

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 1

Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

22 JANUARY 2014

Question asked by: Ray Woolford

Member to reply: Councillor Wise

Question

Can the Council please confirm how many Lewisham Children were in Hostels and bed and Breakfast over the Christmas Period?

Can the Council explain why families in this type of housing are only allowed to bid on one property per week, and why in light of the huge cost to local, tax payers and the misery of the families they are not given great priority for housing?

Does the Council Agree with us that it is totally unacceptable that families are living in one room longer than 6 weeks at greater cost to the Council than living in social housing?

Reply

The Council has always only ever used nightly paid (B & B type) accommodation as the last resort when there are no other alternatives available for homeless households. When it is used all households placed in

this accommodation are immediately prioritised for a move to more suitable alternative temporary accommodation.

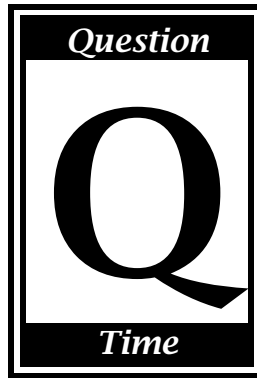
Lewisham is committed to reducing the use of temporary accommodation to a minimum and to this end has embarked upon a Council led house building programme for the first time in 30 years as well as continuing with an active programme of new build housing development with its Registered Provider partners to increase the supply of permanent housing in the borough. This programme includes new build, regeneration, conversion of existing properties and more recently approval for a self build scheme all of which has delivered over a 1000 units of affordable accommodation since 2011.

34 households were accommodated in the traditional B&B type accommodation with shared facilities. None of the households placed in accommodation with shared facilities have been there for more than 6 weeks which is a statutory target set by Government.

The Council does prioritise homelessness in its Housing Allocations Policy. The annual lettings plan, which is publicly available, seeks to distribute fairly the limited properties available each year to all the groups in housing need on the Housing Register. The current plan has a target to allocate 26% of all lettings to homeless applicants in temporary accommodation which is the single highest number of properties given to any applicant group on the Housing Register. To put this into perspective the next highest percentage of all lets given to a particular client group on the Housing Register is 10%. This reflects the high priority that the Council has given to homeless households in temporary accommodation.

In October 2012 when the Council adopted its new Allocations Policy all applicants were permitted one bid per week regardless of their banding. This was adopted following an extensive consultation process with all the Council's stakeholders and partners before being approved by the Mayor and Cabinet on 20th June 2012

The previous system of allowing applicants to bid for up to 5 properties per week adversely affected applicants themselves as it meant that a high number of bids were unsuccessful and the overall waiting time was longer. The previous system was also more cumbersome, inefficient and administratively expensive as well as leading to longer void periods on empty properties and this in turn had a significant adverse impact on rental income for the authority and its partner Registered Providers.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 2

Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

22 JANUARY 2014

Question asked by: Patricia Richardson

Member to reply: Deputy Mayor

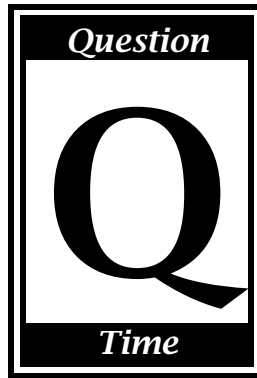
Question

The Christmas Lights in Lewisham were of noticeably poor quality for Christmas 2013, where they existed at all. Was this due to lack of funds? Or was it due to a new supplier, who failed? If the latter is the case, will the Council be pressing for repayment or a financial penalty on behalf of its residents?

Reply

There has been no change in the location of festive lights or type, the Council provides the lights at those agreed locations and they are then installed and maintained by our service provider Skanska.

The exception to this is Blackheath, where in the past these have not been provided by the Council. The Council were made aware that there was a risk of not providing festive lights and, therefore, at short notice were able to provide festive lighting for Blackheath.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 3

Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

22 JANUARY 2014

Question asked by: Peter Richardson

Member to reply: Mayor

Question

Lewisham Council has continued to expand its programme of outsourcing several traditional council services to the private sector which seem to offer little or no accountability to the council taxpayer. Has the Council not considered an outcome of this programme is likely to result in an even sharper fall in voting turnout at the next local election on May 22nd than that already experienced in the past? Is there no one in Lewisham Council concerned about the yawning gap between voters and their assumed representatives with so many vital services now in the hands of quasi-independent corporations?

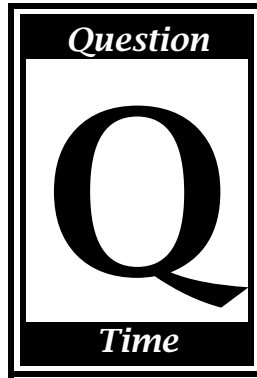
Reply

Lewisham Council has no programme of outsourcing traditional Council services. Decisions on whether services are provided by external organisations are made on an individual basis and judgements are made primarily on the quality of service provided. If an external organisation is able to provide a higher or equal level of service at a lower cost, then it is only prudent for the Council to consider this as a genuine option.

I do not believe that voter turn out is affected by outsourced services. There are many reasons why people chose not to vote on election day and I believe it is the responsibility of all candidates to help increase the numbers who do.

The table below lists voter turn out in each London Borough at the last two local elections in 2010 and 2006. As the 2010 election was held at the same time as the General Election, turn out was significantly higher. I would consider Wandsworth and Barnet to be two Councils that have outsourced a significantly higher proportion of their services than Lewisham. Both had a higher voter turn out than Lewisham in 2010 and 2006.

Borough	Percentage poll 2010	Percentage poll 2006
Barking and Dagenham	60.4	38.3
Barnet	62.8	41.7
Brent	60.1	37.3
Bromley	68.9	42.0
Camden	59.6	37.5
Croydon	63.8	40.4
Ealing	62.1	37.7
Enfield	64.5	38.0
Greenwich	62.0	35.8
Hackney	57.8	34.4
Hammersmith and Fulham	61.9	39.7
Haringey	60.5	35.8
Harrow	65.6	41.4
Havering	66.0	39.5
Hillingdon	63.4	38.1
Hounslow	59.7	37.8
Islington	61.9	33.1
Kensington and Chelsea	47.6	29.0
Kingston upon Thames	68.7	45.2
Lambeth	57.5	30.4
Lewisham	59.8	33.3
Merton	66.3	42.9
Newham	52.3	34.6
Redbridge	62.4	38.4
Richmond upon Thames	73.0	51.1
Southwark	57.8	33.7
Sutton	69.8	43.8
Tower Hamlets	60.5	40.7
Waltham Forest	59.2	37.7
Wandsworth	62.7	34.1
Westminster	53.2	29.8
London	61.8	37.9



PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 4

Priority 2

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

22 JANUARY 2014

Question asked by: Ray Woolford

Member to reply: Councillor Wise

Question

A recent BBC report stated that Lewisham borough has a staggering 2,555 empty homes. What is the Council doing to ensure these empty properties are bought back to use to address the borough's chronic housing crises?

Reply

Our latest Council Tax return to government (CTB1) in October 2013 reported that we have 2,214 empty dwellings, which represents approximately 2% of our overall housing stock. 85% of these properties are owned by private individuals.

The total number of empty dwellings reported are a snap shot of empty dwellings in October 2013 and the vast majority do not require any action as they are not long term empty dwellings. The total number will include all social housing sector empty properties largely due to awaiting demolition or

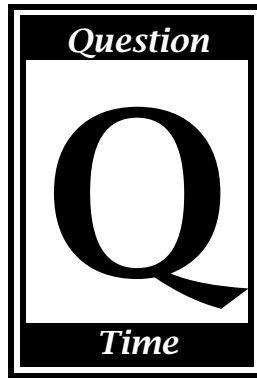
refurbishment, or in the private sector include properties awaiting probate, repossessed dwellings, owners going into care or moving out of the area/country and those where repairs and refurbishment is being undertaken. In addition it will include properties awaiting letting, occupation, newly built dwellings and properties developed from conversions which still need to be let

The focus of the Council's targeted action and concern are the 737 properties which have been empty for 6 months or more and which are the subject of complaint and giving rise to nuisance and worry to local residents.

The Council offers a range of partnerships and support to owners of empty property. In addition the Council has been awarded an allocation of empty homes grant. The first tranche of this budget is being matched against schemes across the borough.

The Council is also working closely with the community groups in the borough who have been awarded funding by the government. A large eyesore dwelling in Brockley Grove SE4 has recently been brought back into use in partnership with PHASES. The 3 & 4 bed flats developed have housed overcrowded tenants. Work to repair and renovate a long term problematic property in Romborough Way SE13 has recently commenced in partnership with ADCRIS CIC –social enterprise. This property was squatted by occupants giving rise to anti social behaviour and fly tipping.

Where owners of empty property do not respond to offers of help and support and there is no valid reason why a dwelling has been left empty, enforcement action is considered, namely the use of an empty dwelling management order. Over a 100 empty dwelling management order notices have been served on owners of empty properties. 43 units of accommodation have been brought back into use through 2012/13 as a result of grant support, enforcement action, partnerships and advice.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 5

Priority 2

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

22 JANUARY 2014

Question asked by: Patricia Richardson

Member to reply: Councillor Muldoon (Chair of Healthier Communities Select Committee)

Question

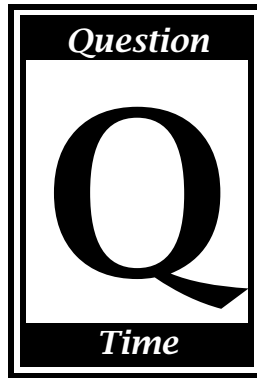
It has come to my notice that the Healthier Communities Select Committee is to produce a Monitoring Report on CEL. Why has this been instituted? What exactly is meant by a monitoring report and are any guidelines or specifications included? What are the expected outcomes? Is there a list of expected contributors? Will any staff/students be asked to contribute or even be made aware that this is being done? Will the report be made publicly available through CEL centres?

Reply

The Healthier Communities Select Committee routinely scrutinises the performance of the Council and other partner organisations, in relation to policy objectives, performance targets and service outcomes in the areas of Health and Wellbeing, Adult Social Care, Libraries, lifelong learning and Community Education Lewisham. The Committee agrees an annual programme of work through which it reviews all of these areas, focusing on priority areas each year. After consideration of an officer report and appropriate evidence, if it feels it is necessary, the Committee can make a

report of its views and recommendations for action to the Council or to the Mayor and Cabinet. Mayor and Cabinet is required to consider the views of the Committee and provide a response within 2 months.

Therefore, as part of its annual work programme, the Committee requests an update from officers on Community Education Lewisham each year. The Committee last considered a report on CEL on 6 February 2013 and is due to receive a further update on 5 February 2014. The report provided to the Committee ordinarily includes information about funding, courses offered, enrolment, partnership working, service improvements and key performance indicators. This is not an in depth review undertaken by the committee and therefore would not, as a matter of course, include contributions from staff and students over and above the feedback that the service ordinarily gathers. The report will be publicly available on the Council website.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 6

Priority 2

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

22 JANUARY 2014

Question asked by: Peter Richardson

Member to reply: Deputy Mayor

Question

We are told that any monetary surplus achieved from the payment of Parking Permit fees, parking violations and the takings of parking meters is to be fed back in to the Service which may also include road repairs.

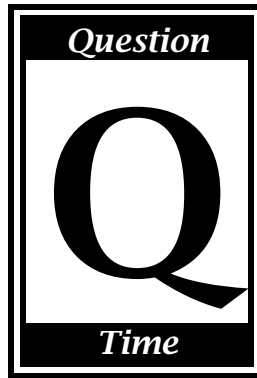
Is anyone at the Council monitoring this? Some of the roads in the borough are in an appalling state of repair with crumbling surfaces and pot holes becoming seriously hazardous to drivers and their vehicles. Has an audit ever been carried out?

Reply

Under the Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984 the Council is required to maintain a separate account of its on-street parking business activities and to report the outcome and the use made of any surplus generated annually to the Mayor of London. The report, made by way of a return to Transport for London, must contain all expenditure and income in relation to the provision, management and enforcement of on-street parking in the Borough.

The return for 2012/13 showed a surplus of £2.5m, which was applied to improved lighting and safety maintenance.

Twice yearly annual inspections are carried out of all the borough's road network to identify defects and responsive maintenance works. In addition the Council carries out a condition survey of all its carriageways on a rolling programme so that all are surveyed every 3 years. As part of the Council's commitment to maintain the local environment , we have a major programme for resurfacing roads over a number of years and this year we are investing £5m in carriageway and footway works.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 7

Priority 3

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

22 JANUARY 2014

Question asked by: Patricia Richardson

Member to reply: Councillor Best

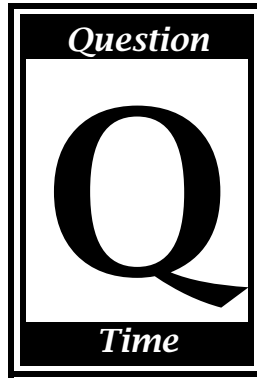
Question

What arrangements is the Council making for the possible closure of Grove Park Adult Education Centre that will include staff and students and the future of Adult Education in the south/east of the borough?

Reply

The Council is fully committed to ensuring that Adult Education continues to be provided in Grove Park. Pressure to provide more primary school places has meant that the option of expanding Coopers Lane School into the building currently occupied by Community Education Lewisham is now the subject of a public consultation. It is proposed to move the current Grove Park CEL provision to 333 Baring Road. CEL will be holding a separate consultation on the proposed relocation. This will enable all current and potential students to consider whether the best relocation site has been identified, to shape the new curriculum for the proposed site and to influence any issues relating to the move itself.

This consultation will commence on 20 January and run until 10 February 2014.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 8

Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

22 JANUARY 2014

Question asked by: Mary McKernan

Member to reply: Councillor Smith

Question

I would like to thank Lewisham Borough Council for its decision to add The Windmill Public House to the Register of Assets of Community Value. In doing so the Council has recognized the viability and importance of The Windmill to the social infrastructure of our area.

Sainsburys want to lease The Windmill for 15 years and carry out building works to convert it to a supermarket. Can Lewisham Council now use the Localism Act to help protect The Windmill from sale or lease as a supermarket?

Reply

If the owner of an asset which has been included on the Council's Register of Assets of Community Value wants to enter into a "relevant disposal" of their property they must notify the Council in writing first. The Council is then required to publicise the proposed disposal of the asset and notify the community group that originally nominated the asset for listing of the

proposed disposal. There is then an initial moratorium period of 6 weeks during which an eligible community interest group may make a request to be treated as a potential bidder. If such a request is made, there is then a full moratorium period of 6 months to give the community interest group an opportunity to prepare a bid. During that 6 month period, the owner may sell to an eligible community interest group but no one else. At the end of the 6 month period, the owner is not obliged to accept a bid from a community interest group and can sell to whoever they choose until a further 12 month period expires. However, if no sale takes place during that 12 month period and the owner subsequently wishes to enter into a relevant disposal, the above process must be repeated.

The Council will ensure that the relevant provisions of the Localism Act are followed whenever it is notified of a proposal to make a relevant disposal of any asset which has been listed on the Council's Register of Assets of Community Value. However, a relevant disposal is defined in the Localism Act as meaning either the sale of the freehold or the grant of a new lease of more than 25 years. The grant of a 15 year lease would not be a relevant disposal for the purposes of the Act and therefore falls outside of the above provisions. The Council has no discretion over this. It should also be noted that these provisions only apply to a disposal of a listed asset, not a change of use which is a planning matter.