

QUESTION No. 1
Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

18 JANUARY 2017

Question by Councillor Hall
of the Mayor

Question

The Government had issued the Local Government Finance Settlement on 15th December. The Local Government Association has publicly stated that it warns the next few years will continue to be extremely challenging for councils who face an overall £5.8 billion funding gap by 2020. What is the Mayor's view?

Reply

Yes the financial outlook for Local Government over the next few years will continue to remain extremely challenging.

In the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement new priorities were highlighted but there was no new money for local government and the ongoing funding reductions to local government through to 2020/21 were confirmed. For example; the monies announced for social care, was a reallocation of monies already due to local government for building new homes. This follows years of reductions to the level of resources committed to local government and growing pressure on Council services as the result of government policies and the growth in population, particularly in London.

These changes have forced Lewisham to reduce its staffing by over 2,000 since 2010 and the Council has sought to do so in such a way as to protect front line services. That protection has not, of course, been absolute but we have succeeded in "putting the frontline first". We have also managed to continue to work in ways which demonstrate that a Labour Council has distinctive policies which can be sustained whether it is the London Living Wage, prioritising affordable housing or working together with our communities.

I have made the point many times that Lewisham's overall financial position has been strong because we have taken prudential decisions over time. However, while this enables us to avoid panic measures and even "invest to save", the unrelenting pressures mean that each year it becomes harder to balance our budgets in ways that are both financially responsible and politically acceptable. Once again, as the Council looks to set its budget for 2017/18, we will need to use some reserves to meet our commitments and aspirations.

The work for the Council continues; focused on serving the population, meeting the needs of the most vulnerable to reduce inequality, and building the place through strong communities.

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

18 JANUARY 2017

Question by Councillor Jacq Paschoud
of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Question

Can the cabinet member confirm that the Council's Travel to School policy is completely compliant with government guidelines and that no child with an EHC plan who is unable to walk to their named school is being denied transport?
Can he confirm that no young people between 16 and 25 have declined a college place having been denied transport?

Reply

The Council's Travel Assistance policy is fully compliant with government guidelines and legislation. Applications for travel assistance are assessed against the agreed eligibility criteria - this includes any mobility difficulties. A form of travel assistance is provided where any child or young person has clearly identified needs that stop them accessing their place of education with the support of a parent/carer/family member, even if they are within the statutory distance. For some children it may be reasonable to expect a parent/carer to accompany them, either walking to school or accessing the free public transport service by TfL, this will be dependent on the complexity of the individual's needs.

We are unaware at this time, that any young person has declined a college place due to being denied travel assistance. Having an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or being granted a college place does not guarantee travel assistance support. Post 16 Travel Assistance support is a discretionary service currently offered by the Council in addition to our statutory obligations.

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

18 JANUARY 2017

Question by Councillor John Paschoud
of the Cabinet Member for Resources

What has been the cost of keeping open the Lewisham Civic Suite building on days between the Christmas and New Year bank holidays? How many Council staff and visitors (not including staff needed to keep the building safely open) used the building during those days, for how many hours in total?

Reply

The Lewisham Civic Suite was operational between 8am and 5pm on 28th to 30th December 2016.

The building heating and lighting cost, based on set times and available data, was approximately £1,200 for the three day period.

Based on information from security, seventeen officers and one Member entered the building over the period and there were no visitors recorded.

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

18 JANUARY 2017

Question by Councillor Curran
of the Cabinet Member for the Public Realm

Question

What was the due process undertaken after the issue of request for any expressions of interest for any or all of the buildings in Beckenham Place Park?

Reply

I am happy to confirm that in December the Heritage Lottery Fund approved the Council's round 2 Parks for People bid and released a further £4.7 million for the implementation of improvements in Beckenham Place Park.

The Council's initial focus for the restoration of Beckenham Place Park is on restoring the landscape of the park and key facilities for park users, this work is scheduled to complete in 2019. A subsequent phase involves restoration and re-use of three other buildings in the park to complete the vision for the regenerated park. The Council issued a 'call for ideas' in respect of these buildings in July 2016.

The call for ideas was carried out to help inform later phases of the project and gave the Council an opportunity to set out our vision for the park and to invite a broad range of ideas for how that vision could be completed. The call for ideas was not the beginning of a formal partner selection process and therefore no formal assessment of these proposals against one another has been undertaken.

As an initial exercise to test the appetite for involvement across a range of sectors it has been useful and will help inform our emerging strategy for building restoration and re-use which will be reported to Mayor & Cabinet in March 2017.

QUESTION No 5.
Priority 2

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

18 JANUARY 2017

Question by Councillor Hall
of the Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Older People

Question

The Government has issued the Public Health Grant Settlement on 15th December. The London Borough of Lewisham is to receive a further cut in grant to £24.9 million. How does the Cabinet Member intend to respond to this?

Reply

The cut to the public health grant was announced by the Government in February 2016 and will be a year on year reduction totalling 9.6% by 2020. This was in addition to the in-year cut imposed in 2015/16.

A consultation on proposed Public Health savings to meet the reduction in the public health grant in 2017/18 was run over the summer 2016.

The consultation report went to Healthier Communities Select Committee on 13 September 2016.

Following consultation, Mayor and Cabinet agreed the savings proposed against the following areas: staying healthy services (including stop smoking), sexual health, school nursing and health visiting.

These savings will be implemented by officers over 2017/18 in line with the reduced grant.

Full details of the proposals and the health impact assessment can be found on the Council's website with the consultation documents.

HCSC <http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=4191&Ver=4>

Mayor and Cabinet Report

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=4305>

QUESTION No 6.
Priority 2

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING
18 JANUARY 2017

Question by Councillor Curran
of the Cabinet Member for the Public Realm

Question

What process was undertaken to let the Mansion House in Beckenham Place Park, who is the occupier or occupiers and what steps have been taken to protect the Council's interests?

Reply

I am happy to confirm that in December the Heritage Lottery Fund approved the Council's round 2 Parks for People bid and released a further £4.7 million for the implementation of improvements in Beckenham Place Park.

Following the Mayor's decision in February 2016 to close the golf course and proceed with the masterplan, council officers have been exploring ways to safeguard the mansion until funds are raised for its restoration. Until closure of the golf course, the mansion was kept safe from squatting and vandalism through the daily use by Glendale Golf of the café space.

Full scale restoration and re-use of the mansion at a cost of c. £4m is not likely to commence for at least 2-3 years, and the best value way to secure the building's safety in the interim is through meanwhile use, which offers a considerable saving over traditional security, as well as benefits to the park from increased activity.

An exploration with potential meanwhile use operators began in April 2016 and continued through to August when it became clear that the lead organisation that officers were in discussion with did not have the capacity to take on temporary use of the mansion. In September, RJK Properties who had shown an interest in developing a proposal for restoring another building were approached to see if they were interested in developing a meanwhile use of the mansion building. They were able to put together a proposal for use of the building based around a blend of outward looking uses including; community activities, events and performances, studio use and workshop space, health and leisure, education and retail.

The Council's interests are safeguarded through a 22 month lease with the organisation.

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING
18 JANUARY 2017

Question by Councillor Hall
of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Question

What is the future for Sedgehill School?

Reply

By way of background, two years ago the Council used its statutory powers to intervene in Sedgehill School because of poor performance and concerns that there was no prospect of it improving. This intervention took the form of the appointment of an Interim Executive Board in January 2015.

The Board commissioned a thorough review of teaching, learning and management at the school. While that review identified some strengths, there were weaknesses across many areas that required rapid change and additional support. In particular, the review identified the need for the senior leadership team to be strengthened. In addition, it highlighted safeguarding concerns.

The IEB also discovered through a detailed budget review that the school had a budget deficit in the region of £1m, which the school had not reported to the council. The IEB appointed new, interim leadership to the school in the summer of 2015.

Ofsted inspected the school in February 2016 and while recognising many positives in what the IEB and senior leadership had achieved in a short time, rated Sedgehill as an inadequate school. Following this (as required by long-standing legislation), the DfE made an academy order in May 2016. This academy order remains in place and since that time, the DfE (via the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC)) has been trying to identify a suitable academy sponsor for Sedgehill. Given the long-standing requirement for schools in this situation to join an academy sponsor and the duty on the local authority to facilitate a quick conversion, council officers, the IEB and the leadership of the school have worked collaboratively with the RSC to ensure that potential sponsors have all the information they need and understand the positive prospects for the school given the future demand for school places in Lewisham. In particular, the IEB has achieved an in-year balanced budget for the school.

Despite this, the sponsors approached through the summer and autumn terms decided not to go beyond the initial 'due diligence' stage, citing uncertainty about the

future financial prospects of the school as some low numbers in certain year groups work their way through the school - and the challenges they see in turning around the popularity of the school. Within this, the fact that the school is part of a PFI is an additional challenge (it reduces flexibility around fixed costs) but this should not be a 'showstopper' as it represents good value for money and is delivering high standard accommodation.

Currently, the IEB continues to govern the school and the leadership team which joined in July 2015 remains in place. Together – and with concerted support from the Children and Young People's Directorate and Lewisham Secondary Challenge – they are implementing the school's post-Ofsted improvement plan. We are all grateful to them for the work they are doing under challenging circumstances and they have agreed to continue running the school until the end of 2017, hoping to hand over the school to a positive, permanent arrangement. Meanwhile, given the prolonged period of uncertainty and the potential impact on the school, recruitment of students and of staff, the RSC, the IEB and the LA have agreed to collaborate to explore the commissioning of an external school improvement partner to provide additional capacity to support the school during this challenging time. This arrangement should be confirmed in the next month. The RSC has reiterated his confidence that an academy sponsor can be found for the school for January 2018 but given the lack of success so far, the Mayor has written to the Schools Minister, Lord Nash, highlighting the problems that this period of uncertainty is causing for the school and asking him to review the policy and legislative framework which has put this (and many other schools across the country) into this position.

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING
18 JANUARY 2017

Question by Councillor Curran
of the Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Older People

Question

What process has been undertaken to gather expressions of interest in running the Broadway Theatre bar and how many potential operators have come forward?

Reply

Marketing consultants were appointed during October 2017 and a 2 month process began to obtain expressions of interest.

Total initial expressions of interest: 28

Translated into total viewings: 11 (with second viewings: 14)

Resulted in topline proposals: 6

Turned into viable proposals: 4

Shortlisting took place on 16 December, and the preferred bidder was selected to begin negotiating heads of terms for the license. The negotiation is currently underway. I am hopeful that the prospective provider will be operational from February onwards.

The opportunity was marketed via the following media channels (working with Lewisham Comms team). I agreed to the marketing approach that was undertaken.

- Local online forums x9
- Local community Facebook pages x18
- Twitter campaign
- Lewisham Council webpages:
 - Regeneration
 - Tenders
- Lewisham Life newsletter
- Catford South Assembly email shot
- Rushey Green Assembly meeting
- South London Press
- The Mercury
- East London Lines
- *Love Catford* website
- Brockley Central blog

QUESTION No 9.
Priority 4

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING
18 JANUARY 2017

Question by Councillor Curran
of the Cabinet Member for Housing

Question

How many council houses in Lewisham have been built since 2014?

Reply

The Council's Housing Strategy commits it to help residents at this time of severe and urgent housing need. The scale of the housing crisis in London is demonstrated most acutely by the increase in the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation. There are now over 50,000 such households in London, and over 1,800 in Lewisham – an 89% increase since 2011.

The Council has taken decisive action to ensure that the homes our residents need are built. Under the London Plan, the borough has a target of 1,105 new homes per year of all tenures. Lewisham regularly exceeds this target and in the past ten years Lewisham delivered 2,765 homes over and above the target for that period.

Of course, it is also important that we deliver the absolute maximum possible amount of new affordable homes for our residents. The Council is working closely with housing partners to deliver 2,000 affordable homes within this administration. Lewisham has a strong track record of delivering the affordable homes our residents need - Lewisham was the only London borough to exceed all its affordable housing targets over the past three years.

An important part of the Council's strategy for delivering new homes is its own programme of building the first Council homes in a generation. This programme is now well under way and a number of schemes have been approved by Mayor and Cabinet over the past year. In addition to the nine that have been completed, there are a further 126 new homes on-site and a further 60 have planning consent and are due to start imminently. This means that a total of 195 new social rented homes are now underway. There are a further 19 projects current at the design stage, a number of which will be considered at planning committees during 2017. In total these 19 projects have the capacity for a further 330 council homes.

In addition to these permanent council homes, the Council has also sought to meet the demand for emergency housing for homeless households by increasing its supply of temporary accommodation. This includes the 24 new homes at PLACE/Ladywell as well as a further 48 emergency housing units provided by

converting the former care home Hamilton Lodge and long term empty office block Kelvin House.

As well as increasing the supply of homes in the borough, these projects also mean that homeless families can be moved out of unsuitable nightly-paid accommodation and into better quality and more stable temporary accommodation until more permanent housing can be found.