned has significantly improved the situation in parks. Also, like Street Services, Parks have also benefited from support from park friend and other new volunteers to help keep park sites clean.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

21 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Chris Kirby, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

At the last Full Council meeting the Cabinet Member confirmed that from March to May, 3,201 Council Tax direct debits were cancelled - and we discussed that there are complex factors driving this (changes of bank details, residents taking precautionary steps against future financial difficulty, increased UC claims and others).

- a) How many Council Tax direct debits were cancelled in the period 1st June to 30th August i.e. the subsequent 3 months?
- b) For the same period, how many Council Tax payments were missed (as opposed to CT direct debits being cancelled) and how does this compare to the same period in 2019?
- c) An analysis of the complexities driving this was understandably not available in June - has any work on this been undertaken since / can the Cabinet Member provide any update on the situation?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

- a) *How many Council Tax direct debits were cancelled in the period 1st June to 30th August i.e. the subsequent 3 months?*

There were 2,066 direct debits cancelled during the period 1st June to 30th August 2020.

- b) *For the same period, how many Council Tax payments were missed (as opposed to CT direct debits being cancelled) and how does this compare to the same period in 2019?*

There were 13,434 payments missed during the same period. A breakdown is supplied for ease of reference which also details the number of payments and part-payments made during the period 1st June to 30th August 2020.

Period	Paid	Partially Paid	Unpaid
Jun-20	78,492	219	3,387
Jul-20	80,783	451	4,099
Aug-20	81,916	138	5,948
	241,191	808	13,434

We are unable to compare 2019 with 2020.

- c) *An analysis of the complexities driving this was understandably not available in June - has any work on this been undertaken since / can the Cabinet Member provide any update on the situation?*

A detailed analysis has not been undertaken as yet. At present revenues management are focused on maintaining service levels and also supporting local businesses by way of government grant payments and supporting colleagues in DRES administering the Discretionary grant scheme for businesses that were not eligible for the Government grants.

It is also worth bearing in mind that the position (1.9% reduction year on year) does not appear, at this stage, to be as bleak as being reported by Councils elsewhere.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

22 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Chris Kirby, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

When Covid-19 struck the Council suspended the practice of applying for liability orders (and therefore the ability to instruct bailiffs) for non-payment of Council Tax, and the government temporarily banned all council tax bailiff visits for the duration of lockdown restrictions (these have since been allowed to resume with new public health guidance in place).

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the council's current approach to council tax arrears collections in light of the outbreak? (note this question relates to arrears collection policy, not CTS) - and specifically can the Cabinet Member answer the following?

- a) Is the Council's in-house arrears collection activity now proceeding again? What adjustments have been made in light of Covid-19 and its impact on the financial position of local residents?
- b) Specifically is the suspension on applying for liability orders still in place i.e. is the Council still adopting the practice of not instructing bailiffs to collect council tax arrears due to Covid-19, or are liability orders being taken out again?
- c) Are council-instructed bailiffs currently visiting residents to collect pre-Covid council tax arrears?
- d) If bailiffs are currently collecting council tax arrears on behalf of the Council - whether for pre-Covid arrears or new arrears - what assurances have been sought that the bailiffs in question are complying with new Ministry of Justice/Public Health England public health guidance for enforcement agents?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

- a) The Council Tax recovery staff are actively engaging with residents who have previous years arrears of Council Tax which are subject to enforcement action. 'Soft' reminder recovery letters are being issued to those who do not have an active arrangement in place, the letter

encourages customers to contact the team to discuss any difficulties they are experiencing and make an arrangement to repay their arrears. Temporary arrangements are being put in place where residents are experiencing financial difficulty. Extended payment arrangements are being offered to assist residents to manage their debts. The letter signposts residents to the Welfare Rights Service and Universal Credit team to encourage take up of benefit. It provided links to a new on-line budget and benefits calculator and provides links to The Money Advice Service, Step Change Debt Charity, Citizens Advice Bureau and National Debt Line. Customer engagement as a result of these letters has been positive.

- b) No liability orders have been referred to the Enforcement Agents since March 2020. It should be noted that summonses are not being issued at this time, we recognise this is a difficult time and the decision is not solely based on the fact that the Courts are currently unable to provide this service. The possibility of virtual court hearings is being explored.
- c) In line with the Government emergency restrictions being lifted, the Enforcement Agent industry resumed visits from 24th August 2020. Where Enforcement Agents are working on cases arising prior to the lockdown in March, they have been instructed to enter into arrangements for repayment wherever possible and take a sympathetic approach to customers circumstances. All residents who had liability orders with Enforcement Agents received a standard CIVEA engagement letter produced in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice, one month prior to the visit taking place to encourage engagement and to prevent unnecessary visits and costs.
- d) All of the Enforcement Agents used in Royal Greenwich are members of CIVEA (The Civil Enforcement Association) who have provided strict guidelines on how Enforcement Agents must conduct themselves in line with social distancing guidelines issued by Public Health England. Revenues management have confirmed with the Enforcement Agents that they are fully complying with these guidelines and that specific training has been provided for all Enforcement Agent staff.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

23 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Chris Kirby, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

In June the Cabinet Member confirmed that a supplier's software problem had delayed the council's application of the government's Covid-19 Hardship Fund to the relevant Greenwich residents' council tax accounts by (at that point) 3 months, with a solution then expected by the end of June.

- a) Does the welcome decision taken on 17th September on the use of the Covid-19 Hardship Fund mean that this software problem has been resolved?
- b) If so when will increased council tax now support as a result of the Covid-19 Hardship Fund actually reach council tax accounts?
- c) Have any residents who will receive this increased Council Tax Support been subject to arrears collections activity in the meantime? Can the Cabinet Member give an assurance that no resident will be disadvantaged by the significant delay in using the Covid-19 Hardship Fund to apply increased support to their account?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

- a) Yes, the software provider covering around 40% of the local authority market has delivered a solution to councils which they can use.
- b) The expectation is that payments under the COVID Hardship Fund will reach individual Council Tax accounts by the end of September 2020.
- c) Some accounts may have received a soft reminder letter or a statutory reminder for payment. However, in recognition of current COVID circumstances and the imminent payments through the hardship fund, there has been no active “recovery” action, no liability orders, nor enforcement agent referral by the Revenues Service.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

24 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Chris Kirby, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

The welcome decision taken on 17th September on the government's Covid-19 Hardship Fund included the allocation of £1.6 million of this fund on increased Council Tax Support - leaving a balance of £1.6 million remaining. The same decision established a Discretionary Council Tax Relief Policy for individual applications, up to £100,000 per scheme per year, and also noted that "any remaining funds under the COVID Hardship Fund, after accounting for new LCTS claimants during the next six months, will be used to provide additional support to vulnerable residents outside of the Council Tax System."

How much is expected to remain from the Covid-19 Hardship Fund after LCTS i.e. how much is expected to be available for Local Welfare Assistance? And how will this be used?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Our projection is that £1.6m of the fund will be used towards the COVID Hardship Payments for existing Council Tax Support working age claimants. For any new applicant in this financial year they will also qualify for the COVID Hardship Payment and so it is anticipated that an additional amount will be required to cover those payments.

The next six months, at least, is likely to be characterised, in part, as a period of economic hardship and uncertainty for many residents, particularly when the furlough scheme ends. In preparation for this, Council officers are establishing a corporate working group to ensure that there is adequate service provision to meet current and future demand. Part of this will include identifying where there are gaps in our service offer, from which recommendations will be made on how to utilise the remainder of the COVID Hardship Fund. Options could include additional funding for advice provision or expanding the scope of existing hardship schemes.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

25 Question from Councillor Spencer Drury, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport

I note from replies to a number of pieces of casework that there is currently a substantial backlog in the programme of tree pruning around the Borough. Can the Cabinet Member inform me how far behind schedule the current programme of pruning street trees is and how long it would normally take to take action following an enquiry about cutting back a tree?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Spencer Drury for his question.

Members will be aware that there is significant financial pressure on Councils budgets. Whilst there has been no reduction in street tree maintenance funding the budget has not increased with inflation or increasing costs since the start of austerity. This has had the effect of meaning less tree maintenance work is able to be completed annually than previously.

Despite this the Council continues to prioritise tree planting and the number of street trees in the borough is steadily increasing. Species selection is carefully considered to ensure trees are right for an area and do not attract high maintenance costs (some trees attract a much higher maintenance cost than others). The funding pressures mean that pruning cycles have had to increase – so trees that might historically been pruned every 3-4 years are now pruned every 4 – 5 years. Priority for pruning work is given to pruning trees in areas of high subsidence risk and property damage and also to ensure trees do not encroach unduly causing obstruction to pedestrians or buses and other vehicles.

Tree work is prioritised following inspection and assessment. It does not always follow that requests are able to be accommodated – but all requests for tree works are assessed against the Councils approved policy. This ensures funding is allocated and prioritised fairly across the borough. Street trees in most residential streets and roads are cyclically pruned, different types of work are completed at different times of the year.

I can advise that in the previous financial year some 1008 works orders for pruning works were completed at a cost of £352k. Currently there are 908 works orders with the Councils tree maintenance unit with a value of £384k. More pruning work is undertaken during winter months and this work is being prioritised for completion.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

26 Question from Councillor Spencer Drury, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities

I note that, following the last Council meeting, the Cabinet Member and Officers have met with representatives of bowls clubs using Council maintained greens to discuss their future. As a result of the meeting, can the Cabinet Member clarify whether he considers that the Council will continue to maintain the bowls green at the Well Hall Pleasaunce and if so, what extra costs will be incurred by the clubs that use the surface?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Spencer Drury for his question.

The Council has got to make difficult decisions due to reduction of funding from and as a result has been forced to make tough choices.

Officers have been meeting with club representatives to find out the best way forward. The Sport & Leisure team are putting a programme of support to help all clubs to be self-sustainable in the future.

All members will be provided with the latest information regarding other sport and physical activity opportunities locally to them via the [Greenwich Get Active](#) activity finder digital platform as well as information from the public health team regarding the [Live Well Greenwich](#) support offer.

Part of the club support offer which is to be finalised includes:

- Supporting clubs and increasing participation –
 - Running a borough wide Get into Bowls campaign
 - Marketing and promotion support
 - Recruitment and retention support
 - Widen the bowls delivery offer
 - Connecting clubs to Bowls England and Bowls Development Alliance to access their support offers

- Club Finance support –
 - Funding and fundraising support
 - Sponsorship planning
 - Other sources of income

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

27 Question from Councillor Spencer Drury, to Councillor Anthony Okereke, Cabinet Member for Housing

I understand that on Gilbourne Road, Plumstead a Council owned block of flats has been encased in scaffolding for more than three years. Can the Cabinet Member concerned confirm exactly how long the block of flats has been surrounded by scaffolding, why this situation has persisted and what has been the cost of the scaffolding over that period?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Spencer Drury for his question.

A protective roof was erected at this block in December 2017 using a scaffolding system, to prevent water ingress into the properties on the top floor, and any damage to the fabric of the building as a whole. This roof was necessary pending a complete roof renewal.

The renewal of the roof was scheduled to take place in June 2019. Due to the costs of the works, and to ensure best value, the Repairs Service carried out a competitive tendering exercise. This process took longer than anticipated

The costs associated to the temporary roof and supporting scaffolding is £132,042.00.

The temporary roof has been removed and the remaining scaffolding at this block is currently being removed.

Where a roof needs to be replaced and there is water ingress, it is common practice to erect a temporary roof to provide cover and prevent further damage whilst works are being commissioned and then carried out. In this case, this has taken longer than expected. Officers have reviewed this to ensure lessons are learnt.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

28 Question from Councillor Spencer Drury, to Councillor Anthony Okereke, Cabinet Member for Housing

In July I asked Council Officers the following four questions, but received no response. Given Officers were not able to answer these questions, could the Cabinet Member provide me with this information? The questions (which are a bit more rough and ready than the normal style of Council questions) related to the Housing Temporary Accommodation programme and were:

- a) Can I see a map of where all of the purchased properties are? In July last year a map of this type was included with the Cabinet report and I would appreciate a similar one showing where properties have actually been purchased rather than one showing where potential properties are?
- b) What has been the cost of each property? Please could I have some idea of the average spend and how it relates to the size of the property (presumably linked to the number of bedrooms)?
- c) Given the fact that these homes are supposed to be temporary, please could I have some idea how long families allocated to the temporary accommodation are staying? My understanding is that they do not have a contract and are in place on licence to facilitate placing them in long-term residential accommodation as soon as it is available, so I was wondering how long residents were staying in the accommodation for? A clear average, with an idea of the longest and shortest periods would be very useful together with the interquartile range.
- d) I was wondering whether it was possible to know where the residents placed in the temporary accommodation within this programme came from? Is there a way of helping them before it gets to this very expensive stage?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Spencer Drury for his question.

Officers have fully apologised for the delay in responding to your question, this was due to needing to do some detailed work around the length of stay in these properties and the information being required from a number of departments. Officers have now confirmed to me that they have now provided the information that you have requested on your enquiry.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

29 Question from Councillor Roger Tester, to Councillor Adel Khairah, Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities

The Friends of Coldharbour Open Spaces group have requested the use of a very small area of unused land at the Coldharbour allotments site to place potted saplings intended to be planted when matured in and around the Coldharbour Estate (or indeed in other parts of the borough if requested) The group have offered to pay the fee for this and are hoping to grow and plant 100 trees per year on a long term basis . The group will maintain and water the saplings themselves and organise sites and planting. Can the Cabinet Member explain why they are being blocked from doing this ? Particularly in light of the climate emergency and the need for many more trees

Reply -

I thank Councillor Roger Tester for his question.

I am pleased that the Friends of Coldharbour have secured saplings for planting on Coldharbour Estate. However, Coldharbour Allotments is designated for food growing and we have a number of residents on the waiting list for a food growing plot at this site. The Council will be showing and letting vacant plots to residents over the autumn and it would be unfair to residents that are on the waiting list if they are denied a plot due to it being taken for planting the saplings.

The Parks Team have worked with many Park Friend Groups on tree planting projects and I encourage the Friends of Coldharbour to contact Claire Lambert, the Parks, Estates and Open Spaces, Community Engagement Officer to ask if she can assist with identifying another piece of land to plant these saplings.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

30 Question from Councillor Roger Tester, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport

In 2018 over 170 residents of a section of Green Lane in Eltham signed a petition calling for measures to reduce speeding and dangerous driving in the area . The subsequent highways meeting arranged surveying and the data showed a far worse problem than expected. Some proposals were drawn up but till now nothing has been agreed or put in place despite promises it would . Can the Cabinet Member tell me when this work will begin and whether proposals for bridge narrowing submitted by Councillor Clare and I will be seriously considered . The situation has worsened since the survey took place and residents are left in this dangerous state

Reply -

I thank Councillor Roger Tester for his question.

Covid-19 has had a dramatic effect on the way that Local Authorities are currently working and on the funding streams available to them. This has affected our ability to deliver traffic schemes within the borough. The Royal Borough of Greenwich usually obtains annual funding for traffic schemes from Transport for London (TfL), but this funding has currently been withdrawn so any proposed schemes have had to be put on hold until an appropriate funding regime is re-established.

The only improvement funding we are currently able to access is through the London Streetspace Programme. Unfortunately, this funding cannot be used to deliver the scheme in question.

When an appropriate funding regime is re-established a work programme will be developed to address road safety concerns on our network. This will take a data-led approach to ensure that our limited resources are targeted where they are most needed. Any potential scheme will need to be prioritised within this programme.

Vehicle speeding is a potential criminal offence and, as such, can only be enforced by the Police. Residents can report concerns of speeding, or any other road danger issue, to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) through its online reporting tool: <https://www.met.police.uk/ro/report/rti/rti-a/report-a-road-traffic-incident/>

Residents also have the opportunity to set up a Community Roadwatch scheme in the area. Information on the scheme can be found on the MPS website at:

<https://www.met.police.uk/notices/met/community-roadwatch/>

In the meantime, officers will add Green Lane to the list of roads where speeding has been raised as a concern.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

31 Question from Councillor Roger Tester, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities

The Friends of Southwood park group have offered to take on the empty and slightly dilapidated old clubhouse located in the middle of Southwood Park which they plan to use for various community projects . The building is currently a hangout for drug taking etc and making the building useful will dissuade this . Can the Cabinet Member tell me if and when this could start being negotiated and perhaps explain why my numerous enquiries to officers have been repeatedly ignored for several months

Reply -

I thank Councillor Roger Tester for his question.

Apologies, that previous enquires to officers have not received a reply and I hope you appreciate that officers have been focused on delivering core services and making arrangements for services to return to normal.

Unfortunately, the sports pavilion in Southwood Park, is currently not in a safe condition to allow it to be used by the community and the building has no services connected. Officers in DRES are currently undertaking condition surveys of the building that will include budget estimates for bringing the building back to a safe and usable condition. Once these surveys and costs are produced, the Council will then consider and decide on the future of this building.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

32 Question from Councillor Roger Tester, to Councillor Anthony Okereke, Cabinet Member for Housing

The Coldharbour Crest, Sandling Rise, The Link and The Mound blocks on the Coldharbour Estate have suffered from years of neglect by the council and a poor level of caretaking . This has left the area looking scruffy and puts visitors of going to the shops in the Mound and the residents living in sub-standard conditions , often wanting to leave the area

I, along with the other Coldharbour and New Eltham Councillors have submitted multiple requests for this to be addressed . Can the Cabinet Member tell me when improvements will start to happen which in many cases are long overdue

Reply -

I thank Councillor Roger Tester for his question.

I am aware that there have been several enquires that Councillor Tester and residents have raised regarding the cleanliness of these blocks over the last six months and previously.

The most recent enquiry being raised by Councillor Tester in July regarding Coldharbour Crest. Caretaking Services had been refocussed over the preceding number of month to focus specific cleaning over the Covid lockdown period.

An inspection was carried out in July after Councillor Testers enquiry and from this a deep clean of the block was completed. A further inspection took place in September and was found to be satisfactory.

We have received one complaint recently regarding The Link and no recent complaints regarding Sandling Rise. This complaint has been addressed.

We are aware of a number of complaints regarding The Mound. This is an area that is frequently troubled with antisocial behaviour, fly tipping and drinkers congregating around the block.

Various inspections have taken place of the Mound over May and June, some of which passed and some of which highlighted further issues which the Caretaking Service is looking to work with Tenancy colleagues to address.

Given the number of complaints and enquires Caretaking Managers and Supervisors will complete a greater number of unannounced inspections of the area to ensure that standards are met and maintained.

I would also like to offer Councillor Tester the opportunity to complete an Estate Walkabout in his area with the Caretaking supervisor to discuss the issues in more detail.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

33 Question from Councillor Matt Clare, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport

Each year the Council rightly invests in new trees but sadly a number die through lack of water. There is always a debate about native species being preferable but heat island tolerant species such as *celtis australis* (Nettle Tree) may have their merits given the increasingly hot and dry summers. Will the council consider adding such species to their pallet ?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Clare for his question.

The Council recognises the significant contribution street trees make to our borough and we manage and maintain over 14,000 street trees borough wide.

Each year, following planting, arrangements are put in place to help ensure trees establish. This includes regular watering and also inviting nearby residents to participate in a tree care scheme which has now been running for 17 years. This scheme is successful and the Council appreciates all the help given by residents.

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 due to Covid-19, at the same time as a period of hot and dry weather, and therefore a higher level of losses is expected.

In terms of species selection for street trees a few years ago a review looking at the establishment rates and successes of individual species was undertaken. In that review it was found, for example, that Rowans in general have performed badly in terms of establishment rates and the alternative more robust *Sorbus intermedia* (Swedish Whitebeam) is preferred.

With regard to *Celtis australis* (Nettle Tree), a number have been planted in the borough as street trees, the first being planted during the 2003-4 planting programme. Along with the Nettle Tree other trees such as *Parrotia persica* 'Venessa' (Persian Ironwood) have also been planted, these being particularly successful.

Even so opportunities for the planting and establishment of new species can be a slow process. We obviously have existing stands of trees in many roads and simply changing them to another is neither practicable nor desirable. Many of our streets are currently planted with a single or number of similar species / cultivated varieties and introducing alternative species can have a jarring effect aesthetically. There are a number of examples across the borough where such changes are underway.

The Council does recognise that dry summers and climate change will provide problems in the future and it is working towards planting trees which are more resilient to drought and less maintenance intensive.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

34 Question from Councillor Matt Clare, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport

Previously I asked if water butts could be installed at ground level to take the free rainwater from large roof areas of RBG or Housing Association blocks of flats. This would reduce the need for water tankers to travel all over the borough to water trees at a financial and environmental cost.

By installing water butts it may also increase the number of volunteer residents who water nearby trees.

As we now exit another extremely dry summer where our officers were particularly challenged by Covid workload would the Council please consider this suggestion again?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Clare for his question.

Water butts are a fantastic, environmentally friendly, way of collecting water for plants and this avoids the need to use valuable drinking water for this purpose. They can also help towards a reduction in local flood risk and so the Council does encourage anyone who has the space and wishes to install a water butt to do so.

Whilst the Council has a number of rainwater harvesting installations around the borough, in relation to the specific point about using collected rain water to water street trees I can advise as follows. Unfortunately, the cost and logistics of managing a network of water butts, many of which would not be in the close vicinity of newly planted trees, would outweigh any savings the Council would make by not using the current mobile watering units (bowsers). The Council continues to promote the scheme where local residents are invited to water a tree during the early establishment years. The establishment rate of newly planted street trees is well over 80% and resident's involvement plays a big part in achieving this.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

35 Question from Councillor Matt Clare, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport

Greenwich is one of the most poorly served London Boroughs by public transport and worst hit in transport terms by covid (our residents cannot walk to the City or West End unlike people in say Camden, Lambeth, Islington...)

Despite this the Council has not been successful in securing what could be considered its share of “TfL and DfT money” for safer walking and cycling improvements. What are the learnings and what will the Cabinet Member do to address this ?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Clare for his question, although disagree with his presumption entirely.

In terms of Department for Transport (DfT) funding, the Council was awarded the full, maximum, amount of funding available to London boroughs from the DfT’s ‘Emergency Active Travel Fund’.

Although £45m of Streetspace funding was made available by Transport for London (TfL) for London boroughs, borough’s sunk costs amounted to approximately £15m, leaving approximately £30m for new projects.

The Council submitted £4 million of new Streetspace bids to TfL. We were awarded £943k, which is in line with an equal share of the £30m available. The Council has also been liaising closely with TfL in order to secure accelerated delivery of the first stage of the Greenwich to Woolwich cycleway.

We continue to work closely with TfL to ensure that we deliver the best possible improvements across our borough and it is disappointing he doesn’t want to share the facts with our residents.

Finally, I would add that it is important that Councillor Clare is honest with Greenwich residents about the conditions being imposed on TfL by the Conservative government, conditions that include the removal of free travel for over 30,000 children and young people in Greenwich. Residents of his own ward, and indeed the whole borough, would I'm sure be looking for his firm support in opposing this measure, which will just increase the poverty levels we are seeing in this borough.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

36 Question from Councillor Matt Clare, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport

Over the summer there were significantly more gatherings in parks than usual. Many boroughs, such as Lambeth, as well as the Royal Parks had large “Euro 1200” bins clearly marked for recycling or general refuse in parks. When I asked about this for Greenwich in mid July I was told the council was encouraging people to take litter home and had installed additional mixed litter bins. Clearly though large quantities of recyclable waste will have avoidably gone to the incinerator. Were steps made to increase recycling from Park waste over the summer? What steps will be made to ensure a more sustainable summer in our parks next year?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Clare for his question.

Due to increased littering in parks during the pandemic more mixed waste wheelie bins have been placed in parks to help keep sites clean. Unfortunately, a previous trial to separate and recycle mixed waste in parks experienced high levels of contamination of different waste streams and therefore was not continued. A further trial will be considered in the future. However, all parks and open spaces uncontaminated green waste is shredded screened and reused as a mulch in our parks and open spaces.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

37 Question from Councillor Matt Clare, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport

I congratulate Council Officers on their excellent preparation of the Council's project to move to LED Street lighting. In addition to the savings (both environmental and financial) which this project will bring will the council work with Southeast London Community Energy to fund solar panels on council owned building roofs (and batteries to store the energy for night time) to then power the street light network ?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Clare for his question.

The Council already includes an assessment of the feasibility of installing solar panels during major works to existing buildings and new build projects. For example, solar panels have been installed on the new Plumstead Centre.

In addition to this the Council is considering how the further installation of solar panels to other Council owned buildings may help meet the Council's aspiration for Carbon neutrality by 2030 and will consider the various options in the market including the role of Southeast London Community Energy.

COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

38 Question from Councillor Matt Clare, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Leader of the Council

At the last full Council meeting we spoke of the learnings from the first months of Covid and preparing for the second wave, specifically ensuring that all volunteers and councillors are utilised to share the load and prevent overload.

Would the Leader please share what progress has been made in this area?

Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Clare for his question.

The response to the call for volunteers in March 2020 was exceptional. Over 2,000 people expressed an interest and 1200 went on to make a full application. In the event there were enough tasks for just over 400 volunteers and opportunities were advertised on a first come first served basis.

Opportunities ranged from shopping, medicine collections, call centre operation and befriending. Many volunteers have now returned to work however some have continued to offer their skills and expertise via the community hub and others are supporting the council in the development of other council initiatives to build the resilience of community centres.

We are continually learning lessons from what has been an exceptional period and council officers have been sharing experiences on working with volunteers with councils across the UK.