

# COUNCIL Minutes

**Place** Council Chamber - Town Hall, Wellington Street, Woolwich SE18 6PW

**Date** Wednesday, 24 July 2024

**Time** 7.00 pm

**Present** **The Worshipful Mayor**  
Councillor Jit Ranabhat

## Councillors

Majella Anning  
Joshua Ayodele  
Olu Babatola  
Sammy Backon  
Sandra Bauer  
Clare Burke-  
McDonald  
Issy Cooke  
Ann-Marie Cousins  
Leo Fletcher  
David Gardner  
Pat Greenwell  
Matt Hartley  
Denise Hyland  
Elizabeth Ige

Adel Khaireh  
Averil Lekau  
Sam Littlewood  
Chris Lloyd  
Mariam Lolavar  
Christine May  
Dr Dominic Mbang  
Sarah-Jane Merrill  
Matthew Morrow  
Calum O'Byrne  
Mulligan  
Anthony Okereke  
'Lade Hephzibah  
Olugbemi  
Simon Peirce

Majid Rahman  
Maisie Richards  
Cottell  
Jackie Smith  
Christine St  
Matthew-Daniel  
Rachel Taggart-  
Ryan  
Roger Tester  
Sandra Thomas  
Danny Thorpe  
Ivis Williams  
Nick Williams

A webcast of the meeting of the Council is displayed on the Council's website <https://royalgreenwich.public-i.tv/core/portal/home> for a period of six months subsequent to the meeting.

## Minutes

Item

No.

### 1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nas Asghar, Gary Dillon, Lauren Dingsdale, Cathy Dowse, John Fahy, Rowshan Hannan, Odette McGahey, Asli Mohammed, Lakshan Saldin, Denise Scott-McDonald, Pat Slattery, Aidan Smith, Dave Sullivan, Jo van den Broek and Miranda Williams.

Apologies for leaving early were received from Councillors Majella Anning, Sammy Backon, Sandra Bauer, Chris Lloyd and Sandra Thomas.

### 2 Minutes

#### Resolved -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 27 March 2024 and the Annual meeting held on 22 May and the Special Meeting of Council on 26 June 2024 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

### 3 Announcements

The Mayor announced that Children's Services had been graded 'Outstanding' after a recent Ofsted inspection and Adult and Community Learning Service had been judged as 'Good' across all areas. Congratulations and thanks were extended to all staff for their commitment, hard work and dedication to improving the lives of residents in the Borough.

### 4 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Sarah Merrill enquired why she was not listed on the Council's Outside Bodies list as a Board Member for Woodlands Farm Trust. She had sat on the Board for over 10 years but this was not reflected in the list. The Mayor commented that this would be looked into.

#### Resolved -

That the list of Councillors' memberships as Council appointed representatives on outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies is noted.

## **5 Notice of Members wishing to exceed the 5 minute rule**

No requests to exceed the 5 minute rule had been received.

## **6 Submission of Petitions**

The following petitions were presented at the meeting:

<b>Subject and Number of Signatures</b>	<b>Presenting Councillor</b>	<b>Lead Department</b>
Greenwich Council: Take West Hallows Traffic Problems Seriously! <b>48 signatures</b>	Roger Tester	DCEC
Help Stop Illegal parking outside Plumcroft Vincent Road School <b>130 signatures</b>	Sam Littlewood	DCEC
Traffic and Parking on Cedarhurst Drive <b>47 signatures</b>	Rachel Taggart-Ryan	DCEC

## **7 Petition Responses**

The Mayor advised that the petition response, set out at appendix I had been published on the Council's website.

In the absence of the Lead Petitioner the Mayor called on Councillor Ann-Marie Cousins, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture and Communities to comment. Councillor Cousins thanked the petitioners as it highlighted the work the Council was doing in upgrading the borough's tennis courts. Charges were being brought in outside of the free period for the maintenance and security of the courts, but there were still free sessions. The courts are well used and maintained better.

## **Resolved -**

That the report be noted.

## **8 Public Deputations on matters not otherwise on the agenda**

The Mayor noted that there were no public deputations.

## **9 Public Questions**

The Mayor stated that Council had received 5 written questions from members of the public. The questions and replies, together with the supplementary questions made during the meeting, are attached as Appendix A to the minutes.

## **10 Questions from Members**

The Mayor stated that 24 written questions had been received from Members of the Council. The questions and replies, together with the supplementary questions made during the meeting, are attached as Appendix B to the minutes.

Under procedures for oral questions, the Mayor invited questions to Members of the Cabinet for response.

Councillor Chris Lloyd asked if the Leader of the Council would agree that the remedial work for the cladding to Royal Artillery Quays should be done to an A1 standard to ensure its safety and effectiveness. Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council said that the Council recognised the seriousness of the matter, and he was getting closer to the issue and had spoken to residents about it. The Council had particular powers that it could take depending on the individual development and could speak to Central Government. He would continue to work collaboratively with residents and ward councillors to pull together how best the Council could advocate for residents in this matter. Councillor Lloyd further asked if the Leader and the Cabinet Member and MP would agree to meet him over the summer to discuss further. Councillor Okereke said that they and ward councillors would continue to make themselves available as required.

Councillor Sarah Merrill asked the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Enforcement that with regard to the delivery bikes in Eltham, if she would take

into consideration that it was a market led demand and that there was a desire and market for their services. Delivery drivers were trying to make a living. Councillor Rachel Taggart-Ryan agreed that a balance needed to be struck between protecting economically vulnerable workers but at the same time ensuring that bikes parked in the designated zones and did not cause anti-social behaviour. She acknowledged that the delivery drivers were providing a service and benefitting the local economy.

Councillor Dominic Mbang asked the Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Borough of Sanctuary if she could reassure residents, after the recent cyber-attack on the NHS, that services were returning to normal. Councillor Mariam Lolavar replied that NHS partners were working hard to re-establish services and prioritise urgent need. There were different contracts for blood tests, however emergency services were still functioning and should be used for urgent need.

## **11 Matters for early debate**

The Mayor said that he had received a request to take item 19 first.

## **12 Annual Audit Letter 2022-2023**

Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Social Value formally moved the report. She thanked Grant Thornton for the report and their service over the last few years. The report related to financial year 2022-23 and things had moved on significantly since last year and in excess of £33m worth of savings had been agreed. The Audit and Risk Management Panel had suggested a Tracker report be submitted to the Panel on progress taken on the implementation of the External Auditor's recommendations from 2021-22 & 2022-23 and also recommended that the Council considered appointing a second non-voting independent member with the necessary financial expertise to the Panel. After discussion with the Leader, Chief Executive and Director of Finance they would be happy to accept these suggestions.

Paul Jacklin from Grant Thornton addressed the Council. Grant Thornton had completed the handover work to Forvis Mazars and this had gone well. The Council was in a good position. For the 2022-23 financial year they had identified two significant weaknesses, one in financial sustainability and one in the '3 E's' area of improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. They had not identified any weakness in governance but had made some recommendations for further improvements in this area. It was worth noting that many more significant weaknesses were being identified across the local

government sector where increased demands were stretching financial conditions further.

They had raised key recommendations in two areas. Firstly, like other councils, Greenwich was facing significant increased demands and complex service provision needs. This had been exacerbated by higher inflation costs and the cost of living crisis alongside uncertainty over future funding levels. Significant savings programmes had been needed to deliver a balanced budget position. Recommendations in this area would centre around strengthening the processes of identification, challenge, implementation and monitoring of savings programmes going forward, to avoid the need for one off measures and the use of reserves to balance positions.

The second significant weaknesses was that the Council, had self-referred to the regulator of social housing regarding delays to site inspections to dwellings which meant the Council was not able to meet the required standards. Action plans had been put in place to return to full compliance but where statutory notices were in place, they were required to report a significant weakness in this area.

It should be emphasised that the report was quite old and so things had moved on. The incoming auditors would comment on the arrangements put in place since this time.

Councillor David Gardner, Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Panel rose to comment on the report. He said he was pleased the recommendations for a second independent member with the necessary experience had been endorsed along with the recommendation of a tracker. Additionally, they would seek to track the implementation of internal audit review recommendations or reasons for delay or non-implementation. There was concern arising from the 2022-23 Audit letter in terms of sustainability and the measures to be taken but the Panel had been reassured by the Cabinet Member and Director that there had been significant improvements in the approach taken for 2023-24, which the Tracker should highlight.

Councillor Matt Hartley, Leader of the Opposition asked Mr Jacklin if he felt that the situation he had described at the end of 2022-23, and how they had urged Members and Senior Officers to acknowledge the gravity of the situation and to take effective and far-reaching action to restore a sustainable financial position, was now being acknowledged and taken seriously and actions put in place accordingly. Mr Jacklin replied that they were satisfied it was now being taken seriously although he could not comment on actions taken for the 2023-24 period.

Councillor Hartley thanked the Auditors and the Finance Team for their work on the report which he felt was strongly worded and highlighted the weaknesses. He believed the report to be quietly damning of the Council's Rethinking Services policy especially regarding digital services, the reform of which had not been delivered. Given the Council's plans were reliant on the success of rethinking services, which at this point it had been suggested they had not been, it was crucial that the Council addressed the weaknesses that had been identified. He had been disappointed by the Council's Management response to this in the report and asked for the Cabinet Member for Finance to offer some reassurance on the strength of the Council's response to the rethinking services findings in the Audit Letter. He added that the Opposition were pleased to see the two recommendations from the Audit and Risk Management Panel had been accepted.

Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Finances, Resources and Social Value formally closed the debate. She commented that it should be noted the period the report referred to was 2021-22 & 2022-23 so during and just after Covid. Savings had been delayed due to putting together the team and the recovery from Covid, but they had not been negated. They were confident the initial savings would be made and hopefully exceeded. She was absolutely confident in the abilities of Officers, and they would be keeping a watchful eye also.

### **Resolved -**

That the 2022/23 Annual Audit Letter be noted.

That the comments of the Audit and Risk Management panel as published, were noted and endorsed.

## **13 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26+ update**

Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Social Value moved the report. She said that services, whilst valued by the public, were structurally underfunded and the Council had very little way of reducing the demand for services that they were statutorily obliged to deliver. The Council were looking at a gap of £27m for the year 2025-26 however many other London Boroughs regardless of political affiliation had gaps in funding too. Other boroughs were also struggling to deliver SEN Transport, Temporary Accommodation and quality adult and child social care.

Additionally the cost of living crisis had brought extra demands in supporting residents. There were difficult choices ahead and there would be no immediate fix despite the change of government.

Councillor Matt Hartley, Leader of the Opposition said that he noted and welcomed the Council's shift in its approach to budgeting which meant the consideration of a more realistic view of demographic pressures which were forecast to rise to 15m from 3.9m. He also noted the report confirmed the increase in central government funding under the previous administration and hoped this would continue under the new one. He agreed there would not be an immediate fix forthcoming which would result in difficult decisions for the Council.

Councillor Danny Thorpe commented that since the change in Government a more respectful and appreciative view towards public sector workers had been seen. The previous governments' inefficient spending had caused many issues that local government were trying to deal with, most notably as highlighted in a recent National Audit report, that local authorities were now spending double on homelessness since 2010.

Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council said that local government worked hand in hand with central government and they would continue to lend their voices to the issues that needed to be overcome. No one thought it would be easy for a new government to sort out what they had inherited. What was needed now was a government that was serious about delivering growth and as a Council, Greenwich would support and work with the new government. Whilst it may seem that central government funding under the previous government increased, it needed to be balanced against the cuts to funding that were also made against a backdrop of an increasing population and demand for services. The Council had voted for £35m of cuts and as the report highlighted there were potentially more to come, however they would continue to safeguard the Council's finances.

Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Social Value formally closed the debate.

### **Resolved -**

That a forecasted £27.3m overall resourcing gap in 2025/26, increasing substantially each year thereafter (Section 7) be noted

That the potentially significant financial risks to the MTFS going forward (Section 6) be noted.

That the MTFS is a continuous process and will be updated on a regular basis be noted.

#### **14 Treasury Management and Capital Outturn 2023-24**

Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Social Value moved the report. She said that the one substantive decision to note was around extra contingency for the future High Street Fund, specifically Woolwich town centre. Unfortunately the original contractor went into administration and so the contract had to be re-let. This meant more finance was needed. Additional funds had been put in to allow for extra contingency to ensure the completion of the project. There was an 80% increase in investment year on year from £177m to £318m. This was due to the efforts to build more houses to deal with the shortage of homes and lack of private accommodation.

Councillor David Gardner spoke on the report. He said that he had recently visited residents in their new Council accommodation in his ward. Whilst the over-borrowing was concerning and they needed to ensure the position was sustainable, to see what the effect of a permanent home had had on these residents was incredible, not only improving their day to day lives but also their life chances.

#### **Resolved -**

That the Treasury Management Outturn Report for 2023/24 (Sections 4-10) be noted

That the Capital Outturn Report for 2023/24 (Sections 11-14), which shows a substantial increase in investment from £177m in the previous year to £318m in 2023/24, be noted, which included;

- £171m on the delivery of new homes via the Councils Greenwich Builds Programme:
  - £104m on the construction of new homes
  - £67m on the acquisition of new homes
- £56m investment in existing Council homes.
- £20m acquiring properties to meet Temporary Accommodation, Rough Sleeping and Refugee pressures.

That the recommended additional allocation of £1.3m of approved contingency within the Priority Investment Programme, as a match funding contribution towards the £17.2m Future High Streets Fund programme (11.5-11.6) be noted.

That comments were sought from Cabinet (24 July 2024) and Audit and Risk Management Panel (22 July 2024) with respect to decisions 1.1 and 1.2. be noted.

## **15 Community Infrastructure Levy - Adoption**

Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council formally moved the report. He said that it proposed higher rates of Levy for residential developments which would help to fund the required infrastructure to support increased development. The new rates would raise an extra £5m for infrastructure and this had been considered appropriate by the Inspector. It would provide greater investment in the borough's communities and would be subject to regular reviews.

Councillor Matt Hartley, Leader of the Opposition echoed the Leader's comments and said they would be supporting the recommendations. They were satisfied with the inspectors' conclusions that the new schedule could achieve the difficult balance of revenue maximisation from developers, alongside ensuring investors continued to be attracted to ensure growth continued by way of private sector investment.

### **Resolved -**

To adopt the Royal Borough of Greenwich Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (set out in Appendix 2 of the report).

That the CIL Charging Schedule will be implemented and effective from 26<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

That the prior CIL Charging Schedule (approved on 25 March 2015) is superseded by the latest CIL Charging Schedule (2024) for chargeable developments first permitted on or after 26 July 2024 (subject to paragraph 2, Part I of Schedule I of the CIL Regulations 2010 applying to relevant outline planning permissions).

That the Charging Schedule approved on 25 March 2015 shall remain in effect for chargeable developments first permitted prior to 26 July 2024 and outline

planning permissions referred to in paragraph 2, Part I of Schedule I of the CIL Regulations 2010.

## **16 Modification of Composition of Membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board**

Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council formally moved the recommendations.

Councillor Mariam Lolavar, Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Borough of Sanctuary said she welcomed the report as the new Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board. The recommendations would bring a welcome increase in representation of the voluntary sector on the Board.

### **Resolved -**

That the composition of the Health and Wellbeing Board as set out in Appendix 2 of the report be agreed.

## **17 Appointment of Political Assistants**

Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council moved the report. He said that they were bringing forward several recommendations following the external peer review, including the introduction of Political Assistants. This would maximise the effectiveness of joint working between elected members and senior officers, aid the work of Cabinet as well as to support councillors and political groups appropriately and effectively. This was an investment in local democracy and would ensure good governance was upheld to aid the realisation of the administration's ambitions for residents. There would also be investment in a role for the Opposition councillors as they believed in the value of having a good opposition. An example of another recommendation from the LGA Peer Review which had been implemented was the establishment of the new Greenwich Strategic Leadership Team meetings which allowed both the political leaders and corporate leadership team to jointly look at areas and challenges to enable them to come up with collective solutions. The work was ongoing to implement all recommendations from the Peer Review to ensure an effective council that worked for all residents.

Councillor Matt Hartley, Leader of the Opposition proposed an amendment as published. He said that the budget had been set without any reference to these posts. They had heard earlier about the £33m cuts required, which

would see cuts to Children's Centres, Council Tax support and libraries amongst others. This represented an increase to the local taxpayer and it would need to be funded from cuts elsewhere but there was no indication yet where this would be. They proposed the decision be postponed until that information was forthcoming. He disagreed in principle with the idea of political assistants. The Council's Auditors had indicated earlier that the Council did not yet have an established record in the rethinking services programme, which contributed heavily to the savings required. He felt the timing of this was poor and did not believe it was in response to the LGA Peer Review but rather from the Leader's long held position. There were already 50 Labour councillors whose skills the Leader could draw on. They did not feel in a position to make a judgement on the issue without first being able to assess the value in what it would bring versus the cost to taxpayers and what cuts would be made to pay for it.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Pat Greenwell.

Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council did not accept the amendment. He said that they had already taken decisions to make £55m worth of savings and to safeguard the Council's finances and deliver for residents against a backdrop of the chaos of the previous government. They had worked hard to safeguard services and had been prudent in managing finances. Once Council had taken the decision with regard to the appointment of Political Assistants, the authority would work out how to fund it. The Auditors commented in their report that the Council had a history of being relatively devolved and directorate-led, rather than having a strong organisational culture which had been reflected in the findings of the Peer Review. They further commented that there was a risk that the leadership culture and level of bureaucracy might pose a barrier to the fast pace of change that was required to resolve the Council's financial challenges. This was what as Leader, he was addressing. They would be implementing all the peer review recommendations to mitigate this risk and to enable the Council to be able to deliver on its missions. They cannot accept the delaying tactic this amendment gave. He was leading a reforming agenda which had seen good results so far and this recommendation from the Peer Review was another step in the process.

Councillor O'Byrne Mulligan rose to speak against the amendment. He said that the money required was not a vast amount and there were currently around 25 jobs at that level being advertised on the Council's website. The Peer Review had indicated the need for it and he believed there was a need for it. The Opposition did not need to appoint a Political Assistant if they did not wish to.

Councillor Matt Hartley, Leader of the Opposition responded that if the decision was made to appoint a political assistant for the Majority group, then by law the minority group had to be allocated one too, so it would effectively be forced on them. He was also surprised by the comment that the cost of political assistants was not a vast amount of money. He disputed the Leader's statements that they were investing in the Opposition. If the amendment was defeated, then the Opposition would be voting against the proposal.

The Mayor put the amendment to the vote and with the majority of Members voting against, the amendment was not carried.

Councillors Nick Williams, Mariam Lolavar, Averil Lekau, Adel Khaireh, Majid Rahman, Ann-Marie Cousins, Rachel Taggart-Ryan and David Gardner all rose to speak in support of the proposal. They spoke about how it represented a much needed investment in public services. Local government politics was becoming more complex and challenging, and many councillors worked full time alongside their council duties. It was a necessity rather than a luxury which all members would benefit from in being able to break down political messages and help members work in a more strategic way. It was possible to have a long held view which was then reinforced by an evidence based peer review. Most other councils had this service already and it worked well, leading to better decision making.

Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council closed the debate. He concluded that all councillors deserve support to deliver for residents and as a reforming Council this is what he intended to do. Whilst the law allowed for the Opposition to appoint a Political Assistant, they were able to decline the post if they so wished.

The Mayor put the proposal to the vote and with the Majority group in favour and the Opposition Group against the proposal was carried.

### **Resolved -**

That the principle of political groups appointing Political Assistants within the framework of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 be agreed

That that authority be designated to the Director of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer to make the additions to the Officer Employment Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution set out in Appendix B, pursuant to section 9(5) of the Local Government Act 1989 relating to assistants for political groups be approved.

That one Political Assistant post be allocated to the Labour Group (35 hours per week) and one to the Conservative group (17.5 hours per week) and approve the appointment procedure at paragraph 4.6, should either group wish to make an appointment be agreed.

## **18 Decisions on Executive Functions taken under Urgency Procedures**

The Mayor introduced the report which was for noting only.

### **Resolved:-**

That the decisions taken under urgency procedures at Section 4 of the report be noted.

## **19 Appointment of Cabinet Member for Planning, Estate Renewal and Development**

Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council introduced the report. He thanked Councillor Aidan Smith for his work as Cabinet Member to date. He understood the vision and mission and was dedicated to the Greenwich Builds Programme. He was leaving the Cabinet to take on a senior role in his day job. Councillor Majid Rahman would take on the role and appreciated the great task ahead of him.

Councillor Matt Hartley, Leader of the Opposition also thanked Councillor Aidan Smith for his hard work and focus in the role and congratulated Councillor Majid Rahman and wished him the best in his new role.

### **Resolved -**

That Councillor Majid Rahman has been appointed by the Leader of the Council to become the Cabinet Member for Planning, Estate Renewal and Development.

That the vacancy occurred after Councillor Aidan Smith resigned from the Cabinet effective 24 July 2024.

The meeting closed at 10.15 pm

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Chair

## **APPENDIX A**

### **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**I Question from Fiona Moore, SE3, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

The situation with Silvertown Tunnel (as I expect you agree) is deeply unsatisfactory. It's taking us in the opposite direction from the vision of Londoners breathing clean air, cargo bikes proliferating, and public transport and active travel prioritised. Eight lanes of traffic will be crossing the river at Greenwich, with no provision for cargo bikes or other small e-delivery vehicles and only the absurd cycle-bus for cyclists. HGV-heavy traffic will flow into already heavily polluted Newham, most affecting the more deprived populations. In the afternoon rush hour, four lanes of southbound traffic will try to cram themselves into two on our side of the Thames. At night, according to the tolling proposals, there will be no toll - worsening roadside noise levels and pollution for Greenwich residents near the A102. Proposed daytime HGV tolls would be lower than for the Dartford crossing.

I understand that the council favours repurposing some tunnel bores. Please could you explain your position on (a) repurposing, especially for cycling and cargo bikes, and (b) tolling; and (c) say how you will make your views known before the tolling consultation ends on September 3rd?

**Reply -**

I thank Fiona Moore for their question.

On 16 March 2022 a motion was submitted to Full Council, calling on the Mayor and TfL to pause work on the Silvertown Tunnel project immediately. The motion was agreed. The Council would support any move to re-purpose the tunnel to accommodate active travel. However, as part of the Development Consent Order, TfL does not have any obligation to do so. Transport for London (TfL) has just begun a [consultation](#) on its proposals for user charge levels, discounts and exemptions, for the Silvertown and Blackwall tunnels.

We are working closely with TfL to understand their proposals and the evidence behind them. We are doing this through the consultation, the

Silvertown Tunnel Implementation Group (which is required to be consulted on the proposals, by the Development Consent Order for the Tunnel) and separate discussions with their technical experts.

We will respond to their proposals once we have fully assessed them. You can [have your say](#) until Tuesday, 3 September 2024 and we encourage everyone to do so. This is vital so that we (and TfL) can understand your views.

**Clarification - Will you make your views/response to the Consultation known to the public?**

**Response from Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability and Transport.**

The consultation is a public document anyway, but yes I am happy to make my response public.

**Supplementary Question**

Can you allay any fears at this stage that residents have regarding the potential of no tolling at night, potentially leading to high volumes of traffic.

**Response from Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability and Transport.**

I would not want to pre-empt the considered response, but I will take all concerns into account. There are some areas I can respond to and other I can't.

# COUNCIL

24 July 2024

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**2 Question from George Edgar, SE3, to Councillor Aidan Smith, Cabinet Member for Planning, Estate Renewal and Development**

In September 2023 it was reported that Greenwich Council held £57 million of unspent Section 106 contributions. Can the Council confirm how much S106 and/or CIL funding remains uncollected, how much is collected but unspent, and what are the Council's plans to ensure full use is made of this important resource?

**Reply -**

I thank George Edgar for their question.

The Freedom of Information request that gathered this information and subsequently reported the amount of unspent Section 106 excluded an enquiry on how much of the available funding was already committed for upcoming projects. Over half of the Section 106 that is held by the Council has been formally committed or has been earmarked for projects that are being developed. As an example £10.8m of the affordable housing money that was detailed in the report is committed for Greenwich Builds Phase 2, a Council home building programme that will bring forward 1,000 new homes either through direct delivery or acquisitions by 2026. Similarly, the education S106 money is fully committed to delivering new school places by 2025, or to providing additional SEN places across a number of Greenwich school sites.

With regard to developer contributions that are yet to be collected, these payments are due to the Council based on agreed payment triggers, either set out in the Section 106 agreement (e.g. on completion or on occupation of certain number of units) or is based on the instalments policy and payment terms that is set out in the CIL Demand Notices. Currently there is the potential for Greenwich to receive up to £193m in S106, the timing of when this money will become due will depend on scheme delivery and the payment triggers set out in the Section 106 agreement. There is currently £3.7m due in CIL from Demand Notices that have been issued to sites that have commenced, with the payments due in accordance with the agreed instalment plan for each site.

In terms of the developer contributions that have been collected, but are unspent, this currently stands at £53.4m for S106 and £10.4m for CIL. However as stated previously much of this is either already committed or the Council are reviewing how best to prioritise these funds aligned with the Medium Term Financial Strategy, diverse capital programme and needs outlined in the published Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

The contributions collected by the Royal Borough do not necessarily cover the full cost of the investment needed, and the Council therefore must take care when deciding how to allocate this scarce funding so as to maximise the benefit and mitigate the impact of development.

### **Supplementary Question**

**The response said that over half the section 106 funds held by the Council have been committed or earmarked. Does this mean that there is around 25 million pounds of Section 106 funds which is unspent and unallocated? What are the plans for allocating for using those?**

**Also can I clarify, Councillor Smith also referred to a thousand new, affordable homes to be “brought forward by 2026”. Can you clarify which affordability criteria that refers to and what exactly brought forward means in this context?**

### **Response from Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council.**

At the last Annual meeting we split the responsibility for Section 106 and CIL funding between the Cabinet Members for both Finance and Planning so we could start to be more strategic about how we use the fund. The money comes in, in stages as a result of development and completion dates, so sometimes the amount allocated is not the same amount allocated in the bank now. We have set up an opportunity for the Cabinet Member for Finance to be looking into it further against how we use it during our Budget process and to make sure we use appropriately and in line with what is described in the agreement to ensure it honours that.

This is also reported in the CIL and Section 106 annual reports.

## COUNCIL

24 July 2024

### PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**3 Question from Karin Tearle, SE10, to Councillor Rachel Taggert-Ryan, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Enforcement**

Sivyer Transport based on Morden Wharf Road SE10 0NU breaks down aggregates on a part of the site that is located directly over the Thames Path. When the machinery is in operation, dust and particulate matter enter eyes and throat. Please can you provide the date of consent for a site that appears to be breaching environment regulations

And in considering this consent, did you refer to EA guidance, which identifies that due to its location and proximity to residential homes as well as users of the Thames Path, it should be fully enclosed?

In addition, how often does the Council carry out inspections of the site?

**Reply -**

I thank Karin Tearle for their question.

The use of the site for general industrial purposes was established under a Certificate of Lawfulness (Proposed) application, which was submitted in 2012. The operations that currently take place on the site fall within Use Class B2 and do not require planning permission. The Environment Agency have granted a permit for the site so that it can be used as a Non-Hazardous Waste Recycling and Aggregates Import Facilities (Ref. EPR/LP3395/VN) they are also responsible for inspecting the site to ensure compliance with any operating conditions within the permit and additionally any complaints relating to the operation of the site should also be directed to the Environment Agency to investigate.

The Council can inspect for statutory nuisance if a resident reports being affected from within their home by calling 020 8921 8921. The Council may then seek to visit the affected resident within their home to assess the nuisance and subject to officer findings, will consider if any further action is required.

If the reports relate to dust in the air whilst walking past the site then this should be referred to the EA directly by the person affected.

### **Supplementary Question.**

My specific questions were not addressed, namely did you refer to EA guidance which identifies that the site should be enclosed and do you carry out inspections of the site?

### **Response from Councillor Rachel Taggert-Ryan, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Enforcement**

The riverside is a major asset to the Borough and we work closely with the EA to address any problems. The Licensing of the site comes under the EA so it would be for them to carry out inspections and address any violations of the license. We will continue to share any concerns from residents with the EA.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**4 Question from Karin Tearle, SE10, to Councillor Pat Slattery, Cabinet Member for Housing Management, Neighbourhoods & Homelessness**

I thank the Cabinet Member for Housing for providing a copy of the March 2023 Report on the investigation into the Orchard Estate tower blocks which highlighted the need for serious investment in block infrastructure. I have since asked for a copy of a later report carried out in 2024 to which the Cabinet member referred in her March Council 2024 reply to me but it has not been supplied.

Can she now supply me with that Report?

**Reply -**

I thank Karin Tearle for their question.

The Orchard Estate high rise blocks have been identified as a priority for refurbishment. This is part of the extensive capital investment currently being delivered to improve the homes of Royal Greenwich residents. Royal Greenwich are currently working alongside industry specialists to form an encompassing schedule of works that considers the current condition. On completion of this exercise further information that explains the scope and rationale will be provided to residents as part of the overarching engagement plan for the area.

**Supplementary Question**

Does the report I refer to exist and if so can I have a copy?

**Response from Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council.**

We are looking to see what we can do with the estate. We wouldn't usually make reports available to non-residents of the estate. The Council's focus is on how to support residents at the estates and make sure that the changes that are needed there, are delivered.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**5 Question from Stacy Smith, SE10, to Councillor Pat Slattery, Cabinet Member for Housing Management, Neighbourhoods & Homelessness**

When I visited residents on the Orchard Estate I could see a number of major works in progress but not completed, such as wires above the doors yet to be connected to anything. These have been like this for some months. Can the council share what the timetable is for completing these works and when you will be updating tenants on this?

**Reply -**

I thank Stacy Smith, for their question.

Royal Greenwich have successfully delivered a significant amount of work to enhance the building components, safety and living environment for residents of the at the Orchard Estate blocks. This includes electrical works to individual dwellings and communal areas, fire detection and upgraded door entry systems.

The remainder of these works, as identified in the question, are part of a project to upgrade the electrical lateral mains and are due to be completed in September 2024.

Royal Greenwich remain committed to the continuing refurbishment of the Orchard Estate high rise blocks and are currently undergoing a process of surveying and scope development to inform a forthcoming programme of work.

Engagement with residents and leaseholders will be planned and undertaken to ensure that information is communicated in a meaningful way, and that feedback and comments are appropriately considered throughout the process.

**Supplementary Question**

Who do residents contact if the electrical work is not completed in September and how do these works fit into the long discussed forthcoming programme on work on the high rise blocks?

**Response from Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council.**

It is worth noting that we have a £430million capital programme which is the largest this Council has ever delivered, so it is worth celebrating that. We are in constant communication with residents whenever we do any work. We go and engage with residents and Councillors are on hand to be able to contact us with any issues.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

#### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

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

Can the Leader of the Council outlines what changes he intends to make to his administration's policies and approach following the Mottingham Coldharbour and New Eltham ward council by-election – this council administration's first electoral test – which resulted in a 4.7% swing in support from Greenwich Labour to Greenwich Conservatives?

**Reply –**

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

I think it is important for politicians of all political persuasions to reflect on the outcome of elections.

That includes the 2022 Council elections when residents returned the fewest ever number of Conservative Councillors since the formation of this Council.

The historic third term secured by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, in May this year.

This month's landslide election of a Labour Government, bringing to an end of 14 years of Conservative rule, including Labour gaining the local seat of Eltham and Chislehurst.

Or Councillor Tester's recent by-election victory which saw his party hold the seat.

The Council is committed to being better at listening to communities and ensuring our communities feel they are heard. Indeed, it is one of our central missions in Our Greenwich, the Council's corporate plan. That is why Cabinet agreed the new Community Engagement Framework and

Pledge, which has been produced following conversations with many hundreds of local people and organisations. We will use this as the basis of how we engage people moving forward and ensure that when local residents speak, their voices are heard.

### **Supplementary Question**

The Leader has not reflected on the by-election Conservative victory which was fought on local issues. Will he make any changes to his plans to reflect this?

### **Response from Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council.**

I welcome the New Labour Government that has been elected. The public saw the previous government and removed them. I have reflected and will keep going until we get rid of all three of them.

# COUNCIL

24 July 2024

## MEMBERS QUESTIONS

**2 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

Transport for London's consultation on the proposed Blackwall Tunnel and Silvertown Tunnel tolls closes on Tuesday 3rd September. What position does the Cabinet Member intend for Greenwich Council to take on the proposed tolls, in its formal response to the consultation?

### **Reply -**

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Transport for London (TfL) has just begun a [consultation](#) on its proposals for user charge levels, discounts and exemptions, for the Silvertown and Blackwall tunnels.

We are working closely with TfL to understand their proposals and the evidence behind them. We are doing this through the consultation, the Silvertown Tunnel Implementation Group (which is required to be consulted on the proposals, by the Development Consent Order for the Tunnel) and separate discussions with their technical experts.

We will respond to their proposals once we have fully assessed them.

You can [have your say](#) until Tuesday, 3 September 2024 and we encourage everyone to do so. This is vital so that we (and TfL) can understand your views.

### **Supplementary Question**

Having seen the consultation, is she prepared to reconsider her position and the Council's position and support a full exemption from tolling for residents and local businesses?

### **Response from Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

As I said earlier, when I have completed my response I will make it public.

# COUNCIL

24 July 2024

## MEMBERS QUESTIONS

### 3 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport

When I asked the Cabinet Member to provide the net financial impact of the Council's new emissions-based residential parking charges, the Cabinet Member responded that "as the scheme is less than a year old and part-way through a financial year, it would not be possible or appropriate to assess its financial performance at this stage." Now that the scheme is exactly a year old, can the Cabinet Member please provide the net financial impact of the implementation of the scheme in terms of revenue for the Council? And in her answer can the Cabinet Member please provide the following specific information – in the first year of the scheme:

1. How many residential parking permits were purchased?
2. Of these permits purchases, how many were renewals?
3. What was the average price paid for a parking permit overall?
4. Of permit purchases that were renewals, what was the average price paid for renewal?
5. How many and what proportion of renewals resulted in the resident paying MORE than under the previous system?
6. How many and what proportion of renewals resulted in the resident paying LESS than under the previous system?
7. Of the renewals that resulted in the resident paying MORE, what was the average PRICE they paid?
8. Of the renewals that resulted in the resident paying MORE, what was the average INCREASE they they paid compared to the previous year?
9. Of the renewals that resulted in the resident paying LESS, what was the average PRICE they paid?
10. Of the renewals that resulted in the resident paying LESS, what was the average DECREASE they paid compared to the previous year?

#### Reply –

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

As previously explained, I have requested a review of all permit charges and can confirm that the work is currently underway, for all permit costs including emissions-based charges, using London borough benchmarking and independent advisory reports.

My team estimate that this work will be completed by around Autumn 2024, and we will endeavour to answer all of your questions.

### **Supplementary Question**

The response hasn't provided any data despite much of it being done so already. Would she let me have this after the meeting.?

### **Response from Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

As my response indicates when the full report is ready it will be shared and will contain all that data.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**4 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the council's planned introduction of a 'new methodology for street sweeping frequency' (MTFS pro-forma 26)?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Good progress has been made to date, the anticipated implementation date is early 2025.

**Supplementary Question**

**Can I request that details be made available to ward councillors ahead of the implementation date so that we can assess the likely impact on our wards and input into the process?**

**Response from Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

Yes. As I said, there will be a consultation and part of that would also include talking to a ward councillors and getting a sense of what they feel about the way forward

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**5 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Social Value**

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on progress in implementing the 118 savings proposals (totalling £33.7m in savings) that the Council approved in the Medium Term Financial Strategy in February? Specifically, how many of these 118 savings proposals have begun their implementation? What is the current forecast performance against the budgeted savings figure of £33.7m?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Work has been undertaken on all 118 proposals. The financial management PMO has been mobilised and is tracking delivery of those proposals across the organisation.

The majority of proposals are forecast to deliver on target, more detailed output of this will be reported via the quarterly revenue monitoring reports to Cabinet and subsequently Scrutiny.

**Supplementary Question**

Has the Cabinet Member's level of confidence in the £33 million in savings being achieved increased, decreased or stayed the same since our last exchange?

**Response from Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Social Value.**

I would say the same. As you know we over-programmed savings as we knew not all 118 would go flying through. The old government did not bring in the new recommended levels for penalty charge notices so that put £300k at risk. We have assistive technology enable care services at £200k which has been delayed. With regard to the £2m for Children's Services including

children's centres, this has been delayed due to the impact on the consultation which was extended by two pre-election periods. We always knew there would be some that wouldn't make it to the finish. Our job now is to make sure that as many of those are delivered as possible and we remain confident that it will be the case.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**6 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Social Value**

Is the Financial Management Project Management Office now up and running, and the Cabinet Member provide an update on its implementation?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

The Council has mobilised its Financial Management PMO which is tracking delivery of the saving proposals across the organisation. This output is regularly reviewed by the Greenwich Strategic Leadership Team, with an update included in the Council's quarterly budget monitor report to Cabinet and subsequently to Scrutiny.

**No Supplementary Question**

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**7 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Mariam Lolavar, Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care & Borough of Sanctuary**

At December's meeting the Cabinet Member's predecessor provided figures to me showing that 225 RBG social care staff had taken up the offer of a flu jab via RBG's in-house flu vaccination clinic. At that point, overall, 463 RBG staff (i.e. not just in Childrens and Adults) had taken up the offer of a flu jab, compared to a total of 681 staff the previous winter.

Can the Cabinet Member please provide the following specific information:

1. the final figures for the whole of the campaign over the winter, for both RBG social care staff, and all RBG staff
2. comparable figures for the previous winter for both RBG social care staff, and all RBG staff
3. The proportion of all RBG social care staff who took up the offer of a flu jab, and how this compares to the previous year
4. The proportion of all RBG staff overall who took up the offer of a flu jab, and how this compares to the previous year

The Cabinet Member's predecessor also agreed to my suggestion to explore a different approach to next year's flu jab campaign, and the suggestion of convening a meeting with officers to progress this in the New Year. Did that meeting take place, what work has been done on this since, and what are the new Cabinet Member's thoughts on how RBG can dramatically increase the proportion of RBG social care staff (in particular) who take up the offer of a flu jab?

#### **Reply -**

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

As you are aware, in RBG we fund and promote free flu vaccination for our staff over the autumn / winter period. Most councils do not provide this offer, but we remain committed to seeking to help to protect our staff from this potentially serious disease.

In the winter 2023-2024 period, a total of 612 RBG staff took up the offer of a free flu vaccination, 226 of who work within Adults and Children's departments.

This compares with 681 RBG staff and 243 Adults and Children's department staff in 2022-2023.

We do not have the data for all social care staff as they are able to obtain the vaccination free of charge from all providers including GP and Pharmacy. Many people will take up the offer of vaccination from their own GP practice or a pharmacy local to their home. Staff do not have to disclose their vaccination status to their employer therefore we are unable to obtain a full picture of social care vaccinations.

We are keen to maximise the number of staff taking up the vaccination offer and this year the team that oversees the RBG Flu Clinic have reviewed the programme and the data and are pursuing the following developments:

**Communications:** initiating comms at an earlier stage with the aim to commence the campaign towards the conclusion of summer. This is likely to involve disseminating a council-wide text to work phones and strategically placing posters well in advance, ensuring visibility in high-traffic areas like bathroom stalls. A proposed strategy includes the distribution of a recorded GP webinar and message from the Chief Exec or other Chief Officer stressing the significance of flu vaccinations.

**Booking system:** exploring modifications to the booking system, such as incorporating calendar reminders and a dropdown menu for attendees to specify how they learned about the flu clinic (intranet, posters, or word of mouth). We are planning to work with the digital to make booking and completion of forms as quick and easy as possible.

**Birchmere:** we again saw relatively low engagement was consistent from staff based at Birchmere. Many of staff, due to the nature of their roles, do not have regular sight of comms on the intranet or via email and so plans for future clinics involve encouraging Birchmere managers to proactively discuss flu vaccinations with their teams. We also plan to schedule sessions on days with higher staff presence.

**Clinics for Teachers:** this year we saw the highest number of teachers accessing the vaccination clinic, highlighting the success of the Woolwich Centre flu clinic, where 68 schoolteachers attended. We are also considering the logistics regarding expanding clinics into schools or extended clinic hours, including twilight sessions after 5 pm to assist teachers to be able to attend.

### **Supplementary Question**

Has the Cabinet Member looked at what other public sector organisations have done around this?

**Response from Councillor Mariam Lolavar, Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care & Borough of Sanctuary.**

We need to remember that individuals can have the flu vaccine privately and so we need to be mindful of that when looking at the figures. There is a comprehensive plan and I know officers continue to have discussions with partners about how we can improve take up and I am happy to listen to any suggestions you may have. I think it is important to note that we choose to pay for a free vaccine and remain committed to that.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**8 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Pat Slattery, Cabinet Member for Housing Management, Neighbourhoods & Homelessness**

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the industrial action in the council's repair service? What has been the impact of the industrial action on the repairs backlog, and ongoing service provision?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

We continue to be available to negotiate with Unions to achieve an affordable outcome which leads to a sustainable service for the future. The current pay arrangements cannot continue. During this period of industrial action there have been 3 days of strike, with 4 days cancelled. We are very cognisant of the impact of strike days for our residents and have put in place mitigations to minimise that adverse impact. These include moving to an emergency only service on strike days to ensure we will deliver critically required repairs. As 2 weeks advance notice is being provided before any strike action, we have been able to put in place necessary alternate arrangements for the majority of pre-scheduled jobs. A minority of larger or more complex jobs were required to be rebooked. The notice period also enabled us to manage residents' expectations on strike days.

The safety of our residents is of course of paramount importance, and we have ensured that resources are in place to undertake such works. There has been minimal impact on our voids (empty homes) business and we have been able to maintain the good progress in this area in making properties available to let.

**Supplementary Question**

Has a review taken place into the apparent failure of controls that gave rise to the situation where unsustainable pay arrangements evolved leading to industrial action in the first place?

**Response from Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council**

I know from my former role as Cabinet member for Housing we were constantly reviewing how we work with our operatives and throughout that time we have kept an eye on our pay and reward scheme. We continue to negotiate with the Trade Unions and operatives to get the best deal for residents.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**9 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Jackie Smith, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business, Skills & Greenwich Supports**

Have the dates on which the Council's planned statutory consultation on changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme will begin and end now been confirmed, and if so what are they?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

We are currently finalising the modelling for the options to be considered, and the consultation and community engagement plans are being prepared. The exact dates for the consultation have not yet been confirmed. When the consultation is launched it will be online with paper versions where needed and we will be promoting through all our available channels to maximise the opportunities for residents to provide a response. Throughout the consultation we will seek to ensure that we are in particular taking into account the views of residents who are already in receipt of council tax support.

**Supplementary Question**

The previous Cabinet Member agreed to discuss the issues around the consultation that's planned on the Council Tax support scheme with me and I wonder if she will honour this and we can have a conversation about it before it's finalised.

**Response from Councillor Jackie Smith, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business, Skills & Greenwich Supports**

Yes, of course. I will also contact you regarding the consultation for the anti-poverty strategy as well.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**10 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Ann-Marie Cousins, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture & Communities**

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the implementation of the recommendations made via Overview & Scrutiny to offer

1) transitional relief and

2) business support to park café operators, following the Council's decision to charge them for electricity and water bills?

The Cabinet Member's predecessor confirmed to me in March that operators were due to be contacted by "mid-April" to discuss both on an individualised basis. Were all operators contacted?

What 1) transitional relief and

2) business support arrangements have been put in place as a result of that engagement?

#### **Reply -**

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

All Café operators were contacted in April and written to in June 2024 advising on next steps.

The Council has commissioned GCDA to deliver a Food Business Support Programme. GCDA will be in touch with all the existing cafe operators who will be offered access to free business advice bespoke to their circumstances to follow up discussion with officers regarding transitional relief as the programme provides access to some micro grants.

Once businesses have accessed the programme, I would be happy to provide an update on the outcome of our engagement and the impact of support provided.

#### **Supplementary Question**

Will utility charges only be transferred to a park cafe operator after transitional relief and business support has been put in place?

#### **Response from Councillor Ann-Marie Cousins, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture & Communities**

Early discussions have started but there is nothing concrete yet and it was too early to say what or how it will be done. They need to speak to the café owners first.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**11 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Ann-Marie Cousins, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture & Communities**

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the council's 'review' of libraries and leisure centres (MTF savings proforma 8)? When will the review take place and what form will it take?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

Good progress has been made to date and Officers continue to discuss the library and leisure services with GLL. We will keep members informed on progress and any changes in due course.

**No Supplementary Question**

# COUNCIL

24 July 2024

## MEMBERS QUESTIONS

### 12 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People

What work is being carried out to improve attendance across RBG maintained schools? What approach will he be taking to ensuring this work is prioritised, in his new Cabinet role?

#### Reply -

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

The DfE *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* non-statutory guidance was introduced for the academic year 2022/23. All Local Authorities(LA) and schools were asked to implement the principles of the guidance in readiness for it becoming statutory in August 2024.

The vision of the DfE via the guidance was 'prevention'. For support and intervention to be put into place at the earliest stage possible, to address irregular school attendance, with legal intervention being the last resort.

Children's attendance at school is a priority for Council services, Public Health, schools, partners, third party providers and the voluntary sector. All staff in children's services and across the partnership are focused on attendance with everyone being responsible for ensuring that the position they hold and the service or sector they work, takes action to ensure the children and young people are enabled and supported to access their education.

Royal Greenwich has for many years utilised a preventative approach when dealing with irregular school attendance, with the majority of schools and services working collaboratively with the Attendance Advisory Service, to ensure that support is provided to children, young people and families where barriers to regular school attendance are identified. Legal action is not undertaken on a punitive basis.

To ensure that local authorities were ready to implement the statutory guidance, the DfE required all LAs to undertake a self-assessment. The

appointed DfE Attendance Advisor has commended the approach in Greenwich and children's services were able to evidence a whole system approach in the preventative work being undertaken and embedded in the work we do for our children and young people.

We demonstrated that the requirements are clearly understood with developments undertaken at both strategic and operational levels, with plans in place to deliver the next steps. For example, the development of the 'Wellbeing Hubs' in schools, how data is being used to inform practice and school attendance being a key element of the Early Help and Prevention Strategy.

Our new Wellbeing in Schools Hubs will be launched in eight secondary schools from September 2024 and will strengthen our response to the root causes of non-attendance, some of which include mental ill-health (parental and child/young person), exploitation, caring responsibilities as well as other contributing factors. This new service will act as the bridge between Home and School for our families who need our support to ensure that their children are able to achieve and sustain good school attendance.

At the final DfE self-assessment review RBG was judged as having made excellent progress towards delivering against the *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* when it becomes statutory in August 2024.

## **No Supplementary Question**

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**13 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People**

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the council's 'review' of Children's Centres (MTFS savings pro-forma 117)? When will the review take place and what form will it take?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

A review of Children's Centres has commenced with the aim of a more flexible integrated service that reaches beyond the walls of buildings utilising community spaces. The review builds on learning from implementing the Family Hubs and is being undertaken to ensure required savings are achieved whilst ensuring a modern approach to early years and family services.

There are plans to shortly launch a consultation as part of the formulation of these proposals and gather people's views for a decision later in the year. Once launched the Council will provide different opportunities for communities to feedback and input into the development.

**Supplementary Question**

When will the consultation start?

**Response from Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People**

Any time soon. It is being finalised now.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**14 Question from Councillor Matt Hartley, to Councillor Rachel Taggart-Ryan, Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Enforcement**

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the council's Rethinking CCTV programme?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Matt Hartley for his question.

RBG has one of the largest public space surveillance camera networks in London and this system has recently undergone a £3.2k modernisation programme, replacing outdated and end of life hardware equipment as well as key investment in top spec front-end software. This phased modernisation programme is now moving from phase one (public space) to phase two (estates based). The control room currently monitors over 280 public space cameras and 500 estate-based cameras in various council blocks across the borough. The control room is currently staffed 24/7 365 days a year and is widely accepted as offering a premium service staffed by 14FTE working in shifts of 2 or 3.

We are embarking on an ambitious but yet untested plan to commercialise our CCTV assets under the working title of 'Safer Greenwich Camera Network' (SGCN). Where 'Rethinking CCTV' seeks to reduce operating costs, the SGCN is looking to try and generate income by looking to offer key stakeholders on the borough services associated with their existing camera networks amongst others. This project is exploring the market viability of expanding the current remit of RBG CCTV suite to include a range of services to be offered to external stakeholders.

We are also working closely with colleagues in our enabling services (legal, comms, procurement, Digital Greenwich) to determine our offer and are in the process of creating a corporate brochure of prospective services. This is a pivotal product to present to stakeholders and will require further development with key experts to pitch as a commercial prospect.

**Supplementary Question**

Since taking on the Cabinet role, is she intending any changes based on what she's seen, or is she content that the arrangements are going in the right way?

**Response from Councillor Rachel Taggart-Ryan, Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Enforcement**

I agree we have a very Premier Service across our borough in terms of our CCTV. We are one of a few London boroughs that operate a 24/7 365 days a year camera service across public spaces and Estates. We will be going through a rethinking CCTV process with officers looking at ways in which we can maximise its efficiency and cost savings. We are also looking at how we can bring in income from this very valuable asset.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**15 Question from Councillor Sammy Backon, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

Please could I ask for an update regarding progress to removing or extending expiry dates from online visitors car parking permits?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Sammy Backon for his question.

I can confirm we have had a number of representations and dialogue with residents and Councillors on this matter. Currently all permits expire within 12 months of the date of issue, however if the resident makes the council aware of expiring permits the service can extend or refund those permits at the residents request.

I have asked the service to better inform residents of these conditions when purchasing parking permits.

**Supplementary Question**

How will 'better informing residents of the conditions' be done?

**Response from Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

Unfortunately the technology we use doesn't have the flexibility to be able to do what seems to make sense. IT are looking at how we can change this. A suggestion is that we put something on the permits when they are purchased reminding residents that they can be submitted back before they expire.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**16 Question from Councillor Sammy Backon, to Councillor Aidan Smith, Cabinet Member for Planning, Estate Renewal & Development**

Please can I ask for an update regarding the disused public toilets/old tram information office located outside St John's Church in Eltham. Residents are keen to see this put back to much better use.

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Sammy Backon for his question.

Council Officers have previously reviewed the condition of the buildings to determine what repairs would be required.

This property will be part of the Strategic Asset Review to ensure all possibilities are considered.

**Supplementary Question**

Is there an approximate timeframe for the review?

**Response from Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Council.**

We are accelerating it as much as possible. We are working to be able to provide timescales over the summer.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**17 Question from Councillor Majella Anning, to Councillor Olu Babatola, Chair, Pension Fund**

What progress has been made to identify and divest from funds in the portfolio of the Greenwich Pension Fund which provide finance to build illegal settlements in the occupied territories of the Palestinian West Bank.

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Majella Anning for her question.

The Pension Fund's primary objective is to pay the pension costs of its beneficiaries when they are due - the consideration of financial factors is therefore at the heart of its fiduciary duty and it should exercise its investment powers in a manner directed towards what is best for the financial position of the fund. This also means that it should not seek to impose its particular views.

The Fund is not directly invested in any of the specific companies on the UN Human Rights Office's list of business enterprises active in Israel's illegal settlements; instead, it invests through pooled passive index holdings. As the Pension Fund is not the owner of the index, we can't pick and choose the constituents of the index. The fund has little way of influencing the index provider, other than to divest out of the whole pool.

However, the Fund believes in collective engagement and is a member of the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF), which is the UK's leading collaborative shareholder engagement group. LAPFF exists to promote the investment interests of local authority pension funds in the UK and to maximise their influence as shareholders to promote corporate responsibility and high standards of corporate governance amongst the companies in which they invest.

The Forum has engaged with 17 companies whereby they are operating in the Israeli settlements/Occupied Palestinian Territory and has focused on requests for these companies to produce robust, independent, and credible

human rights impact assessments (HRIAs) in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The Forum will continue this approach with these companies.

The Forum has also said it will consider employing appropriate escalation strategies such as providing members with voting recommendations for relevant company AGMs, exploring and instigating collective investor engagement initiatives, and using targeted press coverage to facilitate accountability.

The Panel also continue to be aware of the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill, which aims to prohibit public bodies (including those that administer the Fund) from campaigning, boycotting, seeking divestment from, or sanctioning a specific territory internationally, unless it is endorsed by the government's foreign policy. This Bill has passed through the House of Commons and is working through the House of Lords towards becoming an Act. The actions mentioned here could potentially place the Fund contrary to those Regulations if a boycott was in place.

Finally, the Fund's investment managers who oversee the day-to-day management of investments are expected to undertake appropriate monitoring of current investments against their policies and practices on all issues which could present a material financial risk to the long-term performance of the fund such as corporate governance and environmental factors. The Panel holds meetings with these asset managers to discuss their performance as well as their responsibility towards ESG matters.

### **Supplementary Clarification & Question.**

There was an error in the report. The Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill referred to was not passed before the dissolution of Parliament before the election. As such all Bills which had not passed before a change of Government fall, therefore this Bill does no longer exist.

### **Question**

What steps can be taken to consult with the Forum to present the case for collectively divesting in companies invested in the occupied territories in the light of the recent judgement of the ICJ that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories was illegal.

### **Response from Councillor Olu Babatola, Chair, Pension Fund**

With regard to the developments since the ICJ ruling I would need a full briefing on that. We have listened as a Panel we have diverted £210m away from some companies into more climate change friendly companies. We are always focused on what we could do better. I will escalate your concern to the necessary authorities but wish to assure all those in the Pension Fund that it is secure and growing. I will email an update to all councillors with any information that I am able to share under the Local Government Act 1972, Section 12 when I have been further briefed.

# COUNCIL

24 July 2024

## MEMBERS QUESTIONS

**18 Question from Councillor Danny Thorpe, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

The Presence of the Kings Troops in our borough is a great source of pride for many people. However, I have received reports from a number of residents in Shooters Hill about damage to their property by the horses. In one case, the resident has been waiting more than a year to be compensated for the damage, and I have made enquiries which have been seemingly ignored.

Can the deputy Leader agree to;

1. An immediate review of the plans for their use of the borough roads and temporarily suspend the use of all residential roads pending a full review of the plan
2. Agree to convene an urgent meeting with the Troop Commander to convey our expectation on how residents should be treated when something goes wrong.

### **Reply -**

I thank Councillor Danny Thorpe for his question.

Transportation has no legal powers to prevent members of the Kings Troop from riding on the public highway. However, we will contact them to get a better understanding of their routes, travel requirements and plans and assist in agreeing a preferred route, where possible

### **Supplementary Question**

Will the Cabinet Member use her influence to make a personal intervention in this matter?

### **Response from Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

This is something that we all take really seriously. There are certain powers we have and others that we don't. We will be using whatever partner

influence we have to have these conversations on behalf of our residents. However, we do need more information and evidence that we can take to the table.

# COUNCIL

24 July 2024

## MEMBERS QUESTIONS

**19 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Ann-Marie Cousins, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture & Communities**

What is the annual fee charged by the Council for an allotment plot and what exactly does that cover in terms of maintenance work carried out by the Council?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

We currently charge residents the following allotment rent per annum:

- £210 for a 250 sq.mtr plot.
- £105 for a 125 sq.mtr plot.
  
- £100 for a 250 sq.mtr plot with a concession (residents in receipt of benefits or over 65 years old).
- £50 for a 125 sq.mtr plot with a concession (residents in receipt of benefits or over 65 years old).

Most plots are £125 sq.mtrs but we have some sites with smaller plots and they are charged at pro-rotta rate from the fees above.

The fee is mainly related to the rental of the land per annum. The fee includes use of water on the site and 4 cuts of the grass on the main paths per annum. Allotment tenants are responsible for cutting the grass between their plots.

**Supplementary Question**

There is an issue with a fence that borders the west side of Pippenhall Allotments, Bexley Road. I am sure a notice to remedy should have been sent to the owner but nothing has happened and it now needs officer intervention by way of an inspection, to establish whether the Council are responsible for this health and safety risk. I am happy to accompany the visit. There is also a fallen fence which is blocking the pathway that goes along the perimeter of the allotments.

**Response from Councillor Ann-Marie Cousins, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture & Communities**

The Council has a good asset in the allotments which the community can access. I am sorry to hear about the problems and wonder if it has already been raised as casework? Nevertheless, I have indicated to officers that I would like to go on a ride along to see these sites, so I am happy to add that location to my list. Some allotments are privately run so we would need to check if that was. I can then review what's going on overall and hopefully come up with a good model of what works and how we can encourage other allotment owners to look after the site rather than relying on the Council whose resources are stretched.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**20 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Rachel Taggart-Ryan, Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Enforcement**

The delivery bikes on Eltham High Street continue to cause many problems. Not only do they mount the pavements, drive down cycle lanes, break speed limits, and tailgate, but they are also now totally ignoring road closure signs. They are often causing a danger to pedestrians. As the Cabinet Member will be aware I have raised this repeatedly. In her new role, would she agree to work together with officers and ward councillors to try and find a solution to this growing problem?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

The rise of food delivery bicycle and scooter delivery couriers since the pandemic, continues to cause nuisance and presents problems across all our town and district centres. Officers responded to this same issue in Eltham Town Centre when reported earlier this year as a result of concerns raised and endeavoured to address some of these issues in the following ways:

- Getting riders to use dedicated motorcycle parking bays on the high street with signage.
- Engaging with riders and the businesses that use them to educate on best practice and responsibilities.
- Exploring whether businesses can offer parking bays on their own premises. Unfortunately, this was not a potential option.
- Exploring the possibility of coordinated enforcement action days to dissuade this kind of behaviour.

The Community Safety Enforcement Team (CSET) have recently met with some of the delivery companies such as Uber and Deliveroo due to this being a borough wide problem.

It was agreed that if the team came across any delivery drivers that may be causing Anti-Social Behaviour, they would pass this information on to the

companies to investigate and take appropriate action. This does however depend on us getting relevant information such as the time, date, location of offence and VRM if possible. The more information obtained the easier it will be to narrow down who is causing the problems. The delivery companies have also agreed to send out a generic message to all delivery drivers in the Royal Borough of Greenwich about conduct and appropriate behaviour. CSE Team are regularly patrolling Eltham Town Centre and monitoring this behaviour. Enforcement will continue as well as continued engagement with local businesses and partner teams/agencies to explore alternative options to tackle this problematic behaviour.

To date 21x Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued to delivery drivers for breaches of our Public Spaces Protection Order by operating the vehicle in an anti-social manner. 10x Interventions held with delivery drivers under the same Public Spaces Protection Order but did not escalate to Fixed Penalty Notices.

Given the nature of the problem with respect to dangerous driving, which is totally unacceptable and poses a significant health and safety risk to pedestrians, I will work closely with my Cabinet colleagues Councillors Lekau and Jackie Smith, together with the police to ensure a holistic approach is considered using all the levers we have available. Officers will be in touch regarding a meeting to take this forward.

### **Supplementary Question.**

I have raised this issue many times over the years and it is a massive problem. Would the Cabinet Member please keep all councillors involved in how you plan to address this problem and would you speak to other Councils to see how they are addressing this issue?

### **Response from Councillor Rachel Taggart-Ryan, Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Enforcement**

This is a serious issue and we have spoken to the restaurants and Uber and Deliveroo about managing the bikes and codes of behaviour for their delivery drivers. We have issued 21 fixed penalty notices in that area and will continue to enforce. I am happy to meet and discuss the issues with the ward councillors and continue to try and find a way forward.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

- 21 Question from Councillor Pat Greenwell, to Councillor Ann-Marie Cousins, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture & Communities**

What plans if any have been made for Eltham Christmas Lights Up this year?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Pat Greenwell for her question.

The Council's events team are in the process of working up proposals for Christmas events which will include Sparkle in the Park again this year.

I will keep members informed as the plans develop.

#### **Supplementary Question**

Would the Cabinet Member agree to come along to the Eltham Town Center Partnership to discuss what more could be done to involve local businesses in potentially enable this event to continue?

#### **Response from Councillor Ann-Marie Cousins, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture & Communities**

Yes, I am happy to work in partnership and come along to any meeting. I am aware from my handover discussions that there used to be a parade but due to concerns regarding costs it's been harder to do. There are possibilities but it would need greater business and community engagement, so if that is on the cards I would be happy to come along.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**22 Question from Councillor Roger Tester, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

Can the Cabinet Member please provide an update on what actions the Council intends to take in response to the petitions handed in from

1) West Hallows residents and

2) Larchwood Road residents on the acute traffic problems on these roads?

As she is aware there has been a significant delay in responding to these petitions – when can residents expect to receive an update?

#### **Reply -**

I thank Councillor Roger Tester for his question.

In relation to the above as explained previously both locations have been included within our 24/25 delivery programme. As the work progresses I will continue to provide updates to residents and councillors.

In the meantime with regards to any traffic violations on Larchwood Road I encourage the residents to contact the Community Roadwatch team at the Metropolitan Police Service

#### **Supplementary Question**

Is it possible to have a clearer timetable as residents have waited long enough?

#### **Response from Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

Residents will be informed as and when decisions are made. Once that happens they will be the first to find out.

## **COUNCIL**

**24 July 2024**

### **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**23 Question from Councillor Roger Tester, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

What is the Council's policy on the use of glyphosate to treat weeds on roads and in parks?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Roger Tester for his question.

The Council policy is to use a weed treatment to manage weeds on the public highway. At present, the current method of weed treatment is to use a glyphosate-based product which is applied three times a year.

The Council is currently undertaking a small-scale pilot in two roads where residents are managing weed control in their streets using manual methods. Expansion of the scheme will be considered once the trial is completed and the results have been evaluated in Autumn 2024.

Parks and Open Spaces use of Glyphosate is kept to a minimum amount where alternative forms of weed on vegetation control are inappropriate. For example, control of Japanese Knotweed via direct stem injection, controlled dose application on pathways and to control re-growth from cut tree stumps. Where alternative solutions exist, such as mechanical removal and stump grinding, we use these in preference to chemical control.

**Supplementary Question**

Which roads are in the pilot and when will the results be published?

**Response from Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

I can't remember exactly off the top of my head, but they are in the Blackheath ward where many residents were keen to try it, so we thought

we would use that area for the pilot due to the pre-election periods it has been difficult getting it started, but residents have met with officers and are keen to get it going. Once we have more information I will be happy to feedback to members.

## COUNCIL

24 July 2024

### MEMBERS QUESTIONS

**24 Question from Councillor Roger Tester, to Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability & Transport**

What position does the Cabinet Member intend to take on the specific issue of tolls that will have to be paid by local small business owners, under Transport for London's proposed Blackwall Tunnel and Silvertown Tunnel tolls being consulted on currently?

**Reply -**

I thank Councillor Roger Tester for his question.

Transport for London (TfL) has just begun a [consultation](#) on its proposals for user charge levels, discounts and exemptions, for the Silvertown and Blackwall tunnels.

TfL is proposing a £1 discount<sup>[1]</sup> on the proposed standard off-peak charges for eligible small businesses, sole traders and charities based in the host boroughs (including Royal Greenwich) for a period of at least 12 months.

We are working closely with TfL to understand their proposals and the evidence behind them. We are doing this through the consultation, the Silvertown Tunnel Implementation Group (which is required to be consulted on the proposals, by the Development Consent Order for the Tunnel) and separate discussions with their technical experts. We will respond to their proposals once we have fully assessed them.

You can [have your say](#) until Tuesday, 3 September 2024 and we encourage everyone to do so. This is vital so that we (and TfL) can understand your views.

**No Supplementary Question**

<sup>1</sup> Off of the proposed standard off-peak rate (if made by Auto Pay): £1.50 for cars and small vans; £2.50 for large vans; and £5 for HGVs.