



LIST OF MEMBER QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Member questions and answers for the Council Meeting of the London Borough of Lewisham to be held on Wednesday 17 January 2024.

MEMBER QUESTION NO.1

17 January 2024

Question asked by: Cllr Parry

Relevant Directorate: Housing

Member to reply: Cllr Will Cooper

Question

Lewisham's Landlord Licensing Scheme was approved by the Government in November can you please explain the benefits of this scheme for the 1 in 4 Lewisham residents who are living in the private rented sector

Reply

The private rented sector (PRS) in Lewisham is affected by issues relating to poor property conditions, antisocial behaviour and deprivation.

For example, our PRS Housing Stock Condition Report, carried out in 2021 showed that 22.7 per cent of homes in the PRS were likely to have category 1 hazards, considerably higher than the national average of 13 per cent.

Selective licensing will enable us to:

- simplify enforcement by bringing almost all properties in the PRS under licensing, meaning, for example, failure to carry out repairs will be an automatic licence breach, by means of Civil Penalty Notice or prosecution immediately;
- improve our understanding of conditions in our local PRS, and provide a channel for effective engagement between landlords and the Council, enabling us to better raise landlord awareness of their responsibilities;
- generate sufficient revenue to cover the costs of our enforcement and compliance activities, including providing advice and support to renters, and identifying unlicensed properties through an intelligence-led approach; and
- develop and publish clear targets and metrics to measure progress against our goal of improving conditions in Lewisham's PRS.

MEMBER QUESTION NO.2

17 January 2024

Question asked by: Cllr Erheriene

Relevant Directorate: Corporate Resources

Member to reply: Cllr Amanda De Ryk

Question

In the Autumn Statement Jeremy Hunt announced that they will be cutting the Household Support Fund. How has this fund been used in Lewisham so far and what impact will this have on families in our borough?"

Reply

The 2023/24 iteration of Household Support Fund (HSF) was for £5.337m in Lewisham and it is being distributed as set out below;

Proposed spend council	Amount
Children receiving Free School Meals	£2,007,000
Energy efficiency - Residential	£200,000
Households NOT receiving Cost of Living payments	£381,000
Localised application scheme for schools (3 x £300k)	£900,000
School kitchens – Capital support	£150,000
Admin support (Benefits)	£40,000
Programme Management	£48,000
Advice outreach via Citizens Advice	£170,000
Roadshows	£20,000
Essential Goods (Lewisham Local)	£96,000
Communications	£20,000
Income maximisation using LiFT data	£60,000
Holiday Activities and Food scheme	£200,000
Low income Family Tracker (LiFT) tool	£48,000
Better Off calculator – money saving options	£41,000
Unallocated	£956,000

There is currently an unspent amount of £956k which is scheduled to be uses in the fourth quarter of the year on; a further application scheme for residents who have thus far not received support, a loan consolidation scheme for some of our resident debtors and, where possible, homelessness prevention.

It is difficult to demonstrate the direct impact for residents if there is no further funding next year but clearly there are risks without this level of financial support available to the hardest up residents of the Borough.

Pressures from the cost of living are likely to remain high and families will certainly be adversely affected where the support provided for free school meals is withdrawn.

Separate, but related, to the HSF; vulnerable residents receiving certain benefits will also be worse off in 2024/25 as there are unlikely to be the cost of living payments of up to £1,200 made by central government and no payments of £500 paid by the Council to those households receiving benefits but not qualifying for the central government support.

In preparation for the absence of a further version of the HSF, we have invested some of the funding into sustainable solutions and acquired software that we, partners and customers can use for the next few years to identify any shortfalls in income and to ensure these shortfalls are addressed to negate financial pressures as best we can.

We are also continuing to look at what the Council and partners can do to achieve our aspiration of supporting residents financially through income maximisation (claiming of all the benefits they are entitled to), debt advice and other solutions.

MEMBER QUESTION NO.3

17 January 2024

Question asked by: Cllr Olaru

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Cllr James-J Walsh

Question

I really welcome the news of the £3m investment into the Downham side of Beckenham Place Park. What improvements will local residents see when this work is completed?"

Reply

We are proud to continue our investment in local green spaces and recognise that they can improve the lives of our residents on many different levels. The investment in Beckenham Place Park has several aims:

Climate resilience – the works include the construction of a 25,000m³ flood storage basin which in the event of the Ravensbourne River flooding will reduce the risk of damage to homes and infrastructure downstream.

Ecological enhancements – recreation of past wetland habitats, improvement of the river corridor environment, planting of over 5000m² of new native woodland including nationally rare black poplar species, creation of new meadow and marginal aquatic planting.

Public amenity – our improvements include:

- A new playground with table tennis tables
- A new multi use play area with basketball hoops
- A new outdoor gym
- An activity trail for running and cycling
- New and restored footpaths allowing visitors with mobility issues to explore more of the park. New benches and bins will be provided along these routes.
- We are also working to attract a new café provider who will provide additional public toilets for the Downham side of the park

We are grateful to the Mayor of London and our partners at the Environment Agency for their support to deliver these improvements that will enhance the park for local people.

MEMBER QUESTION NO.4

17 January 2024

Question asked by: Cllr Atkinson

Relevant Directorate: Children and Young People

Member to reply: Cllr Chris Barnham

Question

How many family hubs have Lewisham Council opened in 2024?

Reply

We are building a new network of Family Hubs to cover each part of the Borough, and make it easier for parents, carers and young people to access the help and support they need by bringing together different services and types of support in a single location.

The Council launched 2 Family Hubs in 2023: -

- Clyde Family Hub in Evelyn Ward in May 2023
- Bellingham Family Hub in December 2023

It is anticipated that 3 more Family Hubs will be opened during 2024/25: -

- Donderry Family Hub in the existing Children and Family Centre will be opened early in 2024.
- Honor Oak Youth Centre, Telegraph Hill will become the 4th Family Hub, also during 2024.
- A Project Group led by health colleagues has been set up to progress the repurposing of the Kaleidoscope Health Centre in Rushey Green with the aim of housing the 5th Family Hub there.

MEMBER QUESTION NO.5

17 January 2024

Question asked by: Cllr Lavery

Relevant Directorate: Place

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

What is the status of plans to improve traffic management and road safety at the junction of Sydenham Road and Mayow Road and when will residents be consulted?

Reply

The Council is working to finalise designs for this junction and intend to implement improvements this year to address the concerns, aiming to start work in March 2024, following resident notification by end of February / beginning of March. Ward members have been contacted and officers will discuss the scheme before informing residents and proceeding.

MEMBER QUESTION NO.6

17 January 2024

Question asked by: Cllr Jackson

Relevant Directorate: Housing

Member to reply: Cllr Will Cooper

Question

When does Lewisham's Landlord Licensing Scheme come into force?

Reply

The official start date for the Selective Licensing Scheme is 1st July 2024.

MEMBER QUESTION NO.7

17 January 2024

Question asked by: Cllr Best

Relevant Directorate: Place

Member to reply: Deputy Mayor Dacres (Acting as Mayor)

Question

Can the Planning Service provide an update on the recognition of Amenity Societies in the borough and a map showing which areas are covered by what Amenity Society or similar group including the Conservation Areas?

Reply

The Planning Service received 16 applications and has taken further time to consider those applications which overlap following discussions with community groups held at the Community Forum Meeting in November 2023. At this meeting, Officers discussed overlapping applications with groups who explained their reason including historical work in those areas.

Officers have engaged with groups since July 2022, and an update of Amenity Society recognition will be reported to the Councils Sustainable Development Select Committee in March 2024. Where groups over-lap they would have equal responsibility and call-in powers to Chairs Review.

A map of all conservation areas and Amenity Society applications is attached to this reply. Applications for Amenity Society recognition were made to conservation areas outlined in blue, with double or over-lap applications to those outlined in red.

MEMBER QUESTION NO.8

17 January 2024

Question asked by: Cllr Curran

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Cllr James-J Walsh

Question

Is there a fixed date given for a comprehensive building survey of Sydenham Library as on 17th May 2023 a survey was promised to take place within the current financial year.

Reply

The comprehensive building survey of Sydenham Library has been delayed due to the submission of the Libraries Improvement Fund bid to Arts Council England. We are due to hear the outcome from this bid in March 2024 and if successful the comprehensive building survey will go ahead as part of the improvement works. If the bid is unsuccessful, we will still go ahead and commission the full conditions survey shortly after hearing the outcome of the bid.

MEMBER QUESTION NO.9

17 January 2024

Question asked by: Cllr Curran

Relevant Directorate: Place

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

Will the Cabinet member make a statement about the drainage surveys that have taken place in Sydenham in Kirkdale and elsewhere relevant to the continued sporadic flooding that occurs at the bottom of Kirkdale after heavy rainfall?

Reply

The drainage gullies at the area of flooding at the west side of the Sydenham Road / Kirkdale Rail Bridge were surveyed in May last year. The survey did show that the gully outside The Kirkdale Bookshop is a soakaway gully and not connected to the Thames Water Sewer but is not considered to be causing the problem.

The area of flooding is around the gully itself, on the opposite side of the road, outside KF & H Estate Agents. This gully is clear and connected to the sewer. The other gullies further along Kirkdale, leading to this point, have all been cleaned and are running clear.

We are aware there was another incident in November, although this did not affect properties. Officers are currently assessing the next steps to help resolve this matter.