COUNCIL
Public & Members Questions

Date
Wednesday 28 February 2018

Agenda
8 Public Questions
9 Questions from Members

If you require further information about this meeting please contact the Committee Officer:
Daniel Wilkinson
Telephone: 020 8921 5102
Fax: 020 8921 5864
Email: daniel.wilkinson@royalgreenwich.gov.uk
Public Questions

I. Question from Emily Bell, SE18, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Housing and Anti-Poverty.

When will sprinklers be fitted in Chesterford House, Shenfield House, Brentwood House and Winchester House, and will CCTV be fitted to solve the crime and the disgusting living conditions residents are living in?

Reply –

I thank Ms Bell for her question.

The Council is waiting to review the recommendations from the Government review into building regulations (chaired by Dame Judith Hackitt) and the public enquiry into the Grenfell tragedy before making decisions about our investment into sprinkler systems. We need to ensure that the money we invest creates the best possible improvements in fire safety for our residents. Whatever these recommendations are, it is likely that investment will be driven on a risk based approach, which will mean starting with the six tallest tower blocks in Royal Borough of Greenwich housing stock – these are all 24 stories and higher than the blocks on the Shooters Hill Estate.

There are no plans to install CCTV at the block. Work has been done in the communal areas to improve living conditions for residents and inspections have taken place. At a recent residents meeting it was acknowledged that significant improvement has been made.
2. **Question from Annabel Parsons, SE10, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Leader of the Council.**

The risk of a serious fire at New Capital Quay is real and imminent. The development has been subjected to a waking watch as an interim measure and an alternative to immediate evacuation. The London Fire Brigade, Galliard and residents find this to be an inherently flawed and unsatisfactory solution. It is now eight months after Grenfell and six months after the waking watch was put in place - how long does the Council feel it is reasonable for residents’ safety to be reliant on this inadequate waking watch?

**Reply –**

I thank Ms Parsons for her question.

The Council considers the safety of residents is of paramount importance and is working hard with partners in the London Fire Brigade (LFB) to ensure all residents of New Capital Quay are safe. The Council fully appreciates that the immediate safety of residents is causing concern, however the lead agency and experts in this area, the LFB, assures the Council that the buildings remain safe to live in.

The Council is also aware that the uncertainty about who will bear the costs of fire safety measures in the short term, as well as in the longer term should it be necessary to replace cladding, remains a real cause for concern for residents. The Council continues to monitor legal cases where this is being tested and will continue to lobby Government to provide clarity on the issue and lead the discussions with both the building and insurance industry nationally.

The safety of buildings is the responsibility of the building owners. The Government’s advice to building owners, endorsed by the London Fire Brigade, is that a Waking Watch is an effective measure and that in the event of a fire the watch wardens would raise the alarm with residents and the emergency services. The Council understands from the London Fire Brigade that they have instructed Galliard Homes to abandon the ‘Stay Put’ policy in favour of a ‘simultaneous evacuation’.

**ITEM NO: 8**
**PAGE NO: 2**
COUNCIL

28 FEBRUARY 2018

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The building owner has not yet indicated whether they intend to remove the cladding at all and, if they do when and with what cladding material. If the LFB inform the Council that fire safety measures are inadequate and the residents are at an unacceptable level of risk then the LFB or the Council will move towards formal enforcement action. The Council considers that the building owner should remove the ACM cladding as soon as possible and not rely long term upon interim measures such as waking watch. The Council continues to seek details from the building owners about their intentions and understand that there are on-going discussions between the freeholder and the NHBC which may indicate who will pay for the replacement and therefore the timescale.

Given the severity of the fire safety issues at New Capital Quay, why is the Council not using the powers it has available to it under the Housing Act to enforce removal of the cladding?

Reply –

I thank Ms Parsons for her question.

The Council considers the safety of residents is of paramount importance and is working hard with partners in the London Fire Brigade (LFB) to ensure all residents of New Capital Quay are safe. The Council fully appreciate that the immediate safety of residents is causing concern, however the lead agency and experts in this area, the LFB, assures the Council that the buildings remain safe to live in.

The Council is also aware that the uncertainty about who will bear the costs of fire safety measures in the short term, as well as in the longer term should it be necessary to replace cladding, remains a real cause for concern for residents. The Council continues to monitor legal cases where this is being tested and will continue to lobby Government to provide clarity on the issue and lead the discussions with both the building and insurance industry nationally.

The Council and London Fire Brigade both have powers in respect of fire safety in residential high rise buildings. To date, under the arrangements of a joint working protocol, the LFB have been taking the lead using their enforcement powers. The LFB consider the buildings remain safe to occupy with the interim measures in place. The Council understands that the freeholder is in discussion with the building warranty providers, NHBC, regarding the replacement of the cladding although the timescale for doing so is not yet known.

The Council considers that the building owner should remove the ACM cladding and not rely long term upon the interim measures currently in place. The Council continues to press the building owners to provide details about
their intentions regarding the cladding as soon as possible. The council is mindful of both the resident’s views and the legal complexities of the situation and will keep the situation under constant review. Should the circumstances change any decision to use the powers available to the council will be taken in accordance with our published enforcement policy.
4. Question from Kevin Sweeney, SE18, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Sustainability.

On 16 February, the Council announced that the Aberystwyth St/Plumstead High Street car park would be partially closed in order to accommodate the building of the temporary Library while works are undertaken on the main Library building from Summer 2018 to Autumn 2019.


It is stated that “the car park will remain operational once the library building is in place and will provide parking for 12 cars”. Please clarify for the benefit of residents, visitors and local businesses to Plumstead:

a. Does this include provision for disabled parking bays, and if so how many spaces? At present there are 24 spaces in the car park plus two disabled parking bays available.

b. Given the reference to the car park remaining operational “once the library building is in place” is it proposed that the car park be closed partially or fully, while the temporary library and its services are being installed?

Reply –

I thank Mr Sweeney for his question

The planning application for the temporary library identifies 12 parking bays including one disabled bay, which is in accordance with the London Plan parking standards.

The Council will be appointing a contractor that will be responsible for developing the final design and installation of the building, therefore it is too early to understand what the impact will be on the operation of the car park during the works. The proposal is a modular building that is manufactured offsite and craned onto the car park therefore resulting in a fast installation and minimal disruption.
5. Question from Deborah O’Boyle, SE18, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Sustainability.

Should the bid for the Good Growth Fund be successful, will the tiles and all other important and interesting features be retained, protected and incorporated into the remodelling of the former Plumstead Power Station?

Reply –

I thank Ms O’Boyle for her question.

The design process for the Plumstead Power Station project has not yet commenced as this is subject to the outcome of the bid, therefore it is too early to determine what elements of the building will and will not be retained.
6. Question from Deborah O’Boyle, SE18, to Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Culture, Creative Industries and Community Well-Being.

When will work, such as renovations and remodelling, begin on buildings intended to form the Cultural Quarter in the Royal Arsenal?

Reply –

I thank Ms O’Boyle for her question.

Phase 1 works to the buildings that are part of the new Woolwich Creative District will begin in October subject to planning approval and the appointment of a contractor.
7. Question from Eileen Glover, SE9, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Sustainability.

How many Council properties will be lost and how many replaced in the Regeneration programme of the Woolwich Estates?

Reply –

I thank Ms Glover for her question.

The Woolwich Estates programme involves the demolition of 1064 properties. The number of new properties will be in excess of 1500 with the final figure being determined when the reserved matters planning applications for Morris Walk and Maryon Grove are submitted.
8. Question from Eileen Glover, SE9, to Councillor Jackie Smith, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Environment.

I note the Council’s support for the “Foot the Bill” Campaign. Would the Council consider setting up an on-line petition to force a debate in Parliament?

Reply –

I thank Ms Glover for her question.

This is an excellent suggestion from the Chair of the Greenwich Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB). I would like to suggest that this is something the SNB could champion with the support of the Council.
9. Question from Doug Harper, SE18, to Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Culture, Creative Industries and Community Well-Being.

What steps are being taken to obtain advice on, protect and, if possible, restore the murals at Plumstead Library?

Reply –

I thank Mr Harper for his question.

The murals are currently covered by layers of paint, which are providing protection from wear and tear.

The Council is not intending to expose the murals as part of the library development project therefore they will remain protected, but it has written to Historic England to seek advice on care and restoration for future consideration.
10. **Question from Paul Threthewey, SE18, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Sustainability.**

Please can the Council tell me, as a member of the Plumstead Stakeholder Forum, why I was not advised of (or invited to comment on) the proposal for Plumstead temporary library to be located on the Abery Street Car park? I have recently read that it will contain only 12 car parking spaces from the summer. I pass this car park every evening and I can assure Council members that on most days it contains more than 12 cars and this reduction in provision will have a negative impact on local businesses.

Why was the commitment to consultation with the Plumstead Stakeholder Forum not followed through, prior to the announcement, as agreed at the Regeneration, Transport and Culture Scrutiny in December (page 8 of minutes here - [http://committees.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/documents/s61415/Minutes%20of%20Previous%20Meeting.pdf](http://committees.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/documents/s61415/Minutes%20of%20Previous%20Meeting.pdf))?  

**Reply –**

I thank Mr Threthewey for his question.

The minutes of the meeting relate to a correction to a previous report and confirmed that the library would remain open during the development of the new Plumstead Centre. The minute stated that local residents would be consulted on any changes to this agreement. There has been no change to this commitment and the Abery Street car park proposal is to ensure that the library service remains in operation.

I am sure the Stakeholder Forum and residents will be pleased to hear that the library service will not be impacted during the works to undertake this major investment in Plumstead. The proposal for the use of Abery Street car park is subject to planning consent therefore residents and stakeholders will have the opportunity to comment as part of the planning process.
It was reported (21 February) on Plumstead People Facebook page - https://m.facebook.com/groups/513432052063541?view=permalink&id=1863639227042810&ref=content_filter that several thousand residents have recently received letters in error from the Council about being licenced as an HMO. Furthermore it is said that this is causing confusion and distress amongst some recipients, many of whom are not landlords or HMOs.

The Plumstead Stakeholder Forum was led to believe that the issue of HMOs was being tackled by an intelligence-led task force.

While residents welcome action by the Council to tackle rogue landlords and bad housing conditions, is this the right way to go about it by a mass mailing of letters? If an error has been made, will this be publicised so that residents are clear as to their position and what they need to do?

Reply –

I thank Ms Freeman for her question regarding the letter that was sent last week indicating that properties had been identified as a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). We have now realised that this letter was sent to some properties in error and I apologise for the distress this has caused. I would like to explain how this error came about and the steps we are taking.

We are taking proactive steps to find all HMOs in the borough as part of our intelligence led approach. We initially identified the addresses of the properties we wrote to as potential HMOs by interrogating a number of different data sources (Council Tax, electoral register or tenancy deposit scheme data). However, it is now clear that there were issues with the way we analysed one of the data sets and this resulted in some properties being incorrectly identified. Unfortunately the tone of the letter was also written in such a way that it was assumed that the properties identified were HMOs rather than that was a possibility.
COUNCIL

28 FEBRUARY 2018

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

We are writing to all those affected to apologise and they should receive a letter of apology by 2\textsuperscript{nd} March notwithstanding any postal service delays. We will also be replying to all those people who have contacted us about this error. I would like to reassure Ms Freeman that no action will be taken further regarding the non-HMO properties.
12. **Question from Doug Harper, SE18, to Councillor Jackie Smith, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Environment.**

Residents in Plumstead have seen improvements in street cleaning on the High Street, but we are still experiencing fly tipping of mattresses etc. in residential streets. Despite the best efforts of Clean Sweep teams to pick up reported fly tips, is it not time for the Council to recognise that the collection charges are not working for Plumstead, and make household collections free of charge, while pressing for stronger penalties for those who are prosecuted for fly tipping and cover the additional costs of collection from rented households from the landlord/HMO licencing fees?

**Reply –**

I thank Mr Harper for his question.

I am pleased to hear that you have seen an improvement in cleansing in the High Street. We have seen a 30% reduction in the number of fly-tipping incidence in Plumstead over the last year, and with the work of our taskforce teams, enforcement officers and environmental health teams, we hope to see a continual improvement. We are working hard to advise and educate residents, businesses and landlords on how to dispose of large items, along with normal domestic waste. Our paid for bulky collection service is well utilised in Plumstead as it is borough wide, and we believe that the majority of mattresses fly-tipped in Plumstead come from the high volume of HMO properties in the area. We are working hard to identify these properties so that they are licensed with the Authority.

There is no evidence nationally to support that a free bulky waste collection service reduces the amount of fly-tipping that occurs. In addition to this service, residents can dispose of their large items at our free re-use and recycling centre located in Nathan Way SE28.

In terms of stronger penalties for those prosecuted for fly-tipping, our Enviro-Crime Enforcement team will always seek to prosecute offenders of fly-tipping where there is sufficient evidence, however this is difficult with single items such as mattresses where no evidence is available. The Unauthorised Deposit of Waste (Fixed Penalties) Regulations 2016 were made on the 7th

Officer(s) may give a person or organisation a Fixed Penalty Notice offering the opportunity of discharging liability to conviction for the offence of fly-tipping. Currently there are no proposals or consultations by the Government to review the amount currently set.

As part of the HMO licensing scheme colleagues in waste services are notified of all HMO licence applications received. Waste services may then carry out an assessment of the HMO to determine whether the facilities for the storage and disposal of waste are adequate. In addition all HMO licences carry conditions (including those related to waste storage until collection) that the licensee must comply with. Breaches of licence conditions are investigated by Environmental Health and where a breach is confirmed appropriate enforcement action is taken.

Not all landlords in the Royal Borough of Greenwich are subject to licensing arrangements and it would not be fair to impose the costs of household collections from all properties (including non-HMO landlords and home owners) on HMO licence holders.

Re: Plumstead Slade Toilet block refurbishment. At the January Full Council meeting it was stated that the £600k costs for the refurbishment was using industry standards as a guide. Can we have breakdown of costs to see whether this includes groundworks for drainage etc.

Reply –

I thank Ms Currie for her question.

The published scheme and estimate report provides a breakdown of costs and can be found at the following location:

http://committees.greenwich.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=4429

I can confirm that the budget includes costs for drainage.
14. Question from Jessica Currie, SE18, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Sustainability.

Re: Abery St Car Park SE18. Given that many customers using Plumstead High St businesses use Abery St Car Park, can we see the Economic Impact Assessment for the decision to close it while the temporary library is installed on it and then reduce it from 26 to 12 spaces?

Reply –

I thank Ms Currie for her question.

You will be aware that the car park at Avery Street is temporary as identified by the signs on site. Given the small scale nature of the proposal and that it is for a temporary period on a temporary car park an Economic Impact Assessment has not been undertaken, nor is this required for the planning application.

Investigations into the car park has shown that during the week the car park is not full and there are very few ticket sales. This indicates that the car park is used for very short duration pick up/drop off activities, therefore the combination of parking space in the smaller car park is considered sufficient whilst the temporary library is on site.
15. Question from Darryl Chamberlain, SE7, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Housing and Anti-Poverty.

Could you please confirm whether the Housing Revenue Account is in surplus or deficit, and by how much?

Reply –

I thank Mr Chamberlain for his question.

Authorities have a duty to ensure that the Housing Revenue Account is in balance, to keep the budget under review and to take all reasonable steps to avoid a deficit.

Royal Borough of Greenwich hold a balance of £12m which is specifically earmarked for HRA investment, including further capital financing.
16. **Question from Darryl Chamberlain, SE7, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Sustainability.**

On 29 January, the Council Leader tweeted from the Meridian Home Start Rochester Way site: "Families who rent and save will get £1 from Meridian Home Start for every £1 they save to a max of £10k to use as a deposit when they move on to buy their own home." As this is a Council-promoted scheme, can you confirm how this will work and how this will be funded?

**Reply –**

I thank Mr Chamberlain for his question.

The Council recognises it is hard for many local people to be able to purchase their own home and save enough for a deposit whilst also having to pay rent. The Council’s support for Meridian Home Start is based on the principle that Meridian Home Start will be able to offer good quality housing at truly affordable rents.

Meridian are an independent organisation, known as a Community Benefit Society. It is a matter for Meridian how they operate any such scheme.
1. **Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Leader of the Councillor**

What lessons have been learned from Round 1 of applications to the (welcome) Greenwich Neighbourhood Growth Fund, and specifically, that there are fewer applications from community groups than the Council was expecting? Will the Leader ensure that future application rounds take place over a longer period, to give community groups more time to produce and submit bids?

**Reply –**

I thank Councillor Hartley for his question.

The first round of the Greenwich Neighbourhood Growth Fund opened on 18th December 2017 and closed on 4th February 2018. The fund was promoted in the local press, on social media and on the Council’s website. Four drop in sessions were held in each of the four neighbourhood areas to provide applicants with support, and a named officer was available throughout the application period to provide advice as required.

In total 24 applications were received during the application, thirteen of which have now been shortlisted and are subject to a public vote that closes on 4th March 2018.

Once round one has been completed Officers will undertake an evaluation of the whole process to identify where improvements can be made to both the application and the shortlisting process, in preparation for the next round of funding. This will include whether there are additional routes for promotion, and the time made available for applications to be made.

Round two of the Greenwich Neighbourhood Growth Fund will be launched in Autumn 2018. Whilst it is likely that the application period will continue to be for a six week period, it is intended that the dates for round 2 will be announced far ahead of the launch date, to give community groups more time to work up their proposals.
COUNCIL
28 FEBRUARY 2018
MEMBERS’ QUESTIONS

It is hoped that once the successful projects from round one start to be implemented, that this in itself will act as a catalyst for greater interest and more applications.
2. Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Transport, Economy and Smart Cities

I'm sure the Cabinet Member joins me in congratulating Prince Harry and Meghan Markle on their engagement. Will he ensure that the Council allows any residents of the Royal Borough who wish to hold street parties for the Royal Wedding on 19th May are able to do so without road closure fees?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Hartley for his question, and of course I congratulate His Royal Highness Prince Harry and Meghan Markle on their engagement and wish them all the happiness for their new life together.

Established Council policy is already in place to support residents wishing to hold a street party to celebrate a major national event. The Royal Wedding is a major national event and I am pleased to confirm the Council will arrange road closures at no cost to the residents / applications. Members may recall that this was also the case for previous national events such as the Big Lunch and The Queen’s Birthday.
3. **Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Maureen O’Mara, Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Anti-Fraud**

The Cabinet Member will be aware of the report published this month from privacy group *Big Brother Watch* that found more than 25% of councils in the UK have had their computer systems breached in the past five years, with an estimated 37 attacks every minute. How many breaches have occurred in Greenwich systems in the past five years? How many, if any, of these involved experiencing a data loss or breach?

**Reply –**

No actual data was observed to have been breached to a malicious third-party actor as a result of a cyber-security attack.

Whilst this is the case, the number of prevented attacks with the potential to disrupt services and lead to a data breach can be quantified using the following metrics. We have observed on average:

- Approximately 69,000 suspicious emails monthly. This equates to roughly 93 suspicious emails every hour of every day. These have been blocked by the Council’s Mail Marshal System.
- Approximately 9,000 attempted attacks captured on the Council’s firewalls monthly. This equates to 12 potential compromises every hour of every day. The Council’s firewall systems have proved effective in preventing such attacks.

To address the question specifically around data breaches, in total, 22 data breaches have been identified for the period requested. The data available spans from 2015 to 2018. These are primarily non-cyber security related.

A summary of the data breaches is provided below:

- Two data breaches required the involvement of the ICO – primarily due to external parties being involved. These were not related to cyber security incidents.
- In 2015 there were two data breaches identified. These were not cyber security or technology related incidents.
MEMBERS’ QUESTIONS

- In 2016 there were 9 data breaches identified. Three of these required some technical reconfiguration, but were not related to cyber security attacks or data loss.
- In 2017, there were 9 data breaches identified. Three of these breaches involved technical reconfiguration but did not require ICO investigation. One of these resulted in data loss, but was not the result of an attack and did not result in a wider system compromise.
- In 2018 so far there have been two cases classified as data breaches. Both of these are not technology related.

It should be noted that almost all of these data breaches were the result of human error rather than a malicious actor or non-compliance with corporate policies.

The recommendations in the Big Brother Watch report have been taken on board within the corporate ICT service. The concerns highlighted within the report have been addressed as follows:

- The Council is prioritising cyber security as a new maturity area within the ICT service and it is on the corporate risk register. The acquisition of additional resources has been allocated to help keep the Council’s infrastructure and data secure.
- Cyber security awareness is now being promoted, both with Members and Officers. Cyber security training will be rolled up in with Information Governance training to ensure that all users receive a baseline level of training. Guidance has already been issued to Members and Officers on how to handle suspicious emails.
- A new reporting process and policy is being defined as part of the effort to ensure GDPR compliance; this is an evolving piece of work but will ensure consistency in reporting and escalation paths when dealing with potential cyber security incidents.
4. **Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Housing and Anti-Poverty**

Birmingham City Council recently adopted the 'Thriving Places Index' as a means of using 48 indicators representing the drivers of wellbeing to inform policy and strategy. The Index is run by charity 'Happy City'. Is the Cabinet Member aware of the Index, and has it been considered by the Council?

**Reply** –

I thank Councillor Hartley for his question and bringing the Thriving Places Index to my attention.

I have examined the Thriving Places Index and it is clear that there is a correlation between the factors it includes and the seven key objectives of the Social Mobility Strategy, for example income, education, housing and health.

Based on extensive consultation, including with citizens, it does provide an overall indicator of wellbeing, but almost more importantly, supports decision makers to focus on “what matters” to citizens, and to identify issues where things could be better across the 48 local indicators grouped into three domains – sustainability, local conditions and equality.

I will take a report on the Strategy’s key objectives to Cabinet on 21 March and then one of the first stages of developing the delivery plan will be identifying a set of metrics by which we can measure progress in tackling poverty and promoting social mobility. I will ask the lead officer and officer group to consider the index when developing the metrics.

I will also ask them to contact officers in those authorities, such as Birmingham and Leeds that have adopted the index to share any learning.
5. **Question from Councillor Mark Elliott, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Environment**

I have noticed an increase in the volume of fly posting in the Borough of late. Does the authority agree that this is the case and what measures are in place to tackle this?

**Reply –**

I thank Councillor Elliott for his question.

Street Services takes a proactive approach to removal of flyposting in the borough. Firstly, where we can identify the advertiser and can take action against them. Secondly where we are unable to identify who has carried out the flyposting. Where advertisers are identified Enviro-Crime Enforcement Officers issue Statutory Notices which have the potential to result in a Fixed Penalty Notice (£100) if the advertiser does not comply. Where advertisers have been issued with Statutory Notices our experience is that they comply with the requirements. This method has proven to be successful and we have seen a reduction in repeat offending. Where our operational teams identify flyposting and the offender is not identified, we remove it.

Planning Enforcement have not been made aware of an increase in flyposting in the Borough, however I can confirm that some cases of flyposting can be treated as a breach of the Advertisement Regulations. Planning Enforcement do not have sufficient officer resources to be able to remove all flyposting throughout the Borough and can only enforce where an advertisement does not benefit from deemed consent and where there is evidence of an offender to be able to prosecute. In many cases it is not possible to trace an offender and where on Council owned land or street furniture, the only remedy is to remove it so that any offender does not benefit from the advertising.

Flyposting can be reported to either Planning Enforcement or Street Services and the teams will work together to resolve the breach.
6. **Question from Councillor Geoffrey Brighty, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Leader of the Council**

The former underground public conveniences at the Royal Standard, Blackheath have been closed for several years. What is the Council doing to either bring the facilities back into their previous use or to speed up resolution of the legal niceties which seem to be preventing it, at length, finding an alternative use for a potentially valuable space?

**Reply –**

I thank Councillor Brighty for his question.

The toilets referred to are not owned by the Council and are classed as “unregistered” by the Land Registry. The Council recently applied to the Land Registry to secure ownership however the Land Registry rejected the application on the basis that the Council could not sufficiently evidence ownership. The Council is currently securing quotes from Insurer’s to understand the cost of underwriting the risk of an unsure title. Depending on the cost of such a title indemnity insurance, if the Council were to decide to reuse or redevelop the site knowing that if a third party then made a claim for title of the site from the Land Registry and was successful the Council’s investment would be insured from losses.
COUNCIL

28 FEBRUARY 2018

MEMBERS’ QUESTIONS

7. Question from Councillor Geoffrey Brighty, to Councillor Jackie Smith, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Environment

When are we to have “Don’t Litter” banners in Blackheath similar to the “Love Woolwich – Don’t Litter” lamp post banners?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Brighty for his question.

The banners are part of our overall effort to improve the areas by trying to encourage people to love their area and look after it. We have had limited funding and identified areas that could benefit from this type of behaviour influence. We have had signs in Plumstead for the last 10 months and they seem to have contributed in the great effort to improve this area. We have got limited plans for Woolwich, Abbey Wood and Eltham, and if this approach proves very successful, and subject to available funding, we may consider it in other areas that may benefit from this approach.
8. Question from Councillor Matt Clare, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Transport, Economy and Smart Cities

Since the Council first offered the opportunity for residents to apply for their streets to become play streets how many applications have there been and how many approved?

What insights would the Council offer to Ward Councillors to help see this scheme expanded?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Clare for his question.

The Council encourages higher levels of physical activity particularly in children as part of a strategy to combat concerns for growing obesity in society. This includes introducing play streets to encourage children to regularly “play out” safely in their neighbourhood. The Council has introduced play streets wherever a majority of residents have desired one.

Currently there are 6 locations where “playing out” is taking place. They are:

- Trenchard Street
- Eversley Road
- Sundorne Road
- Siebert Road
- Sherington Road
- Ashburnham Retreat has been a conventional “play street” for many years.

Spindle Close (Woolwich Dockyard) Chancelot Road and Dinsdale Road were part of a trial held last year and these roads will be going live in the spring this year.

An additional request has also been received from Gurdon Road which will be processed ready for the summer.
The Council is also promoting five play streets within the Low Emissions Neighbourhood (LEN) boundary in West Greenwich and Peninsula wards. A call-out for residents to nominate their street as a Play Streets will be co-ordinated through the LEN’s online community engagement site: https://greenwich.commonplace.is/ as soon as possible, subject to any purdah restriction.

The process for play street applications is currently being streamlined to make general applications from residents much easier. Prior to making an application I would encourage residents to ensure they have support from most of their neighbours to ensure there’s general consensus, otherwise objections may result in the application being unsuccessful.
9. **Question from Councillor Matt Clare, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Sustainability**

There are exciting proposals to create three pocket parks in East Greenwich as part of a Lower Emission Neighbourhood. It does however again highlight that across our Borough there are scores of grey/concrete corners which could be turned into pocket parks which will create living streets and help clean our air.

Would the Council be willing to encourage groups of residents to seek funding or crowd fund self-sustaining projects to transform these places, provided there was no increase in maintenance costs to the Council?

**Reply –**

I thank Councillor Clare for his question.

Councillor Clare will be aware of the Councils commitment to improve air quality in the borough and a range of initiatives are being delivered to achieve this.

The Low Emission Neighbourhood (LEN) trial is an area specific programme that the Council secured funding (including contributions to future maintenance costs) to support innovative approaches to improving air quality and creating healthier streets for residents. This is part of a wider package of works that will lead to environmental and air quality improvements in the Borough.

In addition to the creation of Pocket Parks the LEN trial will also promote bus priority work, public realm improvements, zero emission deliveries and work to rationalise fright movements at specific times of the day.

The Council is always delighted to hear residents’ views and ideas and would support residents / local groups bidding for external funding for similar initiatives in their area. However, Cllr Clare will also be aware that following a series of government cuts the Council is under significant financial pressure. We will of course consider proposals, and support any work, that improves
the local environment and air quality, provided that any future financial implications can be addressed including the ongoing revenue maintenance.
10. **Question from Councillor Matt Clare, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Transport, Economy and Smart Cities**

In 2011 a Best Value Review Team committee recommended that all residential roads in the Borough become 20mph limited subject to residents being favourable. In 2018 large areas of the Borough remain 30mph limited with speeding a key concern among residents. What is the expected completion date of the Borough wide 20mph Zone programme?

**Reply –**

I thank Councillor Clare for his question.

The Council remains committed to rolling out 20 mph zones in line with the Best Value Review.

To date there is approximately 80% coverage of residential roads within 20mph zones. At the start of the new financial year there shall be some 30 future 20 mph zones awaiting treatment. The rate of delivery is determined by the amount of annual road safety funding the Council receives from Transport for London (TfL). With the existing resources of capital funding and in-house staff capacity, five new 20mph zones will be delivered the next financial year 2018/19.

Unfortunately, there is uncertainty about TfL funding levels after next financial year. The achievement of the residual 20% coverage over the current six-year plan may require adjustment.
11. Question from Councillor Nuala Geary, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Leader of the Council

Can the Cabinet Member explain why a landlord, Criterion Estates, has been able to accrue £8189.71 in outstanding Council Tax liability related to the empty shop site at 356 Footscray Road, New Eltham? As the Cabinet Member and Officers will recall Criterion Estates has blatantly disregarded the state of its empty shops in Footscray Road for many, many years and continue to show no commitment or desire to let the shops to new tenants and to help New Eltham continue to build on its local shopping offer. Local businesses trading in the area do not understand how a landlord can abuse their obligations and no apparent action taken by the Council. Please advise what action the Council is taking to ensure that continued disregard by Criterion Estates is no longer acceptable.

Reply –

I thank Councillor Geary for her question.

The Council tax debt relates to the Council tax for the flat above 356 Footscray Road and not the empty shops at 340 and 356 Footscray Road. Both business rates accounts for these empty shops have been paid in full.

The Council has obtained a liability orders, in respect of the debt of £8189.71. As the debt remained unpaid, despite the liability orders being granted, a charging order on the property was sought. An interim Charging Order was obtained on 28 November 2017, which stopped the property being sold without the debt being paid.

As this order wasn’t challenged by Criterion Estates, the order was made final on 31 January 2018. This final order has now been served on Criterion estates. Therefore, the property cannot be sold without the debt being discharged.

The next enforcement step will be to apply to the court for an order of sale, in order to recover the debt in full. The Council Tax team are currently
undertaking the work necessary to move forward to this stage of the recovery process.
12. **Question from Councillor Charlie Davis, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Leader of the Council**

I note the conclusion of the Council’s review of civic awards resulted in the addition of a condition that ‘any organisation/individual nominated must fully embrace the Council’s values of equality and diversity.’

Does this apply to past nominees or only future?

**Reply –**

I thank Councillor Davis for his question.

The condition was added this year to ensure clarity. While it does apply to past nominees, the conditions were not explicit. For this reason, no previous Civic Awards will be revoked.
13. Question from Councillor Spencer Drury, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Transport, Economy and Smart Cities

I note that in answer to Councillor Davis’ question regarding road resurfacing at the last Full Council meeting, the Cabinet Member stated that:

“No resurfacing projects have been left incomplete.”

Councillor Davis was immediately able to supply one site where the job had not been finished (Granby Road) and I was interested to then receive the following reply from Council Officers regarding another road in Eltham North ward:

“Some areas of the repair have failed. The council’s contractors have been notified and will return to fix the defect at their own expense. Thank you for bringing this to our attention.”

This followed on from another member of the public emailing me in the following terms:

“I have seen many examples of where Riney have changed out undamaged pavement with new works, which fail very shortly afterwards causing pavement issues that did not exist before. Equally, works that are required are carried out in a very shoddy manner, and again fail within a short time.”

Given that this seems to be a recurring problem, can the Cabinet Member outline the procedure for checking the quality of road repairs completed in the Borough and confirm whether he is relying on Councillors/residents raising problems rather than a proper review of jobs as they are completed?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Drury for his question.
Council Drury raises two points in his question – 1. The extent of planned road resurfacing work and 2. The Councils arrangements and processes in place to ensure completed work is to the required standard.

The assertion that the road resurfacing work in Granby Road is incomplete is wrong.

The Council prioritises area–wide road resurfacing according to a range of factors. Conditions data, volume and level of use of the road, reactive repair expenditure and other factors are all taken in to account when the annual programme is compiled. Due to the length of many streets it is not always possible to treat whole lengths of roads at a time so sections in most need of treatment are prioritised.

The Council resurfaced a section of Granby Road in 2013/14 at a cost of £20,000. A further £50,000 was also invested through the Highways Improvement Local Labour programme in pavement repaving of Granby Road following full consultation with residents and liaison with the local Residents Association.

At the present time there are no plans for further work in Granby Road. A new annual road resurfacing programme is currently being compiled and this will be reported to Highways Committee at the next meeting following the completion of the prioritisation exercise.

With regard to Cllr Drury’s second point the Council completes thousands of highway repairs each year made up of large scale planned works and smaller reactive repairs. Since the start of 2017/18 over 10,000 individual highway works orders have been completed to date.

All larger planned work and major projects have dedicated site supervision by Council officers. For smaller “reactive” repairs proper audits and a regime of post-completion inspections are in place to ensure these repairs are completed to the required standard. The vast majority of this work is completed as specified and to a high standard but, on the rare occasion, where defective or substandard work is identified it is dealt with properly and formally through the contract and at no cost to the tax payer.
14. **Question from Councillor Spencer Drury, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Housing and Anti-Poverty**

Earlier in this administration, the Cabinet Member for Housing informed Council that “It is acknowledged that there is a significant problem with damp in a number of properties in the Royal Borough”. The Cabinet Member then went on to confirm that a Damp Team had been created to deal with the issue. Hence I was disappointed to hear at a recent Better Together meeting a complaint from a member of the public about damp not only in his property but also his daughter’s home. Please can the Cabinet Member:

a. Provide an update on the status of the Damp Team?
b. State how many properties were dealt with by the Damp Team and the Council combined in each of the last four years?
c. State whether she considers that there is still a significant problem with damp properties in the Royal Borough? If not, what has changed in the last three years?

**Reply –**

I thank Councillor Drury for his question.

The Damp Team were created in 16\textsuperscript{th} December 2013 in response to the Council’s commitment of dealing with the issue of damp within its housing Stock. The Damp Team is still working hard to ensure the Council’s commitment is fulfilled.

The Damp Team dealt with the following cases:
1. 2014/15 – 2122
2. 2015/16 – 1778
3. 2016/17 – 1578
4. 2017/18 – 1065 (projected)

192 new cases of damp were reported in Q3 of 2017-18. This compares to 295 in the same period last year. The proportion of stock reporting damp and the number of households with children living with damp continue to fall:
The overall proportion of stock reporting damp has fallen from 2.13% to 1.14% in the last 12 months.

The number of households with young children living in damp conditions has fallen from 77 to 48 over the same period.

The Council has worked hard over the last 5 years to improve its housing stock and deal with issues relating to damp caused by building defects and the condition of its stock. However condensation and resultant mould related issues, (often classified as Damp) still continues to be a major concern due to factors outside our immediate control - fuel poverty, the age of the stock and building design - are highlighting additional improvement to be carried out, as these are now resulting in further damp complaints. The Damp Team will continue work closely with residents to assist with the prevention of the build-up of condensation wherever possible, via seasonal monitoring and surveys.
15. **Question from Councillor Spencer Drury, to Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Sustainability**

Can the Cabinet Member confirm the value of assets which has been transferred to Meridian Home Start Ltd in each of the last five years? Could the Cabinet Member include any loans made in addition to assets or direct transfer of funds to this organisation?

**Reply –**

I thank Councillor Drury for his question.

When Meridian Home Start transferred its status to a 2014 a number of street properties were previously under control of Meridian transferred. Further information can be found in the report via the link below. The value of these assets was stated in MHS' accounts in 2016 at £7.78m.


In April 2017 the Cabinet agreed Phase 1 of the disposal of land and development financing for Meridian Home Start and in February 2018 Cabinet agreed Phase 2. The link below provides the report and appendices relating to the value of these assets:


To date RBG has transferred £286,764 to Meridian being a loan of £200,734 and RTB funding of £86,029, both in respect of the Rochester Way site and in line with the approved Cabinet report. RBG has also transferred to Meridian Home Start Ltd £1,381,790 of rent collected on its behalf for the street properties.
16. Question from Councillor Spencer Drury, to Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Transport, Economy and Smart Cities

According to the RAC Foundation, the Royal Borough of Greenwich made the following surplus on on- and off-street parking activities of:

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<td>Parking Operations Surplus £,000s</td>
<td>2,161</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>2,204</td>
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<td>3,434</td>
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Can the Cabinet Member explain how this figure was calculated and what has happened to surplus on these activities?

Reply –

I thank Councillor Drury for his question.

These figures are based on information the Council provides to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government’s (formerly the Department for Communities and Local Government) regarding income and expenditure relating to parking within the borough.

The figures reflect all income from on-street and off-street parking charges, penalty charge notices, resident and business permits and charges for suspensions of parking bays. The expenditure figures include the costs of providing this service, such as enforcement officers, back office staff and running costs and repair and maintenance of car parks and parking equipment.

Any resulting surplus forms a part of the Council’s annual contribution of around £9.6M towards the operation of the London-wide Freedom Pass. This is a concessionary travel scheme, funded by all 33 London boroughs and administered by London Councils, and allows older and eligible disabled Londoners to travel around the capital’s transport network for free. Details of the Freedom Pass scheme and the Council’s contribution towards it are available through the London Councils website.
17. **Question from Councillor Aidan Smith, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Leader of the Council**

What has the Council done to support the industrial action taken by Royal Museums Greenwich workers and their campaign to be paid the London Living Wage?

**Reply –**

I thank Councillor Smith for his question.

Thank you for your question regarding the issue of dispute at the RMG which has seen protests at the museum not paying its staff LLW. I wrote to the Director about this matter and expressed our concern and asked the Board to reconsider its stance. I have today received a positive response to the issue of paying LLW but note that this decision will be achieved over time. Here below is his statement to the RMG staff:

**EMAIL SENT BY DIRECTOR TO ALL RMG STAFF, 28 February 2018**

Dear all

I am pleased to announce that at their meeting on 22 February 2018, as part of their 2018/19 budget deliberations, the Museum’s Trustees approved an Executive proposal to implement the London Living Wage.

It is the Museum’s intention to achieve this over the next four years subject to affordability and sustainability. The strategy will be funded by a combination of plans to increase income, and for cost efficiencies and structural changes.

The first step in this strategy will commence on 1 April 2018 with an increase in the minimum RMG hourly rate to £9.00 an hour.

I hope that everyone appreciates the positive approach that the Trustees have adopted and will strive to help realise this goal.

Dr Kevin Fewster