

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

Wednesday, 15 July 2020 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Damien Egan (Mayor), Councillors Obajimi Adefiranye, Tauseef Anwar, (Speaker), Chris Barnham, Paul Bell, Peter Bernards, Chris Best, Kevin Bonavia, Andre Bourne, Bill Brown, Juliet Campbell, Suzannah Clarke, Patrick Codd, Liam Curran, Brenda Dacres, Sophie Davis, Amanda De Ryk, Joe Dromey, Colin Elliott, Aisling Gallagher, Leo Gibbons, Alan Hall, Carl Handley, Octavia Holland, Sue Hordijkeno, Coral Howard, Mark Ingleby, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Caroline Kalu, Silvana Kelleher, Louise Krupski, Jim Mallory, Paul Maslin, Sophie McGeevor, Joan Millbank, Hilary Moore, Pauline Morrison, John Muldoon, Olurotimi Ogunbadewa, Lionel Openshaw, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Stephen Penfold, Kim Powell, James Rathbone, Joani Reid, Sakina Sheikh, Jonathan Slater, Alan Smith, Luke Sorba, Eva Stamirowski, James-J Walsh and Susan Wise.

70. Election of Speaker

Councillor Tauseef Anwar was proposed by Councillor Bill Brown and seconded by Councillor Joan Millbank.

In accepting his unanimous appointment, the Speaker paid tribute to Cllr Jacq Paschoud's contribution over the last two years, as both Chair and then as the Council's first Speaker.

RESOLVED that Councillor Tauseef Anwar be elected as Speaker of the Council for the Municipal Year 2020/2021.

71. Election of Deputy Speaker

The election of Councillor Pauline Morrison was proposed by Councillor Bill Brown and seconded by Councillor

RESOLVED that Councillor Pauline Morrison be elected as Deputy Speaker of the Council for the Municipal Year 2020-2021.

72. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

73. Minutes and report of Urgency Committee

RESOLVED that

(1) the minutes of the Council held on 26 February 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record; and

(2) the recommendations made by the Urgency Committee on April 30 in

respect of the Pay Statement be endorsed.

74. Announcements or Communications

COVID-19

The Chair recalled the hundreds of pandemic victims in Lewisham and invited the Council to observe a minute's silence to remember those residents no longer with us, and the impact COVID-19 had on their families and loved ones.

Black Lives Matter

The Mayor spoke in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and underlined Lewisham's continuing commitment to racial justice.

Report of the Returning Officer

The Returning Officer reported the resignations of former Councillors Skip Amrani (Catford South) and Tom Copley (Sydenham).

The Council placed on record its thanks for their service to Lewisham.

Obituaries

The Council noted with sadness the deaths of three persons with close links to Lewisham, Bill Fitzsimmons, Christine Grice and former Councillor Sylvia McCartney and asked that their grateful thanks for the service they offered to public life be recorded in the minutes.

Councillor John Muldoon paid tribute to Bill Fitzsimmons, recounting his upbringing and Irish heritage and the contributions he had made to civic life.

Councillor Alan Hall remembered Christine Grice, both as a senior Education Officer and as a Labour Party colleague from Greenwich where she rose to be Deputy Leader of the Council.

Staffing Changes

The Council noted the departure of staff who had given over 100 years of service to the Borough and hoped they could be welcomed back post pandemic for a proper farewell.

Councillor Chris Best paid particular tribute to Kath Nicholson, the retiring Director of Law who had been at the forefront of every significant event impacting the Council during her decades of service.

Local Government Boundary Commission

The Council noted the outcome of the LGBC's recommendations for new wards in Lewisham.

Mayoress

The Mayor reported he had appointed Natasha Ricketts, Dawn Atkinson and Christina Norman, who were all volunteers at the Evelyn Community Store in Deptford, as Mayoresses of Lewisham for this municipal year. Congratulations and we all look forward to working with you.

Reappointment of Mayoral Advisers

The Mayor confirmed he had reappointed his existing advisers.

Mayor's Charity

The Mayor announced the reappointment of the 999 Club as the Mayor's Charity.

Councillor Joani Reid

The Chair welcomed Councillor Joani Reid to the meeting and congratulated her on the birth of her daughter, Helena.

Councillor Joan Millbank moved that Councillor Reid be granted an additional leave of absence in line with the Council's parental leave policy. Councillor Kim Powell seconded the proposal and it was

RESOLVED that the proposal to grant Councillor Reid a leave of absence be agreed.

Pokhara

Councillor Adefiranye proposed the recommendation to agree the Friendship Agreement with Pokhara in Nepal and Councillor John Muldoon seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED that a Friendship Agreement with Pokhara be agreed.

75. Executive Composition

The Mayor informed the Chief Executive that the members, listed below, will continue to serve as members of the Cabinet in the municipal year .

Name

Portfolio

Damien Egan,	Mayor of Lewisham
Cllr Chris Best,	Deputy Mayor of Lewisham and Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care
Cllr Kevin Bonavia,	Cabinet Member for Democracy, Refugees and Accountability
Cllr Chris Barnham,	Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School

Performance
Cllr Paul Bell, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning
Cllr Jonathan Slater, Cabinet Member for the Community Sector
Cllr Amanda de Ryk, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources
Cllr Joe Dromey, Cabinet Member for Culture, Jobs and Skills (job share)
Cllr André Bourne Cabinet Member for Culture, Jobs and Skills (job share)
Cllr Brenda Dacres Cabinet Member for Safer Communities
Cllr Sophie McGeevor, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport

RESOLVED that the constitution and composition of the Executive for the municipal year 2020/21 be noted.

76. Scheme of Delegation

The Mayor had not made any changes to the existing powers delegated by him in relation to Executive functions. Existing arrangements were temporarily suspended to allow the March 25 Mayoral meeting to proceed but were reinstated as soon as the deployment of the Microsoft Office Teams platform allowed virtual collective decision making to take place.

RESOLVED to note that there are no changes to the existing Mayoral Scheme of Delegation in Part VIII of the Council's Constitution.

77. Committee Terms of Reference

There were no changes to the terms of reference of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Standards Committee or other committees.

RESOLVED to note that there are no changes to the terms of reference of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Standards Committee or other committees.

78. Allocation of Seats 2020

The Council considered a report setting out an allocation of seats on committees to political groups on the Council in compliance with the requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees would continue to be allocated in accordance with the proportion of seats held by the political groups on the Council.

At the proposal of Councillor Millbank, seconded by Councillor Powell, Members agreed unanimously to form an Overview and Scrutiny Committee of all 43 non-executive Councillors, that was politically balanced.

RESOLVED that:

(i) seats be allocated to political parties as indicated on the schedule attached to the report;

(ii) the Overview & Scrutiny Committee shall comprise all 43 non-executive Councillors; and

(iii) the composition of the Constitution Working Party, the Appointments Committee, the Urgency Committee, 3 Planning Committees, a Strategic Planning Committee, a Licensing Committee, a Licensing (Supplementary) Committee, a Pensions Investment Committee, a Health & Safety Committee, an Elections Committee, and an Audit Panel with the Terms of Reference set out be agreed.

79. Appointments to Committees

It was moved by Councillor Millbank and duly seconded by Councillor Powell that members be appointed to serve on committees as listed below.

The motion was declared carried and it was:

RESOLVED that members be appointed to serve on committees, as indicated, for the municipal year 2020/21.

<i>Council Speaker (1)</i>	Councillor Tauseef Anwar
<i>Council Deputy Speaker (1)</i>	Councillor Pauline Morrison
<i>Planning Committee (A) (10)</i>	Councillor James Walsh (Rushey Green) (Chair) Councillor Sophie Davis (Forest Hill) (V-Chair) Councillor Jimi Adefiranye (Brockley) Councillor Pauline Morrison (Crofton Park) Councillor Liam Curran (Sydenham) Councillor Carl Handley (Ladywell) Councillor Pat Codd (Lewisham Central) Councillor John Paschoud (Perry Vale) Councillor Luke Sorba (Telegraph Hill) Councillor Octavia Holland (Lee Green)
<i>Planning Committee (B) (10)</i>	Councillor Aisling Gallagher (Lewisham Central) Chair Councillor Alan Smith (Catford South) (Vice-Chair) Councillor Jim Mallory (Lee Green) Councillor Leo Gibbons (Forest Hill) Councillor Tauseef Anwar (Crofton Park) Councillor Lionel Openshaw (Evelyn) Councillor Hilary Moore (Grove Park) Councillor Liz Johnston-Franklin (Ladywell) Councillor John Muldoon (Rushey Green) Councillor Sakina Sheikh (Perry Vale)
<i>Planning Committee (C) (10)</i>	Councillor Olurotimi Ogunbadewa (Downham) (Chair)

	<p>Councillor Stephen Penfold (Brockley) (Vice-Chair) Councillor Suzannah Clarke (Grove Park) Councillor Mark Ingleby (Whitefoot) Councillor Peter Bernards (Forest Hill) Councillor James Rathbone (Lee Green) Councillor Silvana Kelleher (Evelyn) Councillor Louise Krupski (Rushey Green) Councillor Paul Maslin (New Cross) Councillor Jacq Paschoud (Bellingham)</p>
<i>Strategic Planning Committee</i> (10)	<p>Councillor John Paschoud (Chair) Councillor Leo Gibbons (Vice-Chair) Councillor Kevin Bonavia Councillor Andre Bourne Councillor Suzannah Clarke Councillor Liam Curran Councillor Olurotimi Ogunbadewa Councillor Sakina Sheikh Councillor James Walsh Councillor Aisling Gallagher</p>
<i>Licensing (inc Supplementary) Committee</i> (10)	<p>Councillor Eva Stamirowski (Chair) Councillor Kim Powell (Vice-Chair) Councillor Colin Elliot Councillor Caroline Kalu Councillor Alan Hall Councillor Sue Hordijenko Councillor Coral Howard Councillor Juliet Campbell Councillor Susan Wise 1 vacancy</p>
<i>Appointments Committee</i> (5)	<p>Councillor Bill Brown Councillor Louise Krupski Councillor Kim Powell 2 Cabinet Members</p>
<i>Pensions Investment Committee</i> (8)	<p>Councillor Mark Ingleby (Chair) Councillor Louise Krupski Councillor Stephen Penfold Councillor Paul Maslin Councillor Patrick Codd Councillor Chris Best Councillor Caroline Kalu Councillor John Muldoon</p>
<i>Health & Safety Committee</i> (6)	<p>Councillor Silvana Kelleher (Chair) Councillor Peter Bernards Councillor Jim Mallory</p>

	<p>Councillor Alan Smith Councillor Chris Best 1 vacancy</p>
<p><i>Elections Committee</i> (6)</p>	<p>Councillor Leo Gibbons(Chair) Councillor Liz Johnston-Franklin Councillor Jacq Paschoud Councillor Kevin Bonavia Councillor Juliet Campbell Councillor Silvana Kelleher</p>
<p><i>Standards Committee</i> (16)</p>	<p>Councillor Jimi Adefiranye (Chair) Councillor Pauline Morrison (Vice-Chair) Councillor Tauseef Anwar Councillor Andre Bourne Councillor Bill Brown Councillor Sue Hordijkeno Councillor Olurotimi Ogunbadewa Councillor Jim Mallory Councillor Pat Codd Councillor Hilary Moore Cathy Sullivan Gill Butler David Roper Newman Leslie Thomas Fasil Bhatti Joy Walton</p>
<p><i>Council Urgency Committee (6)</i></p>	<p>Councillor Tauseef Anwar (Chair) Councillor Chris Best Councillor Kevin Bonavia Councillor Bill Brown Councillor Joan Millbank Councillor Jacq Paschoud</p>
<p>Constitution Working Party (6)</p>	<p>Councillor Susan Wise (Chair) Councillor Kevin Bonavia Councillor Sophie Davis Councillor James Walsh Councillor Obajimi Adefiranye Councillor Bill Brown</p>
<p><i>Audit Panel</i> (6 plus 4 co-optees)</p>	<p>Councillor James Rathbone (Chair) Councillor Susan Wise Councillor Sophie Davis Councillor Paul Maslin Councillor Joan Millbank Councillor Alan Hall Ian Pleace Stephen Warren</p>

	Carole Murray 1 vacancy
<i>Overview & Scrutiny Committee (all 44 non executive councillors)</i>	Councillor Bill Brown (Chair) Councillor Sophie Davis(Vice-Chair)
<i>Business Panel & O&S (Education) Business Panel (10)</i>	Councillor Bill Brown(Chair) Councillor Sophie Davis (Vice-Chair) Councillor Liam Curran Councillor Kim Powell Councillor Juliet Campbell Councillor John Muldoon Councillor Luke Sorba Councillor Peter Bernards Councillor Joan Millbank Councillor Patrick Codd
<i>Public Accounts (6)</i>	Councillor Patrick Codd (Chair) Councillor Alan Hall (Vice-Chair) Councillor Jim Mallory Councillor Paul Maslin Councillor Joan Millbank Councillor Tauseef Anwar
<i>Healthier Communities (6)</i>	Councillor John Muldoon (Chair) Councillor Coral Howard (Vice-Chair) Councillor Leo Gibbons Councillor Sue Hordijenko Councillor Kim Powell Councillor Alan Smith
<i>Children & Young People (8)</i>	Councillor Luke Sorba (Chair) Councillor Caroline Kalu (Vice-Chair) Councillor Liz Johnston-Franklin Councillor Octavia Holland Councillor Colin Elliott Councillor Hilary Moore Councillor Jacq Paschoud Councillor Lionel Openshaw
<i>Safer & Stronger Communities (6)</i>	Councillor Juliet Campbell(Chair) Councillor James Rathbone (Vice-Chair) Councillor Pauline Morrison Councillor Sakina Sheikh Councillor Jim Mallory Councillor Carl Handley
<i>Sustainable Development (6)</i>	Councillor Liam Curran (Chair) Councillor Louise Krupski (Vice-Chair) Councillor Jimi Adefiranye

	Councillor Suzannah Clarke Councillor James Walsh Councillor Eva Stamirowski
<i>Housing</i> (6)	Councillor Peter Bernards (Chair) Councillor Stephen Penfold (Vice-Chair) Councillor Susan Wise Councillor Aisling Gallagher Councillor Olurotimi Ogunbadewa Councillor Silvana Kelleher

80. Appointments to Bodies

The Speaker reported there was no bodies where there were more candidates than places available, the Speaker moved and the Deputy Speaker seconded a proposal that the tabled schedule of appointments be adopted.

The motion was declared carried and it was:

RESOLVED that members be appointed to serve on other committees and organisations as set out in below:

Organisation	Appointment 20/21
Age Concern Reminiscence Theatre	Amanda De Ryk
Albany 2001 Council of Management	Aisling Gallagher
Albion Millennium Green Trust	Sophie Davis
Blackheath Joint Working Party (3)	Kevin Bonavia Juliet Campbell Amanda De Ryk
Deptford Challenge Trust	Obajimi Adefiranye
Lewisham Local History Society	Liam Curran
London Youth Games (2)	Hilary Moore Alan Smith
Marsha Phoenix Memorial Trust	Obajimi Adefiranye
Trinity Laban	Pat Codd
Our Healthier South East London (OHSEL) JHOSC (2)	John Muldoon Liz Johnston-Franklin
SLaM Mental Health of Older Adults	John Muldoon

JHOSC (2)	James Rathbone
Youth First	Liz Johnston-Franklin

81. Council Calendar

The Speaker, seconded by the Deputy Speaker moved that the recommendations in the report be approved and it was unanimously:

RESOLVED that

(1) ordinary meetings of the Council be held on 28 October 2020, 25 November 2020, 20 January 2021, 24 February 2021 and 3 March 2021 (fall back) and that the Annual General Meeting be held on 31 March 2021; and

(2) the attached schedule of meetings (Appendix A) for the municipal year 2020/21 be approved;

(3) the proposed approach to Select Committees set out in section 6 be noted; and

(4) the schedule of meetings be reviewed by Council in November

82. Mayoral Appointments 2020

The Speaker proposed and the Deputy Speaker seconded a proposal that the schedule of appointments made by the Mayor be noted.

RESOLVED to note the appointments made by the Mayor to the following external bodies/committees.

Position	Appointment 20/21
Brent, Lewisham, Southwark IT Committee (4)	Kevin Bonavia Brenda Dacres Amanda de Ryk Jonathan Slater
Children and Young People's Stakeholders Forum (VAL) (2)	Caroline Kalu Chris Barnham
Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board	Chris Barnham
Corporate Parenting Group (6)	Chris Barnham Chris Best Luke Sorba Jacq Paschoud Kim Powell

	Andre Bourne
Groundwork Local Authority Strategic Input Board	Susan Wise
Health & Wellbeing Board (2)	Damien Egan Chris Best
Intercultural Cities: Group Spokesperson	Jimi Adefiranye
Joint Street Lighting Committee (2)	Sophie McGeevor Amanda de Ryk
Lewisham Homes Board (3)	Mark Ingleby Caroline Kalu Susan Wise
Lewisham College	Hilary Moore
Lewisham Local Representative	Joan Millbank
Lewisham Safer Neighbourhood Board	Sakina Sheikh
Local Government Association – General Assembly (4)	Damien Egan Paul Bell Brenda Dacres Juliet Campbell
London Councils (a) Leaders' Committee (b) Grants Committee (c) Greater London Employment Forum (d) Transport & Environment Committee	Damien Egan / Kevin Bonavia Jonathan Slater / Amanda de Ryk Amanda de Ryk / Kevin Bonavia Sophie McGeevor / Brenda Dacres
London Road Safety Council (2)	Tauseef Anwar John Paschoud
Newable (Greater London Enterprise)	Joe Dromey
New Cross Gate Trust	Joan Millbank
Phoenix Community Housing Association (2)	Sue Hordijkeno Timi Ogunbadewa
Positive Ageing Council Steering Group	Coral Howard
Safer Lewisham Partnership	Brenda Dacres
Social Services Fostering Panel	Jacq Paschoud
South East London Combined Heat & Power (SELCHP) Board	Liam Curran
Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) (3)	Hilary Moore Jacq Paschoud Liz Johnston-Franklin
London South East Flood Risk Partnership	Sophie McGeevor
Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association	Jacq Paschoud
Works Council	All Members of Cabinet

CHAMPIONS

Air Quality Champion	Louise Krupski
Evening and Night Time Economy Champion	Pat Codd
Women’s Night Time Safety Champion	Octavia Holland
Mental Health Champion	James Rathbone
Cycling Champion	Mark Ingleby
Armed Forces champion	Kevin Bonavia
Heritage champion	Chris Best

83. Changes to the Constitution - virtual meetings

Councillor Susan Wise moved that the recommendations be approved and this was seconded by Councillor Kevin Bonavia and it was then unanimously:

RESOLVED that the Constitution be amended to include the procedure rules at Appendix 1 in part C – Council Procedure Rules.

84. Annual Mayoral Report

The Mayor delivered the address shown below. Following his address, the Council was addressed by the outgoing Mayoress, Barbara Gray, who reported with gratitude the many highlights of her year in office.

The Mayor delivered the address shown below. Following his address, the Council was addressed by the outgoing Mayoress, Barbara Gray, who reported with gratitude the many highlights of her year in office.

“Thank you Speaker and congratulations on your election. I look forward to working with you over the year ahead and I join you in paying tribute to Cllr Jacq Paschoud who has been an excellent Speaker and ambassador for our borough. Thank you Jacq.

This is an AGM like no other. Unimaginable, only a few months ago.

I would like to thank all those who have worked so hard to make sure tonight’s AGM can take place.

I do of course want to add my condolences to not just on my behalf, but on behalf of all the council and our thoughts are with all the 260 Lewisham residents have died due to coronavirus and very many more have been ill with the virus.

Our thoughts are with the family and friends of all those who have lost loved ones.

Tragedy and hope

We are in unprecedented times. With much uncertainty ahead.

The last four months have been ones of anxiety and tragedy.

But they have also been ones of heroism and hope.

And we have seen our community come together like never before.

I am hugely proud of the way our council has responded to this crisis, and I am proud that this is in large part thanks to hard work of volunteers.

It's no surprise that the first mutual aid groups sprung up here in Lewisham.

When I set up a Just Giving to raise money for a local food bank our community stepped forward and donated £128,000.

And our volunteers have help us get food and medicine to any of our 10,000 shielded residents who needed help.

In many ways this has been the 'year of the volunteer' and to highlight the incredible role volunteers continue to play, I have appointed this year not one, but three Mayoresses - Natasha Ricketts, Dawn Atkinson and Christina Norman.

Three incredible women who run the Evelyn Community Store in Deptford. A food project that has supported 100s of families in need.

And I want to say all our volunteers and those who have given so much these last few months, you know who you are, thank you.

In contrast: the Government response

But we have an even more challenging time ahead of us as we face the reality of a much reduced council budget – and the bills aren't all in yet.

We know people have already lost their jobs, income and businesses.

At the Council when you add lost income to new costs then the cost of Covid has already cost Lewisham Council £53m.

Now, at the beginning of lockdown, I joined other council leaders from across the country on a call with the Secretary of State.

The message from Government could not have been clearer: he said that the Government would do “whatever is necessary” to support the work of councils in protecting the most vulnerable.

And we did, and we did it well. Not just protecting residents but also keeping the basics going; emptying every bin, keeping our streets swept, making sure all our parks stayed open.

But now the Government is threatening to backtrack on the pledge they made to us.

They talk instead about councils needing to, and I quote, “share the burden”.

A barely coded signal that further cuts are expected.

After a decade of austerity what could be a more shameful betrayal by this Government than to cut the jobs of the very frontline workers saving lives today.

But that’s the reality and that’s why Lewisham and councils up and down the council are calling for the government to keep the promises they made.

Our priorities

This massive change in our budget will undoubtedly have an impact on our work too.

I will be working with councillors to renew our priorities in the months ahead as we look closely at our Corporate Strategy.

There will be some non-negotiables, including our council-house building programme and our refugee resettlement scheme.

And there will be new commitments we want to make.

The Covid crisis has held up a mirror to our society.

It has reflected back the deep inequalities which we know exist in our country.

It has reminded us of the injustices that impact the lives of too many of our children and young people.

And it has thrown a harsh light on the fragility of our economy and the insecurity that so many of us face.

But it has also given us a renewed appreciation for the importance of our environment, parks and green spaces;

For our local neighbourhoods and the shops and businesses that keep them going;

And for our human relationships, with family, with friends, with community, the things that matter most in life.

Amid the huge challenges we face, we also have an opportunity to build a more equal society.

Racial inequalities

But to build a more equal society we also have to be honest about the people who are being left behind.

The impact of Covid on BAME communities has been truly shocking. Our black residents are not just more likely to catch Covid, but more likely to die from it too.

It exposes once again the persistent racial inequalities that people of colour face – not just in healthcare, but in education, in housing, in the criminal justice system, the pay you get and how likely you are to succeed at work. Racial inequality permeates across all walks of society.

The Black Lives Matter movement offers both a glimmer of hope, and a chance for each of us to renew our commitment to rooting out racism wherever it lurks.

One issue that I will continue to focus my efforts is on the issue of drug reform and I will continue to work with others for an evidence-based system; one which treats drug use as a public health, not a criminal justice issue.

And this is important in Lewisham.

Now, our Youth Offending Service is doing an excellent job and picking up recognition from across the country. But I was shocked when I learnt that, last year in Lewisham 49 children, nearly a child a week, were sent to our Youth Offending Service for first-time drug offenses.

Of those 49 children, how many do you think were children of colour?

43 of 49.

And every single child in Lewisham who received a custodial sentence from the courts last year was a child of colour.

And they're not the ones running the gangs.

The majority of those Lewisham children are sent into our Youth Offending Service are sent there because of involvement with cannabis, and often with a very small amount, a drug now legal in many parts of the world where public health approaches are being advanced.

In Lewisham, you're three times more likely to be stopped and searched if you're black than if you're white.

And three quarters of the time the police find nothing on you.

Our drug laws are racist.

They criminalise young black men, while giving criminal gangs the power to exploit vulnerable young people.

I will do all that I can to challenge and reform them.

Educational inequalities

And racial inequality stretches deep into our country's education system too.

In Lewisham we are making progress but – as across the country – the biggest determinate of how well a child will do at school is your family's income.

This when overlaid by ethnicity, leads to a situation in Lewisham where only 1 in 4 of our Black Caribbean children attained five good GCSEs.

Good local schools with heads and teachers that share our determination, our ambition, to reduce inequalities are critical to Lewisham's future success.

Many parents have told me that - as their children approach secondary school – they start to feel that maybe they need to either move out of Lewisham or get ready to fight for a school place outside the Borough. We need to convince them that there is a better choice. And we will judge success by a simple metric: more families making a Lewisham secondary school a choice for their children.

Today, we're currently supporting our schools to get ready for September.

And I want to pay tribute to our teachers who have led a superhuman effort and have worked so very hard through these difficult times.

Our schools have been open during lockdown for keyworker and vulnerable children, including during the school holidays.

But there is no doubt that far too many young people have been out of the classroom for far too long – And we will support our schools as they prepare to welcome all children back in September.

A greener Lewisham

One of the positives we saw from lockdown was that air quality improved as our streets were less choked by car fumes.

I do not want us to just go back to how things were.

And being green isn't just about responding to the climate emergency, it also tackles health inequalities too.

It is the poorest in Lewisham who are least likely to own a car, yet most likely to live in areas with toxic air.

We must and we will make some difficult decisions.

We must step-up Lewisham's move away from cars, we must and we will prioritise walking, cycling and public transport.

Our parks have been a real lifeline this year, especially if like me you don't have a garden.

But we shouldn't accept that the tranquillity found in our parks should lie exclusively behind their fences and in private gardens.

Yes we're a dense borough, with over 300,000 people, but we can also step up our efforts to be a more beautiful borough too. With safer streets centred around people and play – not the car dominated landscapes our children see outside their windows.

So we will continue to charge those who drive the most toxic vehicles more to do so. We will continue to work with residents to roll out our Healthy Neighbourhoods programme. We will close more streets around our schools.

And we will redouble our work with TfL to support the Bakerloo Line coming to Lewisham, segregated cycle routes and to improve public transport in our borough.

And I would like to take this moment to thank Sadiq Khan for all the support, all the new funding that he has awarded Lewisham so we can begin to realise our ambitions.

Protecting our high streets

Lockdown has also meant we're all travelling less and exploring what's on our doorstep. I've enjoyed showing Yossi around all our different neighbourhoods, I create little tours and we'll go out for a few hours and I get to see Lewisham through his eyes.

We love the fact that Lewisham is home to so many independent businesses, amongst the highest in London I remind him.

And you'll have heard me say before that I'm proud that we're a Pret-free borough.

And I am so thankful that many of the bland and sterile high street chains that make up so much of London have largely passed us by.

Instead, we have shops and family-run businesses and restaurants with products and food from all over the world that reflect Lewisham's history of migration.

Independent businesses with both local and global roots, don't just make Lewisham a more vibrant and fun place to live. They're good for our local economy too.

But competition is fierce and we've got to do all we can to support our small businesses, especially as they face a recession.

All too quickly and all too quietly we could start losing these businesses, and before we'll know it our high streets would start to look and feel very different.

So that we're always highlighting the needs of small business I've asked officers to undertake a new annual survey of our high streets, becoming the first council to physically go out, every year, and count and publish the number of independent retailers and the number of black and BAME owned businesses on Lewisham's high streets too.

I've asked that this survey runs alongside our new local plan which runs until 2040. This means the results won't just help inform the decisions that I and councillors make today, but they'll inform future Mayors and councillors too. And hopefully signal to small businesses that they'll always be at home in Lewisham.

Culture for all

As I come towards the end of my speech I'd ask you to think about what you think makes a good place to live, what do you think about?

Because over the coming months we need to draw on our experiences during lockdown to think about Lewisham's next decade.

When we think about a good place to live, it can be all too easy to forget about culture.

Yet it's one example where during lockdown many of us we'll have realised just how important the arts and culture is to our wellbeing and to our sense of understanding about life and about the world around us.

2022 may seem a way off, but we are already working hard to prepare for one of the biggest years in Lewisham's history and what a celebration it will be.

Winning London Borough of Culture is not just an accolade we should all be proud of, it is a watershed moment in how the rest of London sees Lewisham and how we all feel, particularly our young people, about where we live.

We will use this opportunity to make sure all Lewisham residents have cultural opportunities in their neighbourhoods.

We will make certain that our Borough of Culture programme reaches every corner of our borough and reflects Lewisham's wonderfully diverse community.

Mayoress

Now, finally, I'm coming to the part of the speech where I hand over to our outgoing Mayoress.

And I would like to formally record my thanks to Barbara Gray.

I would like to thank you Barbara, for the positive way you have worked with us and given advice to myself and councillors and challenged us too.

Thank you for agreeing to continue as my Advisor on BAME Health Inequalities. I'm glad to be working with you for another year.

Your efforts are reflected in our work and I'm delighted that, alongside Birmingham, Lewisham will be leading new national work studying health inequalities among Black African and Caribbean residents.

Barbara has been an amazing role model of our borough, in and out of our schools inspiring our young people, and we are truly blessed to have such and powerful champion and friend as you are.

And just before we hear from Barbara.

I want to close my speech tonight by thanking my colleagues, councillors, cabinet members, officers of the council, for all your hard work and support in this truly extraordinary and truly challenging year.

Thank you."