



# **LIST OF PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

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

## **PUBLIC QUESTION NO.1**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Andrew Brown

Relevant Directorate: Place

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

### **Question**

Why was the traffic counter at location Leahurst Road(South of Longhurst Road) excluded (for the 2nd time) from the traffic measuring report? Can you confirm whether traffic on this part of the road has increased since the LTN was introduced?

### **Reply**

While collecting traffic counts and vehicle speed data in 2022 and 2023 with the use of automatic traffic counts, a number of sites were subject to repeated vandalism of the equipment. This meant some data could not be collected.

This includes the location on Leahurst Road (South of Longhurst Road). Several roads in the vicinity of Leahurst Road have had continual monitoring since 2019/2020, including Ennersdale Road, Longhurst Road, Eastdown Park and Leahurst Road (north of Ennersdale Road). Traffic count data for Ennersdale Road, Longhurst Road and Eastdown Park have shown significant decreases in traffic between 2019 to 2023. On Leahurst Road (north of Ennersdale Road), there has been a slight increase in traffic since 2019 however this has decreased from 2022 to 2023.

The latest data monitoring of the LTN has shown overall:

- With few exceptions, traffic levels on roads within and surrounding the LTN continue to decrease
- Vehicle speeds have reduced by an average of 1.5mph on roads within and
- Surrounding the LTN, and are below the 20mph speed limit in the majority of cases
- Air quality has continued to remain below the 40µg/m<sup>3</sup> EU/UK legal limit across the area and has shown improvements on most roads monitored
- Bus journey times have continued to operate within a comparable time prior to the LTN being implemented
- Accidents related casualties on these roads have seen a reduction by 18% since before the LTN was implemented

## **PUBLIC QUESTION NO.2**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Mark Morris

Relevant Directorate: Children and Young People

Member to reply: Councillor Chris Barnham

### **Question**

Please publish a table for the calendar year 2023 of missing looked after children showing 1. The number of children that had been placed inside the borough who had been missing for 24 hours or more. 2. The number of children that had been placed outside the borough who had been missing for 24 hours or more. 3. The number of incidents of children going missing from placements within the borough for 24 hours or more. 4. The number of incidents of children going missing from placements outside of the borough for 24 hours or more.

### **Reply**

Caring well for children who need to be looked after by the local authority remains one of our most important priorities. In recent years, a comprehensive improvement programme has been in place, responding to the 2019 Ofsted inspection finding that our children's social care service required improvement.

In more recent visits, Ofsted has praised the progress being made, and the improvements achieved in supporting children in care, despite the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the pressures on families caused by the cost-of-living crisis, for example. This is a very welcome acknowledgement of the hard work and dedication of our children's social care team.

There is of course more to be done - we have always known that we were engaged in a multi-year improvement programme, against a challenging background of financial constraint and pressures on our families. Support for children in our care will accordingly remain a very high corporate priority.

Turning to your question about children in care who at some point go missing, the Council has recently introduced more robust systems to capture data in this area. The more accurate data underpins an annual report to the Council's Corporate Parenting Board on children and young people at risk of exploitation. This provides an accurate and comprehensive summary of the year 2022-23, compared with the preceding year. The figures show that the number of looked after children who went missing at some point in 2022-23 was broadly the same as in 2021-22, but the number of episodes of a child being missing reduced by around 40%.

These figures were included in a published report to the Children and Young People Select Committee in November and are available here (see paragraph 6.17):

<https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s112437/Childrens%20Social%20Care%20Improvement.pdf>

I will send you separately a copy of the full report to the Corporate Parenting Board.

### **PUBLIC QUESTION NO.3**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Mark Morris

Relevant Directorate: Children and Young People

Member to reply: Councillor Chris Barnham

#### **Question**

Please state how many teenagers in the calendar year of 2023 (or the most up to date figures for this time period) who are in the care of Lewisham Council have been placed in “unregulated accommodation”, that of independent or semi-independent accommodation with limited support and which is not regulated by the quality inspectorate, with figures broken down by (a) children under the age of 16, and (b) teenagers between 16 to 18.

#### **Reply**

There is a national shortage of suitable provision which needs urgently to be addressed by national government. In that context, and in exceptional circumstances when it was not possible to secure a registered care placement for a child, Lewisham like other councils have no other option but to make placements using unregulated provision (not registered and regulated by OFSTED). When doing so, we are working in partnership with trusted providers, with whom we have established relationships. We set up bespoke arrangements, they are most commonly rented properties for a solo placement, because of the needs of the young person and on occasion the risk they may pose to others. Where these arrangements are unlikely to be short term, we are working with all providers to register the arrangement with Ofsted.

During 2023, such placements included:

- Children under 16 - Total placed across the calendar year = 13.  
All young people except one, were placed in solo provisions provided with care 24/7 at a minimum staffing ratio of 2:1.
- Children aged 16 and 17 placed across the calendar year = 7  
These are children who required more than 20 hours support per week, which means this is an unregulated placement because this level of need requires care, not just support.

A decision to make such a placement is typically made when we have been unable to identify any regulated provision across the country that is able to accommodate a specific young person. These are young people with multiple and complex needs, frequently children with very fragile mental health. Nationally there is an acute shortage of suitable provision for children with complex social, emotional, mental health needs.

For all children placed in these circumstances, we ensure there are additional safeguards and monitoring in place for children's safety and wellbeing:

- Permission has to be granted to place in unregulated provision by the Director of Children's Social Care.
- The children are reviewed fortnightly, by senior managers including the Director of CSC to ensure progression towards movement to a regulated provision.
- Many of the young people are subject to Care Order and under the oversight of the Family Courts.
- Ofsted have been notified in all instances.
- The children are subject to regular visits by their allocated social workers.
- The Independent Reviewing Officers have oversight of the arrangements and statutory review meetings are routinely held.

In the recent Ofsted Inspection (December 2023), the regulator was satisfied Lewisham had robust arrangements in place to safeguard children in unregulated placements.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.4**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Stephen Locke

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

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

**Question**

What is the Council's policy on twinning with other local authorities and what benefits does it hope to gain?

**Reply**

The Council does not hold a policy specifically related to twinning with other local authorities. Decisions on this matter are taken when historical ties between places are present, and/or it is felt that closer ties with a different local authority will bring a benefit to the Council and its residents.

Twinning enables benefits such as cultural and knowledge exchange, links between schools and shared history, friendship and cultural ties.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.5**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Stephen Locke

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

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

**Question**

What is the cost of Council twinning activities in terms of staffing and external expenditure?

**Reply**

£0. There is no dedicated budget or staff for twinning activities.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.6**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Marcus Mayers

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

**Question**

Will the potential cost of a Mayoral by-election during 2024 (PQ23 of 22.11.23 refers) be met from the existing electoral services budget, a specific Govt grant or cuts to other Council services?

**Reply**

The costs for unscheduled local government polls are met from the council's corporate provisions and reserves. Every year the council puts aside a reserve to cover unscheduled polls. This will include councillor by-elections, a mayoral by-election, and neighbourhood planning referendums. Other polls such as the GLA elections and Parliamentary elections are funded by the GLA and national government respectively.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.7**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Marcus Mayers

Relevant Directorate: Place

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

**Question**

Before the Council designates space for parking e-bike does it consult local residents about positioning particularly when the proposal obstructs the pavement?

**Reply**

The council assess whether pavements are suitable for locations for designated dockless (e-bike) parking bays and implements where there is adequate space to allow free flowing pedestrians movement. No consultation is required for such measures on the pavement and none has been carried out.

However, for future roll out of these bays, all bays (including those on the pavements and roads) will be subject to statutory consultation which will be advertised by street notifications.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.8**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Margaret Clarke

Relevant Directorate: Place

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

**Question**

What guidance has the Council given the owner of Lewisham Shopping Centre about integrating their development plans with Lewisham railway station, buses, Lewisham Gateway, the High Street and library?

**Reply**

The owners of the shopping centre (Landsec) and their wider team have been advised that any future scheme must be delivered across a masterplan that prioritises how the site integrates with the surrounding town centre. Through the placement of entrances, servicing and delivery access and new public spaces.

This is set out in the new Local Plan site allocation for Lewisham Shopping Centre which has delivery requirements which states:

The site must be re-integrated with the surrounding street network to improve access and permeability into and through the town centre, with enhanced walking and cycle connections. This will require significant reconfiguration and re-orientation of the existing buildings and spaces to achieve a hierarchy of routes with clearly articulated east-west and north-south corridors together with a high quality market area.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.9**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Margaret Clarke

Relevant Directorate: Place

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

**Question**

With reference to your answer to Q18 of 22.11.23 why doesn't the Council insist developers include an embodied carbon assessment as part of the standard application process for all large developments?

**Reply**

Embodied carbon assessments are required on referable applications to the Mayor of London, these most typically are for developments of 150 or more new homes. The policies within the Council's new local plan reflect the position of the current London Plan and will be subject to independent examination by the Secretary of State.

Decarbonisation is a key issue for the Council, having declared a climate emergency and the Planning Service will continue to closely monitor changes in policy that could result via the examination and those in the next review of the London Plan that allow for stricter decarbonisation across all large developments. The Local Requirements List is mandatory for applicants to follow and will be updated accordingly following a period of consultation.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.10**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Peter George

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

**Question**

At the last meeting, after protesters left the building, residents who were waiting patiently to put their supplementary questions were unable to do so as Councillors had absented themselves. What arrangements have been made to enable the public to put their questions?

**Reply**

It was unfortunate that the disruption in the public gallery necessitated the suspension of the meeting.

All questioners who submitted a supplementary question prior to the Council meeting received a reply.

An email has been sent to those members of the public who had submitted questions but who had not submitted a supplementary question asking whether they would like to do so.

I will arrange for all supplementary questions submitted and answers provided to be published on the council's website within a reasonable timescale.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.11**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Peter George

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

**Question**

In the 12 months before the Council restricted the number of questions Councillors could ask, they averaged 14 questions per meeting. In the 12 months since, they have averaged 6 questions per meeting. Does the Council regard this 57% fall in the average number of questions asked as a success?

**Reply**

As you may recall, at the last Annual General Meeting of the Council changes were made to public questions to ensure that as many people as possible were given the opportunity to ask questions within the allotted time scale. The changes included limiting the number of questions per member of the public to two. Also, at that time it was considered equitable to amend the constitutional provisions relating to member questions in the same way.

The time limit for questions has not been amended and I do not believe there has been any Council meeting since the last AGM where the time limit for member questions has been reached. With this in mind I do not believe that the right of members to ask questions has been impeded.

The Council Procedure Rules are kept under periodic review and should it be felt that any amendments are required they will be considered by a meeting of the Councils Governance Committee before being formally determined at a meeting of the Council.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.12**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Josue Lucas

Relevant Directorate: Children and Young People

Member to reply: Councillor Chris Barnham

**Question**

The Mayor of London announced he will fund free school meals for all primary school pupils, so what are the council funds “to supplement the universal free school meals initiative [in primary schools]” (Lewisham Mayor on Council email sent 21/12/2023) being needed and used for?

**Reply**

The Council strongly supports the Mayor of London’s free school meals initiative, which has been particularly important during the cost of living crisis and the pressures families are enduring. It is essential that all our children are provided with good, balanced and nutritional meals each day. As well as benefiting primary age pupils, the Mayor of London funding has enabled Lewisham to provide more support to children of other ages - we have been able to allocate £250k from the Household Support Fund last term to our secondary schools and colleges to tackle school hunger across the borough.

We also very much welcome the Mayor of London’s announcement on 9th January 2024 to extend the Free School Meals for All programme for primary school children for another academic year, with an investment of £140m which will continue to benefit thousands of Lewisham children and families.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.13**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Josue Lucas

Relevant Directorate: Housing

Member to reply: Councillor Will Cooper

**Question**

A family has been with a broken window they can't close during sub-zero temperatures despite a follow up email in July and follow up call after a failed engineer visit in September. Considering Lewisham Homes has been moved in-house with the council, how much longer should the family expect to wait before the issue is dealt with and the window is fixed?

**Reply**

The council is aware of the challenges in completing glazing work and regrets the impact on tenants. On Tuesday 2 January we issued over 1,000 glazing jobs to an external company with a target deadline to complete these jobs within one month.

The backlog has built up due to vacancies in our workforce and delays in being able to recruit additional Glaziers.

We are confident the action taken will resolve the backlog and that tenants will see a marked improvement in service.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.14**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Janet Hurst

Relevant Directorate: Children and Young People

Member to reply: Councillor Chris Barnham

**Question**

During 2021/22 and 2022/23 how many cases against Lewisham were brought to specialist tribunals by parents in search of SEND support for their children? Please show the figures for each year separately.

**Reply**

The Council has received 45 appeals to the SENDIST Tribunal in 2021, which is 1.3% of all appealable decisions and 53 SENDIST Tribunal appeals in 2022, which is 1.5% of all appealable decisions. The numbers for 2023 are currently verified for the formal data return collated via the annual SEN2 census that takes place in January. Many of these cases logged in 2023 are still active appeals and decisions have not been made yet.

For context, the Council currently maintains over 3,500 EHC Plans for children and young people with SEND.

A range of outcomes is possible for appeals: some are settled via formal mediation; some are conceded by the Council or by parents/carers; some proceed to a Tribunal hearing, where they may be upheld, partially upheld, or dismissed.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.15**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Janet Hurst

Relevant Directorate: Children and Young People

Member to reply: Councillor Chris Barnham

**Question**

In how many of the cases noted in answer to my previous question did the Council successfully oppose the parents' legal challenge? Again please show the figures separately for each year.

**Reply**

It would not be appropriate to provide precise detail on the outcomes of the appeals since the small numbers involved may risk confidentiality of the families involved. At the headline level, two thirds of appeals were upheld in 2021. For 2022, the proportion upheld is a little lower. In both years, this compares to a national position where over 90% of appeals are upheld.

## **PUBLIC QUESTION NO.16**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Jean Branch

Relevant Directorate: Place

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

### **Question**

All the money raised from the borough's CPZs is spent on concessionary travel passes. As the Council plans a massive extension of CPZ across the borough, will there be an upper limit on the amount the Council will allocate to travel concessions before spending CPZ revenue on environmental enhancements such as street trees and bike shelters etc?

### **Reply**

Alongside the introduction of parking permit schemes, the Sustainable Streets programme proposes a series of improvements to local streets and investment in sustainable transport measures, including more street trees, safer crossing points, electric vehicle charging points, secure cycle storage and car club bays.

It is planned to consult the majority of the borough in phases over proposed improvements to streets, the link to the Sustainable Streets webpage is included below for information.

<https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/roads-and-transport/sustainable-streets-programme>

The council is also working closely with Street Trees for living, a tree planting organisation, who work with residents, schools and community groups to increase street tree numbers within neighbourhoods. A link to their website is included below that contains information on what they do and how residents and community groups can register an interest.

<https://www.streettreesforliving.org/>

Any parking permit scheme must be self-financing and cannot be funded through Council Tax income. The revenue generated from parking fees and charges covers the cost of running the scheme, which includes enforcement and maintenance. Any surplus must be reinvested for other transport related purposes. Currently, any surplus is used on travel concessions but does not cover the full cost of these concessions, which is still subsidised by the council and is deemed appropriate.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.17**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Jean Branch

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

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

**Question**

The Mayor said he would publish the agenda of his meetings with the local Met Commander (12.07.23) and subsequently backed out of that commitment (27.09.23). Unlike Merton's select committees, Lewisham's do not regularly meet the Met but Lewisham's Mayor does. Why is the Mayor trying to hide his meetings and refusing to tell Lewisham residents what issues he is raising in their name?

**Reply**

The agenda items of scrutiny committees are a matter for scrutiny councillors. In July 2023 the Mayor said he would investigate the arrangements of Merton Council. This research was undertaken and found that Lewisham already followed the same approach as Merton Council.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.18**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Mark Bennett

Relevant Directorate: Housing

Member to reply: Councillor Will Cooper

**Question**

Lewisham Homes was created by Lewisham Council as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Council and appointed Councillors to its board. How has the Council allowed its subsidiary to fail residents and leaseholders so badly that it has been referred to the housing regulator?

**Reply**

The council took a decision to self-refer to the Regulator of Social Housing due to potential breaches of the Home Standard (part of the Consumer Standards for social housing that are set by the Regulator). The referral was made on 7th December 2023 and demonstrates the council's commitment to openness and transparency and to improving stock quality.

A significant number of councils in London have self-referred to the Regulator. The age and quality of the stock in Lewisham and other boroughs, coupled with the constraints of the Housing Revenue Account and stronger regulation, mean that many social landlords are facing challenges in complying with the Standards. Lewisham Homes as the council's ALMO (arms length management organisation) had been taking action to improve services and stock quality and the council is now continuing that journey. As well as submitting the self-referral the council also responded to the Government's recent consultation on the proposed new Consumer Standards and highlighted the need for greater funding to be directed by Government into social housing in order to raise quality and achieve net zero carbon.

## **PUBLIC QUESTION NO.19**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Mark Bennett

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

Member to reply: Councillor Schmidt

### **Question**

Most Councillors have been excluded from the O&S committee. The majority of members are now chairs of select committees who are effectively appointed by the Mayor through the auspices of the party whip. Does the Chair of O&S agree with official guidance that select committee chairs should be elected by secret ballot?

### **Reply**

Scrutiny is an independent function, which operates separately from mayor and cabinet. Please be reassured that all appointments are made by a secret ballot. Committee chairs are not appointed via the party whip but are chosen based on experience, knowledge, skills and ideas. Please also be aware that only scrutiny members can vote for scrutiny committee and task and finish group appointments, and that the Mayor and Cabinet do not vote on this. Last year we chose to reduce the number of members on OandS from all scrutiny members, to all scrutiny committee chairs. We did this with the intention of improving the effectiveness of the committee, and we believe we have been successful in this. Having a smaller committee allows more focus scrutiny work and effective meeting management. You will appreciate that managing a 2 hour meeting with 44 members, and trying to insure active participation is neither practicable or a good use of Scrutiny Members time. Of course all scrutiny members are welcome to participate when they choose to, and join when they have a particular interest in the subject area.

I look forward to our report on this year's scrutiny work being made available to you later this year, so you can see the mix of pre-decision, performance monitoring and policy development that we are proud to have carried out in Lewisham.

If I am elected again as Chair of Overview and Scrutiny I look forward to continuing to work alongside my talented, ambitious and caring colleagues, and continuing our work towards our shared goal of improved public services in Lewisham.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.20**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Eric Kentley

Relevant Directorate: Place

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

**Question**

In the Council's document "Cycle storage for hire" it states that there is a high demand across the borough for cycle hangers. A cycle hanger is being installed in Culverley Road/Thornsbeach Road, part of the Culverley Green conservation area. How many requests were made by residents on Culverley, Thornsbeach and Bargery roads for a cycle hanger? And when did the "consultation with local councillors and residents" (as stated in "Cycle storage for hire" document on LBL's website) take place?

**Reply**

The council is aiming to provide as many cycle hangars as possible within financial constraints. As of early 2023 there were no cycle hangars in the Catford South ward, with requests being made for an increase in the number of hangars to be placed for residents. By the end of this financial year (March 2024), the council expect to have 4 cycle hangars in place within the Catford South ward, of whom more than 50 have made a request for a cycle hangar.

As the hangar was placed on the footway it does not require a statutory consultation and subsequent traffic management order. It was installed in a location that is aimed not to obstruct pedestrians.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.21**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Diana Cashin

Relevant Directorate: Place

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

**Question**

Lewisham have recently installed parking bays for Lime bikes, in some instance on the public pavement. Is the council being paid for providing these bespoke sites for Lime bikes?

**Reply**

The designated parking bays for e-bikes are being provided for the public to improve the operation of cycle hire schemes in the borough. Through allocating designated parking spaces, this will help to reduce issues caused by inconsiderate parking as riders will not be able to end their journey without parking in a designated bay, following the implementation of bays across the borough.

The Council has launched its partnership with Lime, however it is in discussion with other e-bike providers operating in London and the implementation of marked bays will serve cycle hire schemes for future years, which may include multiple providers.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.22**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Diana Cashin

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

**Question**

With Mayor Egan's departure to further his career in the Bristol area, and expenditure of between £475,450 and £635,500 (Q23 November 22nd 2023) estimated for a new mayoral election, will the council take the opportunity to give residents a say on whether to continue this model of governance or like the residents of Bristol reject it and save a considerable amount of money at a time of real financial difficulties for the council.

**Reply**

In October 2001 there was a referendum in Lewisham to consider the model of local government to be adopted in the Borough. Residents voted in favour of an elected Mayor. The Council has no plans to review this model of governance.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.23**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Roy Hill

Relevant Directorate: Housing

Member to reply: Councillor Will Cooper

**Question**

During each of the last three years how many cases of rat infestation were raised with Lewisham Homes? Please show the figures for each year separately.

**Reply**

The number of reports of rat infestation received by Lewisham Homes are as follows:

2023 = 45

2022 = 28

2021 = 25

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.24**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Roy Hill

Relevant Directorate: Housing

Member to reply: Councillor Will Cooper

**Question**

How many of the cases noted in my previous question above were resolved within two months?

**Reply**

The Council does not currently maintain records on the time taken to resolve each case and is therefore unable to provide it.

This is because once a request is received, the resolution may take a number of different forms, involving different service teams, outside agencies, residents and local businesses, depending on the cause of the infestation.

We can however confirm that each case is investigated, and residents are advised accordingly based our pest control policy. Each case is different and requires different actions, some of which take longer than others. The actions required to resolve infestations are not always the responsibility of the Council.

If Mr Hill would like to contact the Council regarding a specific case, the Council will be pleased to respond on the timescale to resolve that case.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.25**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: David Higginson

Relevant Directorate: Housing

Member to reply: Councillor Will Cooper

**Question**

Since October 2023 residents have raised on six occasions the matter of a tree on council property which will cause damage to ours if not dealt with quickly.

The Lime tree has branches touching our property.

Residents have given the council notice of the action they intend taking.

How should residents notify the Council when one of its trees is endangering their property if the Council does not respond to emails sent to a designated address on its website?

**Reply**

Residents are advised to report tree problems on our website:

<https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/environment/trees/report-tree-problems>

Please note that this is a self-service system. This is the most efficient and effective way for us to operate a fully auditable formal system and for residents to monitor the outcome of inspections. After logging an issue one of the team will inspect the tree within 28 days and a response will be posted on the website that you can look up using the reference that was generated when the request was made.

Where a resident logs an issue in the specified way and no response is provided by the Council within 28 days, it is recommended that residents escalate the issue by making a complaint to the Council on our website at Lewisham Council - Corporate complaints procedure.

There are 3 priority ratings:

Priority rating	Definition
1	These are works that are deemed to be immediately necessary as they pose a Health and Safety risk or are, on the balance of probability, are causing damage to property.

	NOTE – some situations may arise that require an emergency response , in which case contractors are contacted immediately and are not subject to any 'scheduling' as such.
2	Trees assessed to be causing problems or nuisance, such as trees that are very close to dwellings. These trees require remedial works but do not pose a direct risk to public health and safety.
3	Trees that need some form of work e.g. pruning or thinning, however it is not immediately necessary and the trees are of an adequate distance from properties.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.26**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Chris Maines

Relevant Directorate: Housing

Member to reply: Councillor Will Cooper

**Question**

Which specific issues in the fire risk assessment of Council housing have fallen behind and led to the Council to refer itself to the Regulator of Social Housing ?

**Reply**

The issue is related to many outstanding fire risk assessment (FRA) actions which have built up over the past 24 months, many of which are now overdue.

A plan is in place with additional specialist contractors procured to clear the actions, with priority given to completing urgent actions. Examples of the types of urgent actions being completed , specified in FRAs are:

- P1 1 month timescale
- Fit smoke detectors into property where non exist or they are damaged
  - Compartmentation between flats has been damaged allowing fire to spread
- P1 3 month timescale
- Replace the off-site 24-hour emergency connection to the support service which is damaged, poor connection line,
  - There was no fire action notice present at xxxxxx. A fire action notice instructing the stay put policy should be provided. LDB
  - Replace front door which is not a Fire-Resistant door
- P2 6 month timescale
- Doors not fitted with a suitable self closing device
  - Bin stores adjacent to main building need to be moved away from building
  - Renew damaged Emergency Lighting systems

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.27**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Chris Maines

Relevant Directorate: Housing

Member to reply: Councillor Will Cooper

**Question**

What impact will the promised investment of £321 million in bringing all Lewisham's housing stock up to Decent Homes Standard have on any proposed new builds of social housing and the wider Council's Capital programme ?

**Reply**

The coming 2024/25 financial year will be the 3rd year of the 5 year £321m investment programme to bring Lewisham's housing stock up to standard. A further c£900m (including inflation) of investment in the Council's current stock over the remaining 25 years of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 year business plan will follow. As such, there is no impact on the plans for providing additional social housing nor the Council's wider capital programme, as the resourcing for these programmes within the HRA has been planned alongside other programmes but is a discreet programme.

The HRA is a finite resource with competing demands. The impact of recent rent caps and the rising cost of maintaining an ageing stock through a period of high inflation, combined with market disruption and additional safety regulations make this a particularly challenging environment. This is not a pressure unique to Lewisham and is why levels of development activity (public and private sector) have experienced a significant slowdown since the Covid pandemic and rising construction costs. The Council is actively engaging with partners at both the regional and national level to assess these challenges and consider mitigations. We remain committed to increasing the supply of social housing in the borough and to drawing down grant to assist with this. However, we recognise that there is an absolute imperative to improve the quality of our existing stock and to maximise HRA investment that will raise standards and ensure compliance with the Consumer Standards.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.28**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Geoff Dolamore

Relevant Directorate: Housing

Member to reply: Councillor Will Cooper

**Question**

In each of the last 5 years, how many Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDA) has Lewisham Homes or Lewisham Council required tenants to sign as part of a compensation settlement for housing-related failures?

**Reply**

Our process does not include the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements for tenants to sign. We are not aware of any NDAs that Lewisham Homes used in the past 5 years, and none have been used since the transition back to Lewisham Council.

There is one example where Lewisham Homes used a Tomlin Order with a resident to settle a disrepair case.

A Tomlin order is a court order in the English civil justice system under which a court action is stayed on terms that have been agreed in advance between the parties and are included in a schedule to the order. As such, it is a form of consent order. In this case the proceedings were set out in a confidential schedule attached to the order.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.29**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Geoff Dolamore

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

**Question**

There is talk that the Council's computer records have been hacked in the last few months resulting in the theft of residents' debit card details. Is the Council aware of any such security breach or is this allegation potentially a scam to obtain sensitive information from the unwary?

**Reply**

The Council's own IT systems and records have not been subject to any security breach and we are unaware of any theft of residents debit card details. If the questioner is able to provide further detail of the allegations then the Council will, of course, conduct an urgent investigation.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.30**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Patricia Richardson

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor James-J Walsh

**Question**

Did the Lewisham public library service submit a report to Baroness Sanderson's Report for Lord Parkinson (libraries minister at the DCMS) and will the council make their submission available for Lewisham residents and library users?

**Reply**

Lewisham's Library and Information Service (or any other library authority) did not "submit a report" to Baroness Sanderson, but it participated in the Deep Dive discussion she held about a future Strategy for Libraries.

We understand that the Draft Strategy – which itself will be subject to consultation and should have been published before Christmas by Central Government – might be published soon, but a date has not been announced yet

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.31**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Patricia Richardson

Relevant Directorate: Corporate Resources

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

**Question**

IT develops and government agencies and elected bodies continue to develop further ways and means to present policy, consultation, responses etc on-line. Is any consideration, or adaptation, given to those who cannot keep up for a variety of reasons - lack of equipment, lack of resources to buy and update equipment or learn its management - and therefore excluded from participation?

**Reply**

Making sure we hear residents' voices and enable residents to shape our services is a priority for the Council. When carrying out consultation exercises, we think carefully about who we are engaging with and take steps to ensure people receive the information and can respond in a format that meets their needs – albeit often within tight budgets. This can include providing paper copies of surveys; taking part in focus or discussion groups; and offering translation services.

To ensure our digital services are inclusive, we carry out user testing to understand the needs of our residents and accessibility of our online services. In terms of resources, we have connected a total of 1,640 social homes to full-fibre broadband in partnership with Community Fibre – with a further 623 due to be connected soon. We also work with providers to offer a discount to housing tenants.

The Library and Information service supports residents who are digitally disengaged with the offer of free access to computers and wi-fi in every Hub and Community Library. For those who need support to develop digital literacy skills, libraries are also able to help with free access to the Good Things Foundation's "Learn my Way" programme.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.32**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Rashid Irshad

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Juliet Campbell

**Question**

Lewisham Council has a sanctuary programme in place wherein the council hosts and affords council housing under a refugee resettlement programme in the borough, which might add, is to be lauded as we should help those in dire need.

Under the said sanctuary scheme Lewisham borough council is currently hosting refugees from Ukraine and Afghanistan.

Will Lewisham Council afford sanctuary to Palestinian refugees as well and if so how many?

**Reply**

Lewisham is proud to be a Borough of Sanctuary supporting those fleeing persecution. We have resettled families from Syria and Afghanistan through the UK Government's Afghan and Syrian resettlement schemes. Ukrainian refugees were resettled under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. We would of course welcome refugees from wherever in the world they are from and support people to rebuild their lives here under any Government resettlement scheme.

It should also be noted that refugees are not automatically provided with council housing. Nearly all refugees on resettlement schemes are housed in private rented accommodation. Ukrainian nationals are housed through the UK Government's hosting scheme, followed by private rented accommodation when the placement ends.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.33**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Alia

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

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

**Question**

The Council paid tribute to Archbishop Desmond Tutu in early 2022, a month after his death. Tutu warned that it was not possible to be a neutral bystander: “Those who turn a blind eye to injustice actually perpetuate injustice. If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor”. Will the Council follow his principle, which they praised in their tribute, and call out the injustices we are witnessing in Gaza?

**Reply**

Like all residents of Lewisham, I have been horrified by the loss of life of both Israelis and Palestinians since the terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7th and the Israeli military response, the intolerable suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza and the ongoing treatment of hostages. The council continues to offer support to all of those in the local community who continue to be affected by the conflict through our faith groups. People in our borough are rightly concerned about family, friends and loved ones across the region, and it is our role to bring our communities together and to offer them support.

I joined calls made by the Shadow Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs in the House of Commons last week (Monday 9 January 2024) for the Government and its international partners to do all they can to bring about an urgent cessation of hostilities in order to stop the killing of civilians, provide urgent humanitarian relief, ward off famine, free hostages and provide the space for a lasting and sustained ceasefire.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.34**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Jilna Shah

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

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

**Question**

On 17th November, multiple independent UN human rights experts raised the alarm about a risk of genocide in Gaza, at a time when 11,000 Palestinians had been killed and 1.7 million forcibly displaced by the Israeli state. Will the council condemn Israel for its potential war crimes?

**Reply**

Like all residents of Lewisham, I have been horrified by the loss of life of both Israelis and Palestinians since the terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7th and the Israeli military response, the intolerable suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza and the ongoing treatment of hostages. The council continues to offer to support to all of those in the local community who continue to be affected by the conflict through our faith groups. People in our borough are rightly concerned about family, friends and loved ones across the region, and it is our role to bring our communities together and to offer them support.

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**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.35**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Andra

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

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

**Question**

Since releasing its statement on October 10th, why has the council not acknowledged, yet alone condemned, the indiscriminate targeting of Palestinian civilians in Gaza by Israel

**Reply**

Like all residents of Lewisham, I have been horrified by the loss of life of both Israelis and Palestinians since the terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7th and the Israeli military response, the intolerable suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza and the ongoing treatment of hostages. The council continues to offer to support to all of those in the local community who continue to be affected by the conflict through our faith groups. People in our borough are rightly concerned about family, friends and loved ones across the region, and it is our role to bring our communities together and to offer them support.

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**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.36**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Amy Humphries

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

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

**Question**

Why has the Council failed to name Palestinians and the word 'Palestinian', in both the statement issued by the Mayor on behalf of the Council on 10 October and the response to a public question about this on November 22nd (number 68)?

**Reply**

Like all residents of Lewisham, I have been horrified by the loss of life of both Israelis and Palestinians since the terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7th and the Israeli military response, the intolerable suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza and the ongoing treatment of hostages. The council continues to offer to support to all of those in the local community who continue to be affected by the conflict through our faith groups. People in our borough are rightly concerned about family, friends and loved ones across the region, and it is our role to bring our communities together and to offer them support.

I joined calls made by the Shadow Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs in the House of Commons last week (Monday 9 January 2024) for the Government and its international partners to do all they can to bring about an urgent cessation of hostilities in order to stop the killing of civilians, provide urgent humanitarian relief, ward off famine, free hostages and provide the space for a lasting and sustained ceasefire.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.37**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Harvey Irving

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

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

**Question**

Numerous political leaders, including the leader of the national Labour Party Keir Starmer, are now calling for a sustained ceasefire. The UN general assembly has also just voted overwhelmingly for one. Why has this Council, in spite of its Labour Party majority, not done the same, nor updated its statement since 10 October to take into account almost 30k Palestinian civilians that have been killed and acknowledge the impact on many Lewisham residents?

**Reply**

Like all residents of Lewisham, I have been horrified by the loss of life of both Israelis and Palestinians since the terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7th and the Israeli military response, the intolerable suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza and the ongoing treatment of hostages. The council continues to offer to support to all of those in the local community who continue to be affected by the conflict through our faith groups. People in our borough are rightly concerned about family, friends and loved ones across the region, and it is our role to bring our communities together and to offer them support.

I joined calls made by the Shadow Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs in the House of Commons last week (Monday 9 January 2024) for the Government and its international partners to do all they can to bring about an urgent cessation of hostilities in order to stop the killing of civilians, provide urgent humanitarian relief, ward off famine, free hostages and provide the space for a lasting and sustained ceasefire.

## **PUBLIC QUESTION NO.38**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Ali Al-Talib

Relevant Directorate: Corporate Resources

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

### **Question**

Are you able to tell us whether any of the funds that Lewisham Council's pension fund is invested in are connected to weapons or other military equipment that is potentially being used in human rights abuses globally, including in Gaza?

### **Reply**

The Lewisham Pension Fund invests in the following types of mandate:

- Equities
- Bonds
- Property
- Private Debt
- Infrastructure
- Private Equity
- Custodian / Cash

All of the Fund's investment managers have policies against investing in companies that manufacture weapons.

The two Equities mandates are in low carbon oriented passive index tracking funds. For these mandates there could be some exposure to companies involved in the defence sector, which can include elements of defence equipment. For these mandates the exposure is very low and, we believe, the potential to be supporting human rights abuses almost nil. Both fund managers have extensive Economic, Social and Governance screening in place for the companies invested in.

Notwithstanding the above, we are checking into the purpose of companies invested in through the low carbon tracking mandates. This may take some time as we don't manage these funds and are reliant on external partners.

We can confirm at this point in time that the Property, Private Debt and Custodian mandates do not have exposure to the defence sector.

We are seeking responses for the Infrastructure and Private Equity investments, although it is very unlikely these have any direct investments in the defence sectors.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.39**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Reem Abu-Hayyeh

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

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

**Question**

Why is Cllr Tam now listed as 'Independent' on the Council website?

**Reply**

Lewisham Labour Group were informed by the Labour Party last year that Cllr Tam was being investigated by the Labour Party's Governance and Legal Unit and that during this investigation Cllr Tam's membership of the Labour Party has been administratively suspended.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.40**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Bethany Williams

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Juliet Campbell

**Question**

Lewisham's 'Borough of Sanctuary' plan outlines a vision for the Council to "seek to become practice leaders in our work with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, promoting awareness and understanding across the Council borough and beyond." Could Cllr Campbell please comment on what assessment and action - however initial - is being undertaken by the Council to 'promote awareness and understanding' of the situation of the 1.9 million Palestinian refugees in Gaza, some of whom are likely to wish to migrate to the UK (as a proportion of the Palestinian diaspora already live here).

**Reply**

Lewisham's Borough of Sanctuary strategy is a partnership strategy in which all key partners and stakeholders play a part. The Council makes commitments towards this strategy by using its powers where they exist to provide a welcoming and safe space for all incoming refugees.

Lewisham has a strong track record of supporting refugees with local support services and resettlement and is committed to continuing this work as the country's first borough of sanctuary.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.41**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: Jennifer Edmunds

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

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

**Question**

Why did the Council acknowledge the impact on Jewish families in Lewisham of atrocities committed by Hamas on October 7th but not the impact on Palestinian families of atrocities committed by Israel in Gaza in the days following? And will the council remedy this?

**Reply**

Like all residents of Lewisham, I have been horrified by the loss of life of both Israelis and Palestinians since the terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7th and the Israeli military response, the intolerable suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza and the ongoing treatment of hostages. The council continues to offer to support to all of those in the local community who continue to be affected by the conflict through our faith groups. People in our borough are rightly concerned about family, friends and loved ones across the region, and it is our role to bring our communities together and to offer them support.

I joined calls made by the Shadow Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs in the House of Commons last week (Monday 9 January 2024) for the Government and its international partners to do all they can to bring about an urgent cessation of hostilities in order to stop the killing of civilians, provide urgent humanitarian relief, ward off famine, free hostages and provide the space for a lasting and sustained ceasefire as a first step towards that long-term solution.

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO.42**

**17 January 2024**

Question asked by: S Francis

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Juliet Campbell

**Question**

One example of Islamophobia in the APPG on British Muslim's definition of Islamophobia adopted by Lewisham council is denying Muslim populations the right to self-determination. How is the Council ensuring it is adhering to this definition and standing against islamophobia? And will the council acknowledge that Israel's indiscriminate assault on Palestinian in Gaza, is in contravention of this rights?"

**Reply**

As was noted in the Council motion to adopt the APPG of British Muslim's definition of islamophobia, Lewisham is proud of the contributions that Muslim residents make to the borough, and of the Council's status as the first borough of sanctuary. Earlier this year, the Council was proud to offer Mountsfield park to all Muslim residents so they could celebrate Eid in the Park.

The Council also undertakes extensive work to tackle racism in all its forms, working closely with partner organisations across the borough and adhering to the Local Government anti-racism statement to which we are a signatory.