

QUESTION No. 1
Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

21 FEBRUARY 2018

Question by Councillor Hall
of the Mayor

Question

As this is the Mayor's final budget, how does setting this budget compare to his first budget under a Labour Government?

Reply

The first budget involved some savings as the previous year's budget had overspent but not on the scale that has become familiar since the advent of Austerity. The government of the day had great ambitions for the nation and saw local authorities, particularly ones like Lewisham with significant levels of deprivation as key partners in meeting those ambitions. Overall funding was relatively stable but in addition there were considerable amounts of specific grant funding available. In addition there were capital programmes which offered the opportunity to improve many aspects of the borough. Both the Decent Homes Programme and Building Schools for the Future were introduced by that Government and these have made a huge difference to many of our residents and students and staff in our schools.

It is difficult to think of anything remotely as far sighted that has been done by the Government elected in 2010 and their flawed understanding of the vital role of local government has been reflected in a cavalier approach to financial support for the sector and the vital services it provides. Nothing in the settlement that was received from Government this year changes that view.

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

21 FEBRUARY 2018

Question by Councillor Curran
of the Mayor

Question

Would the Mayor give an update on Crown Post Offices in the borough?

Reply

There are 22 Post Offices in the borough of which 2 are directly managed Post Offices formerly known as Crown Post Offices.

However there are changes at both of these Post Offices:

Sydenham Post Office – 44 Sydenham Road

The Post Office occupy the ground floor of 44 Sydenham Road. The Post Office have signed a new lease with the Council on the premises and the Post office will be operated by ZCO limited.

New Cross Gate Post Office 199 – 205 New Cross Road

The Post Office concluded the consultation and reported the outcome on the 22 November 2017. The feedback the Post Office received was on the new location and the products and services available. The Post Office is going ahead with the move of the Post Office to the OneStop 165 – 167 New Cross Road SE14 5DG on the 15 February 2018.

There are also some changes proposed at:

Lewisham High Street Post Office 302 Lewisham High Street

The Post Office are consulting on the move of this Post Office to Sheel Pharmacy 298 Lewisham High Street with some minor changes to the services available. The consultation closes on the 2 March 2018 with a proposed move date in May/June 2018.

The Council is not aware of any other changes to Post Office Services in the borough.

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COUNCIL MEETING

21 FEBRUARY 2018

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

Question

Following the successful pilot in Whitefoot Ward of involving local residents in monitoring the feed of one of the Council's surveillance cameras, to improve the rate of catching and enforcing against fly-tipping perpetrators, can the Council provide the inexpensive but highly deterring effect of leaving behind cheaper but visible cameras on lampposts when the main camera is moved on to other fly-tipping hotspots, so that the deterrence factor is maintained?

Given the plethora of smaller filming devices now at large amongst many road users, has the Council reviewed the size, power and cost logistics of camera equipment now on the market that could extend the number of locations that the Council (and participating citizens) could monitor?

Reply

We are pleased with initial results from the innovative pilot in Whitefoot, which involves residents monitoring CCTV cameras to help the authority catch fly-tippers. We will evaluate the pilot to consider extending this idea to other parts of the borough. This will include looking at the most effective way to deter further fly-tipping when the cameras are moved.

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COUNCIL MEETING

21 FEBRUARY 2018

Question by Councillor Jacq Paschoud
of the Cabinet Member for Resources

Question

The Council has worked very hard to reduce the amount of paper involved in its meetings and in the role of Councillor. With the local elections in May, is it time, as the new administration begins, to end the Councillors "Car Run"? Any paper communications can be left for collection at the civic suite or if urgently needed scanned and emailed.

Reply

I can confirm that innovations arising from the Worksmart programme ensure that there are no technological objections to the suggestions being made.

However it is a legal requirement that members of the Council continue to receive hard copy agenda documents at their home address unless they specifically opt not to do so. Currently 30 members of the Council have opted to receive papers by electronic transmission only, 7 have opted for electronic transmission of some of their papers and 18 have so far declined to adopt electronic transmission.

I agree that the imminent arrival of a new administration would be a suitable time to review the operation of the delivery of Council documents by car run and consider alternative provision of hard copy documents where they still exist.

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COUNCIL MEETING

21 FEBRUARY 2018

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

Question

Following Bianca Jagger's public comments, please may I have an update on tree felling in Beckenham Place park?

Reply

The first phase of work to restore the parkland commenced last winter (2016/17) with the planting of over 12,000 new native woodland trees. The current phase involves the removal of some trees and scrub to restore views across the parkland. This includes; the removal of some inappropriate golf course plantings, the removal of dead /diseased trees, the thinning of plantings where trees are growing too closely together to allow the remainder to grow on and make a long term contribution to the park. It also includes the removal of poor quality woodland, that had colonised the old lake bed prior to restoration of this key landscape feature.

Officers consulted widely on proposals for the restoration of the historic parkland and in particular the recreation of the lake, which historically was the key landscape feature. It was always made clear that to restore views across the park linear belts of trees planted to define the golf course fairway or to protect cars and pedestrians from golf balls would have to be removed or thinned and this work is now nearing completion.

We prepared material to illustrate this as part of the public consultation on our proposals and to raise park users awareness in the months running up to the works being carried out. This material has been prominently displayed in park notice boards and at key points around the park where work is to be undertaken. There is also a range of information on the Council's website explaining the reasons for the work and the overall ecological benefits we will achieve as a result. This information sharing has been supported by corporate communications through the usual social media channels.

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21 FEBRUARY 2018

Question by Councillor Jacq Paschoud
of the Cabinet Member for Resources

Question

What is being done to reduce plastic waste from the Civic Suite and Laurence House particularly single use plastic cups and water bottles, sachets and tea bags.

Reply

The Council provides water as a duty of care to officers, councillors and visitors to the Civic Suite and Laurence House. To date it has found the most efficient way of doing this has been using plastic cups and water bottles. These are all recycled. In addition the large water bottles for the water machines are returned and reused many times before they go to recycling.

The Council also provides fair trade tea and coffee with powdered milk. At present the containers for these are not recyclable.

During 2018/19 the Council will explore more efficient and environmentally friendly ways to provide this duty of care. For example, replacing single use plastic cups with reusable cups, replacing sachets of milk with refillable milk dispensers and ensuring where there is waste that it is recyclable. Where reasonable and practical these will be implemented.

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COUNCIL MEETING

21 FEBRUARY 2018

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

Question

How much were Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission involved in the current tree and scrub removal plans in Beckenham Place Park including the plans for wet woodland, and what oversight or involvement will they have going forwards?

When the above bodies next meet with Council officers will there be opportunities for public input to or public presence at any of the meetings?

Reply

Neither the Forestry Commission nor the Woodland Trust have been involved in developing the plans for restoration of the parkland including removal of some trees and scrub. These plans have been informed by expert ecological appraisals of the site and have been reviewed by the Council's Ecological Regeneration Manager.

The Forestry Commission have been in touch with the Council offering support and potential funding opportunities to support improved management of the existing woodland and this could include help to increase the amount of woodland in the park if deemed desirable.

The Woodland Trust have been involved in agreeing the standards for the planting of 12,000 new native woodland trees in the park which took place last winter.

We do not meet routinely with either body. We are considering a new woodland management strategy and if this were developed it would be appropriate to consult members of the public as part of this process. If the Forestry Commission supports the development of this new strategy then they may want to be part of that process too. We are very keen to involve our growing number of volunteers in the development of plans and activities for the enhancement of the park and woodland and this work is being led by the project's new volunteer and events co-ordinator.

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21 FEBRUARY 2018

Question by Councillor Jacq Paschoud
of the Cabinet Member for Resources

Question

Lewisham is a London Living Wage employer. Some budgets handled by Lewisham are passed on to other bodies or individuals and this should not be seen as a way of avoiding paying The London Living Wage. What is being done to ensure that people paid from budgets handled or managed by Lewisham, for example agency cleaners in schools, agency care workers and those paid through the "Direct Payments Scheme" are paid the London Living Wage?

Reply

Agency workers are hired through our managed provider REED Recruitment. Reed raise their rate card to ensure all workers they provide to Lewisham comply with the new London Living Wage (LLW) each year. This exercise has been carried out for the new rate set at £10.20.

The Council requests, in all its procurements, that bidders price the contract including and excluding the LLW. The Council must do this to comply with legal requirements to achieve Best Value under the Local Government Act 1999. The decision to award a contract based on LLW or not is made by the authorised decision maker. Since the Council has become a LLW employer and where there is an option between including or excluding the LLW, the Council has awarded contracts on the basis of LLW. The Council is in the process of updating its contracts register which will include information regarding payment of the LLW.

All social care providers with contracts with the council have to pay the LLW. In respect of direct payments to individuals eligible for social care, funding is sufficient to allow them to pay the LLW.

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21 FEBRUARY 2018

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

Question

How can we better involve local residents from the vicinities of the borders of Beckenham Place Park, some of whom are long standing regular park users, in the current and next stages of the regeneration work?

Reply

More than a thousand people were consulted on the development of the plans for Beckenham Place Park, with a particular emphasis on the areas that surround the park. We targeted local assembly meetings in Bellingham and Downham, the local high streets in Bellingham and places where lots of locals spend time such as the Downham Healthy Lifestyles Centre and the Green Man on Bromley Road. We have also spent time getting the views of local school children through a survey targeting schools within a 2km radius of the park. As these plans move into the implementation phase the project team continues to produce a range of communications material aimed at keeping the public up to date and informed about the progress of the project generally and in particular what the next phases of work involve.

The Council's website hosts much information about the project and a range of frequently asked questions, we are also active on social media. Notices about upcoming work are also displayed in park noticeboards and at key points where work will be taking place in the park. We produce a regular e-newsletter which is delivered to all the members of the public who have signed up to receive information on the project including notifications of upcoming events and opportunities to get involved. Work will begin shortly on the restoration of buildings in the park, one of which (the Gardener's Cottage) will be the long term headquarters for volunteering and engagement in the park. This will enable a new range of opportunities for officers involved in the project to spend much more time face to face with the public and to develop new activities to actively engage local people in the regeneration and renewal of the park.