



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 20 July 2022.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 1

Priority 1

Question asked by: Nicholas MacGuinness

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Brenda Dacres

Question

Railside habitats are the most biodiversity rich habitats in Lewisham borough. One of the most valuable of these habitats in terms of nature recovery is owned by a property developer. It is the closest Ancient Woodland to the City of London and is located in Courtrai Road SE23 & Buckthorne Road SE4.

At a recent meeting between Mayor Egan and the residents of Crofton Park ward, the Mayor agreed to discuss the possibility of a Compulsory Purchase Order for Gorne Wood, after he understood that the community cannot attempt to raise the necessary funds without this process being agreed by LBL.

Will the council commit to starting a CPO process for this site?

Reply

The Council recognises this site provides a habitat for many protected species and is therefore very valuable ecologically and in terms of biodiversity. Officers are considering the realistic options as to how the railside habitats at Courtrai Road SE23 & Buckthorne Road SE4 could be protected and will be providing advice on those options to Members in due course.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 2

Priority 1

Question asked by: Gina Raggett

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor James-J Walsh

Question

According to the Council's website, "All libraries have study space, free PC access and free WiFi access".

This is clearly untrue in the case of Age Exchange in Blackheath, where there is no study space and the PCs are not in use. Even before Covid, the PCs were inaccessible to wheelchair or disabled users as the platform lift does not extend to the reference section.

Moreover, the library is closed at lunchtime and from 4pm every day as well as all day on Saturdays.

The result is that local children are unable to access their library after school or at weekends.

Q: What, apart from blaming a lack of volunteers, is the Council doing to remedy this appalling situation?

Q: If RB Greenwich can provide a comprehensive and efficient library service despite Covid and government cutbacks, why can't Lewisham?

Reply

Thank you very much for your question and the query that you've raised. As the new Cabinet Member for Libraries I'm always keen to hear feedback from the public about our services both how we can improve alongside positive feedback too.

Lewisham's approach is to seek to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service through the library services available at Lewisham, Deptford Lounge, and Downham, and shortly a reopened library at Catford, alongside the invaluable work delivered through our community libraries. Blackheath Library is one such community library.

Thank you for highlighting the anomaly in the service currently in Blackheath to me, which I have met with the Libraries Service to discuss. I can confirm we are actively

working our host voluntary sector partner Age Exchange to help navigate some challenges that arose for them and the service at that site during the pandemic. All of the other hub and community libraries have study space, free PC access and free Wi-Fi access. Going forward I'm also delighted to share with you that our hub libraries are about to increase their opening hours in August, reintroducing a 7 days' operation.

As an interim, and if at all possible for you and your family, it may be well worth a visit and exploring the offer at Manor House Library, which is just over a kilometre away and less than a 15 minutes walk from Age Exchange.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 3

Priority 1

Question asked by: William Phillips

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie Davis

Question

Who has external oversight and auditing of Lewisham Homes procedures and finances?

The continued lack of governance in relation to financial billing of leaseholders and lack of response to leaseholder queries continues (as has for many years) with management complicate in the “rotten” culture and seeming unable to change or accept the issues.

Reply

There are a number of external organisations who have a role providing either external oversight or auditing of Lewisham Homes procedures and finances. In respect of the company TIAA undertake an internal audit function, with KPMG undertaking an external audit role. Both of these organisations have a focus on financial controls.

In relation to leaseholder accounts, Lewisham Homes have recently procured new auditors (Beever and Struthers) to undertake an audit in this area.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 4

Priority 1

Question asked by: Andy R Smith

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Chris Barnham

Question

In relation to Park Safety most notably Hillyfields, has the council investigated the need for cctv at certain locations?

Frequently the local residents (including myself) are subjected to loud noises at night (such as motor biking in the park) and other anti social behaviour and it's becoming a ongoing concern.

Reply

We have fixed CCTV points across the local authority; however, we do have the option to deploy temporary cameras where one can be fitted and when repetitive reports have been received in a specific location. To evidence the reports, we rely on Police intelligence.

There are a number of ways to report anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance at Lewisham. Through the SaferCommunities@Lewisham.gov.uk inbox or through an online portal at <https://lewisham.gov.uk/myserVICES/environment/noise/noise-and-other-disturbances-we-investigate> which is most preferable, as this will prompt you to include detail of the incident, which includes times/date and your housing status. The latter is requested as not all anti-social behaviour is managed by the Council, thus this way of reporting would allow a swifter targeted response.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 5

Priority 1

Question asked by: Alan Hall

Relevant Directorate: Chief Exec's

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

Question

What are the Mayor's responsibilities?

Reply

Lewisham Council has a directed elected Mayor and Cabinet model of governance. This means the electorate has directly chosen Damien Egan to be Mayor, for a four year term in 2018 and more recently again for another four year term in May 2022. The Mayor is responsible for the overall strategic direction of the Council, leads the community and speaks up for the whole borough. The Mayor has responsibility for the executive functions of the Council and works closely with the Chief Executive and senior officers to deliver the Council's corporate priorities.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 6

Priority 1

Question asked by: Temitope Fisayo

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

A third of car trips in London are under 2km, a distance that could easily be travelled on foot or by bike. As a Council, Lewisham has declared a climate emergency. To reduce emissions of CO₂, reducing car use is vital. It therefore follows that increasing the number of journeys made by bike is consistent with the Council's vision of a carbon neutral Lewisham.

What plans have been made to increase cycling provision in Brockley and New Cross?

By 'cycling provision', I am referring to: bike lanes (e.g., upgrading existing cycleways, building new ones) and bike storage (e.g., Sheffield stands in public places, cycle hangars on residential streets).

Reply

The Council remains committed to encouraging active and sustainable travel and creating an environment where travel by sustainable modes will be the most pleasant, reliable and attractive. Currently there are 121 bike hangars across the borough.

The Council has taken a borough wide approach to increase the provision of bike parking facilities, cycle lanes and reducing traffic levels. For example, the council has implemented a low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) aimed at reducing car dominance and improving the environment for walking and cycling, whilst benefiting from improved safety and air quality. Currently the Council is rolling out complementary environmental measures in the LTN and surrounding area to further improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, which includes a significant number of bike hangars, improved crossing facilities, school streets and electric vehicle charging points.

The Council is currently developing a programme to roll bike hangars out to other areas of the borough, including Brockley and New Cross. To deliver this we are actively seeking alternative sources of funding, such as section 106 funding, in light of the challenging financial position of TfL.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 7

Priority 1

Question asked by: Silvia D Barber

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

When the new development between the two Catford stations was completed I was disappointed to find out that no allowance had been made for bike locking areas near the new Sainsbury's local, café and barbershop. Currently the nearest bike parking facilities are at Catford Station or on the other side of the river by the wall of Catford Bridge Station. As Lewisham is trying to increase the air quality and promote the use of bikes over cars, I believe bike parking near the new supermarket will encourage more people to choose this method of transport.

Will the council consider retrofitting bike parking facilities near the new Sainsbury's local to facilitate the use of bikes in the Borough?

Reply

The Council remains committed to expanding the provision of cycle parking throughout the borough.

The proposals for the Catford station area improvements include a covered cycle parking along the outside wall of Catford Bridge station. Whilst the land directly outside of the Sainsbury's local is not public highway, we will investigate opportunities to further increase the provision in the area.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 8

Priority 1

Question asked by: Nicolette Morgan

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Chris Barnham

Question

There has been a lot of disruption at night around my house on Lewisham Way. Last night it was the worst it has been with approximately 15 people pitching up deck chairs in the street and having a party. I contacted 101 and they informed the police do not attend noise complaints and it would be for the council to manage this. They stated they did not have an out of hours phone number to report this. Due to the fact there have been some dangerous crimes in the area recently neither my partner nor myself would feel comfortable asking said people to keep it down or move on (not that we should be expected to do so anyway).

How are we supposed to enjoy living in this area if we just have to accept constant disruption, shouting and general antisocial behaviour and are unable to report it. And how is there not an pit of hours phonenumber to report noise disruptions? Surely late nights are when the most complaints would occur? What will the council do to support "out of hours" complaints?

Reply

I was sorry to hear about the nuisance that you and neighbours have experienced. I can well understand the stress this may cause. Unfortunately, as a result of over 12 years of central government cuts the Council has had reluctantly to cease to operate an out of hours response service. However, we take these issues very seriously, and if we receive repetitive reports of concern we are able to investigate specific issues of concern at whatever time is appropriate, including out of hours.

Accordingly, I would urge residents always to report concerns, with as much detail as possible. There are a number of ways to report anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance at Lewisham. Through the SaferCommunities@Lewisham.gov.uk inbox or through an online portal at

<https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/environment/noise/noise-and-other-disturbances-we-investigate> which is most preferable, as this will prompt you to include detail of the incident, which includes times/date and your housing status. The latter is requested as not all anti-social behaviour is managed by the Council, thus this way of reporting would allow a swifter targeted response.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 9

Priority 1

Question asked by: Clive Lees

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Brenda Dacres

Question

We are interested in viewing comments made by consultees to planning applications. However, these do not display – there is a 'blank list' of comments but no way to see them. eg at https://planning.lewisham.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=neighbourComments&keyVal= LEWIS_DCAPR_112565&neighbourCommentsPager.page=1

Reply

Internal and statutory consultee comments are uploaded to planning case files online and can be viewed alongside plans and documents.

Public and neighbour comments are not routinely uploaded to the case file due to GDPR rules. However, on request to planning@lewisham.gov.uk, public comments on any case will be provided in a redacted format.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 10

Priority 1

Question asked by: Peter Richardson

Relevant Directorate: Corporate Resources

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

Question

How many Lewisham residents do not pay their council tax by Direct Debit?

The council enclosed a leaflet with the 2022/23 council Tax bill referring to its plans to pass on the £150 government payment to residents.

Have those paying by Direct Debit been reimbursed? How will those not paying by Direct Debit be reimbursed and when?

Reply

31.73% do not pay their council tax by Direct Debit.

65,487 households living in properties banded A – D and paying their council tax by direct debit were reimbursed with a payment of £150 which was credited directly into their bank accounts on or around 10 May 2022.

Anyone living in a property banded A – D but NOT paying their council tax by direct debit will receive a letter confirming the arrangements for them to claim their payment. The letters will be dispatched in surname order over a 4 week period commencing on Monday 11 July as below;

Surname starts with	Date letters will be sent
A - Do	11 July 2022
Do - La	18 July 2022
La - Ri	25 July 2022
Ri to Z	1 August 2022

The letter will contain an embedded barcode which they can present at their local post-office with their ID to redeem the cash payment of £150. They will have one month from the date of the letter to redeem it for cash. Any un-presented letters at the end of this period will have the credit off-set against their council tax account instead.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 11

Priority 1

Question asked by: Patricia Richardson

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Brenda Dacres

Question

Lewisham Planning Department recently delivered a leaflet in Lee Green Ward advising of the proposed development at the Leegate Centre (DC/22/126997)

How widespread was this delivery in the London borough of Lewisham?

Will the council be informing the Royal Borough of Greenwich Planning Department of the proposed development as the adjacent borough's residents may feel the effect/impact of the demolition plans, delivery of building materials, building time and resulting new development, more than some distanced residents of Lee Green Ward?

Reply

The Royal Borough of Greenwich have been consulted on the Leegate Planning application.

8,637 letters have been sent to addresses within an area approximately 300 metres from the development site boundary and in some places, where the site is directly visible, letters have been sent to addresses up to 500 metres away from the boundary. This is in addition to site notices and public notices being displayed in the local area and a local newspaper in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 12

Priority 1

Question asked by: Caroline Bennett

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

We the residents of Tannsfeld and Girton roads (both directly off Sydenham high street) have been asking for residents' parking for many years. We have registered our interest on the council website at least twice, myself and many of my neighbours without a response.

We are asking for parking restrictions similar those which operate in the London Borough of Bromley where it is only in force for part of the day to deter all day parking for now to see if there is any impact.

Residents of Tannsfeld use the bottom part of Girton Road which emerges halfway down Tannsfeld and where there is no housing to park on also, so a scheme which links the two roads would be helpful.

We have lost many parking spaces on one side of Tannsfeld because of the increasing number of drives which have been put in, where previously three cars could park outside two houses, you can only park two cars, on the drive. Most of one side of Tannsfeld is prevented from adding drives because the front gardens are 50cm shorter than the recommended length.

There is a large car park (very badly signposted) which is free for two hours on Girton Road (close to the entrance with the high street) so there is ample parking for gym users and shoppers.

Please can you look into this please?

Reply

The Council understands the concerns raised with regards to requesting better parking controls and we sincerely apologise for the lack of response. Currently the Council is in the process of developing a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) programme which is aimed at consulting at areas with no parking controls at this time, asking residents if they wish to see parking controls introduced on their roads. The programme will focus on areas of highest stress at first and implementation will on a phased approach and dependent on resident feedback. A

decision on the programme is expected by the Mayor & Cabinet committee later this year.

The issues around poor directional signage for Girton Road car park will also be looked into and improved where possible.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 13

Priority 1

Question asked by: Billy Shah

Relevant Directorate: Chief Exec's

Member to reply: Councillor Brenda Dacres

Question

Lewisham Life has on average five photographs of Mayor Damien Egan in each edition, with nearly every other spread having a photograph of him. The code of practice on local council publicity says that council magazines should only have "information for the public about the business, services and amenities of the council or other local service provider".

What is the reason to have so many pictures of the Mayor in the magazine and is this consistent with the code on publicity?

Reply

Lewisham Life is published four times a year, in line with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. The current issue, which was distributed earlier this month includes 13 pages on our London Borough of Culture programme, with details of events and opportunities for residents to get involved and experience. It also includes information about our leisure centres, markets, adult learning centre open days, new playgrounds and how to get a COVID vaccine booster. Lewisham Life is a valuable way to share this information with residents – particularly those who don't have access to or choose not to use social media. We do include photos of the Mayor and Cabinet members where appropriate and in context to illustrate stories, usually alongside local residents at local events.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 14

Priority 1

Question asked by: Phil Bridger

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

Parking in Clarendon Rise Car Park and on Albion Way is restriction free on Sundays. There also appears to be no parking enforcement. This leads dozens of cars being parked illegally / parked idling and an extremely busy wider area as people save their shopping for this day (due to being fare free).

Given the recent move to emissions based parking what is the climate incentive for maintaining this restriction free policy? Surely it leads to heavily polluting vehicles simply parking on Sundays?

Why is there no enforcement of illegal parking on Sundays (cars can be parked in fare free zones illegally e.g double yellow lines, disabled parking with no badges etc)?

Does the council have an ambition to improve the illegal parking situation in the area and if so how does it plan on implementing this ambition?

How much money has been raised from parking enforcement on Albion Way YTD 2022. In expectation that this is a very large number doesn't this point to a wider issue with parking in the area that needs fixing / preventing rather than just punitive enforcement?

Reply

Clarendon Rise Car Park operates Monday to Saturday. On Sundays and bank holidays, the car park is free of charge. The Council does deploy parking enforcement teams on Sundays and bank holidays except on Easter Sunday and Christmas Day, to minimise the cost to the Council considering controls are not in place. On these days enforcement does take place for contraventions to double yellow lines, disabled bays and dropped kerbs, as examples.

Albion Way falls under the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) which operates from Monday to Saturday in this area and again, the Council's parking enforcement team will be patrolling the location to enforce vehicles parked against similar contraventions as mentioned above, on Sundays.

If the Council is to propose an extension on the CPZ days, through a review, the Council will need to undertake a public consultation with residents and businesses, with approval likely if there is a strong appetite for any extension to parking controls. Currently a review programme for existing CPZs is being considered with possible committee decision later this year.

The Council is always looking for ways to improve parking compliance whilst lowering the emission in direct response to the climate emergency. This includes introducing new emissions controls on motorcycles recently, enforcing contraventions to traffic signs, as well as updating signs and road markings which have been deteriorated over the years through general wear and tear.

To date and since the beginning of the financial year, payments due to fines issues have totalled £10,180.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 15

Priority 1

Question asked by: Tim collingridge

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

Barrier on path between Avonley Rd/Hunsdon Road and John Williams Close in New Cross

This question concerns this barrier, made up of three overlapping railings, which LBL installed in November 2021 on the path between Avonley Rd/Hunsdon Road and John Williams Close.

This is on a designated cycleway:

<https://www.openstreetmap.org/way/170206117#map=18/51.48018/-0.04914>

I contacted highways@lewisham.gov.uk on 17/2/22 and 26/3/22 for clarification of the reasons for the erection of this barrier but did not receive any response.

The barrier that has been installed is very difficult to cycle round and causes conflict between cyclists and pedestrians. Also it is not passable by cargo bikes and 'inclusive' cycles like trikes. Given that one of the stated aims of Lewisham's transport policies is to encourage active travel and use of cargo bikes this barrier seems very inappropriate in its implementation and design.

We are also a bit baffled by the signage which states this is a 'Pedestrian' zone with no mention of cycle access along the path.

For information my original email sent from lewishamcyclists@gmail.com to Highways contains photographs of the barrier and signage.

Please clarify why the barrier was erected and what evidence was collected that demonstrated that it was needed.

Reply

I am sorry that you didn't receive a response to your original enquiry and Council officers are happy to meet and discuss the points raised.

The barriers were introduced following the receipt of complaints from members of the public raising safety concerns resulting from motorcycles and moped users using this route.

We appreciate that this has made it more difficult for cyclists, however this had to be weighed against the safety of pedestrians in this area, some of whom are elderly.

There is always a challenge to find a compromise solution that addresses the safety concern about motorcycle/moped use, but remains accessible and enables the use by adapted/cargo bikes.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 16

Priority 1

Question asked by: Mark Bennett

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Brenda Dacres

Question

Sadly Cllr Bell chose to answer a different question to the one I put (question 54) in March 2022 about the Council's business plan for Kitewood. It was not a question about when the Council published its interest in the development. Please answer the actual question: does the Council have a business plan for Kitewood and if yes where can I find a copy?

Reply

No, the Council does not have a dedicated business plan for Kitewood. However, the Council's proposal for its land at Copperas Street, involving Kitewood, can be found on the Council's website using the following address:

<https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=139&MIId=4350>

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 17

Priority 1

Question asked by: Richard Hebditch

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

Is it still council policy to deliver on the actions in Lewisham's climate action plan from March 2020, and will the council publish an update on the individual actions within it?

Reply

Lewisham Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan was approved by Mayor and Cabinet on 11 March 2020. The Council's delivery of Lewisham's Climate Emergency Action Plan has had to adapt in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and in relation to new funding opportunities such as the Government's Low Carbon Skills Fund, the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, the Green Homes Local Authority Delivery Fund and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. Updates on delivery of the Action Plan have been presented to Mayor and Cabinet on 10 March 2021

<https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=6122>
and 9 March 2022

<https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=6498>

A further update on delivery of Lewisham's Climate Emergency Action Plan will be presented to Mayor and Cabinet in March 2023.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 18

Priority 1

Question asked by: Lee Powell

Relevant Directorate: Corporate Resources

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

Question

Lewisham's auditors have reported that "slippage in the council's capital programme has been a recurrent theme over the years" and that this year it has happened again with capital projects allowed to slip into the following financial year. The auditors note that "there is more work to be completed in relation to instilling a sense of accountability for capital management". They also point out the lack of reporting on slippage on a scheme by scheme basis, and call for detailed explanations for any slippage. Given this issue recurs year after year and is not picked up by scrutiny (beyond public questions), what is the council's plan to deal with this issue?

Reply

This refers to the Auditor's Annual Report and positive Value for Money conclusion for 2020/21 and the subsequent post balance sheet period received by the Audit Panel at their June 2022 meeting with the report available here:

<https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s100379/Appendix%20A%20-%20Auditors%20Annual%20Report%20London%20Borough%20of%20Lewisham.pdf>

Since 2020 with the expansion of the housing capital programme at the same time as the Council was dealing with the disruptions from the Covid pandemic has made the timely delivery of the capital programme more challenging.

As noted in the report, the governance arrangements have been reviewed and strengthened given the increased and scale of the Council's Housing Revenue Account capital programme and the General Fund Plans. In addition, the internal reporting to decision makers is being improved through the introduction of more comprehensive Project Highlight Reports (PHR). These help more closely align reporting on the time, cost and quality elements of delivery of schemes.

The financial reporting has also been strengthened with the introduction of Red, Amber, Green (RAG) ratings for spend against project profile for the period and in respect of the total budget. The financial timetable has also been revisited for 2022/23 to include a full re-profiling stage in the annual programme cycle in June/July with a further update in October/November by exception.

This improved reporting informs and is part of the capital section in the regular quarterly budget monitoring to Mayor & Cabinet. The re-profiling work and future programme is then consulted on with Member via pre-scrutiny at the relevant select committees, in particular the Public Accounts Select Committee, before moving to Mayor and Cabinet for the proposals to form part of the Budget report presented to Full Council for adoption.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 19

Priority 1

Question asked by: Mark Morris

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Brenda Dacres

Question

Please state what is Lewisham Council's exact definition of a social home?

Reply

There are lots of different types of 'affordable' housing products being delivered across London and nationally

The affordable homes that we define as 'social homes' for the purposes of planning are:

- London Affordable Rent (LAR) homes; and
- Target Rent homes

London Affordable Rent is for households on a low income with the rent level based on social rent levels with those levels set by the GLA. This is a lower rent level than the national Affordable Rent which is set at up to 80% of market rent.

Target Rent is a social rent level calculated by the government.

When the Council refers to its Building for Lewisham programme, the council uses the term social home to describe the tenures reference above i.e. LAR and Target Rent and also temporary accommodation, which the Council are both building and acquiring to support those residents presenting to us as homeless. The Temporary Accommodation homes delivered by the Council are let at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 20

Priority 2

Question asked by: Andy R Smith

Relevant Directorate: Chief Exec's

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

Question

When I'm a candidate for the local election, can my professional qualifications appear next to my name? I.e Andrew R Smith, MSc, CA ?

Reply

No, current electoral law does not allow for election candidates to display a title or qualification next to their name. The ballot paper allows for the candidate's full name, or their commonly used name. In addition, candidates for political parties are allowed to use a description and an emblem (both of which must be registered with the electoral commission). Independent candidates are allowed to have the description "independent". No further information appears on the ballot paper.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 21
Priority 2

Question asked by: Alan Hall

Relevant Directorate: Corporate Resources

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

Question

How does Lewisham Council ensure compliance with the data protection and sharing requirements laid down in law, specifically the INSPIRE Regulations 2009?

Reply

The Council's Information Security and Governance team oversee data protection compliance. It does so by delivering mandatory data protection training, advice and support to council services. It oversees the data privacy impact assessment (DPIA) and data sharing agreement (DSA) processes to ensure sharing activities comply with legislation.

The Council's LLPG/GIS (Geographical Information Systems) Team is responsible for the transfer of Spatial Data to staff, internal and external clients and partners. The team transfer data to the INSPIRE Hub guided by INSPIRE Regulations of 2009. INSPIRE Regulations of 2009 implement the European Directive on public access to environmental information (2003/4/EC) in the UK. The Directive requires public authorities to make environmental information available to the public on request, free of charge. The Regulations set out how public authorities must comply with the Directive, including what information must be made available, how requests for information must be handled, and what exceptions apply.

Information that must be provided includes air quality, water quality, noise levels, waste management, and other environmental issues. The exceptions in the Directive include information which is confidential or commercially sensitive, or which would prejudice the interests of security or defence.

Requests for information must be handled in a timely and efficient manner. The regulations do not specify a particular method for handling such requests, but they do require that all requests must be responded to within 20 working days. In addition, the regulations stipulate that public authorities must make every effort to provide the requested information in an accessible format. The INSPIRE Regulations do not apply to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 22

Priority 2

Question asked by: Patricia Richardson

Relevant Directorate: Corporate Resources

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

Question

The council will have agreed a balanced budget for the London borough of Lewisham for 2022/2023.

Will the council be forced to re-think its spending plans or draw up emergency cuts to front line public services due to the highest inflation rate, causing a surge in costs, thus eroding funding agreed? Would this be likely to affect front line services? Or, will the council use any funding required from its contingency reserve?

Reply

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is kept under regular review, aligned with the regular budget monitoring in-year and announcements from government on future spending plans impacting Local Authority activities.

At present based on the service budgets set and corporate provisions made for 2022/23, including assumptions for inflation, the Council is not expecting to need to draw up emergency cuts to front line services. Any pressures in-year not covered by these assumptions will be considered by the s151 officer. They will then agree plans with the relevant service(s) to find alternative means to reduce an overspending risk. The use of reserves as a temporary measure to provide the time for these plans to be implemented would be part of this discussion and report to Mayor & Cabinet at the earliest opportunity, either via the quarterly monitoring report or the reports that build the budget if later in the year.

If the current very high levels of inflation continue for longer than expected based on Bank of England assumptions the savings target for 2023/24 may also need to be increased. These considerations are explored further in the 6 July MTFS report to Mayor & Cabinet, available at:

<https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s101761/Medium%20Term%20Financial%20Strategy.pdf>.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 23

Priority 2

Question asked by: Mark Bennett

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Brenda Dacres

Question

During 2021/2 how much did the Council spend on legal fees defending it's planning decision concerning Mais House, Sydenham Hill? How much did the Council spend on legal fees in the same year defending other planning applications?

Reply

The Council spent £74,111 defending the Mais House decision in 21/22.

The Council has spent £63,706 on legal fees defending other planning applications in the same year.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 24

Priority 2

Question asked by: Lee Powell

Relevant Directorate: Chief Exec's

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

Question

Until the election of Mayor Egan in 2018, Lewisham published on its website its monthly performance report. These were then scrapped. The council has now taken down all the pre-2018 performance reports from its website. The auditors have now revealed that in fact the council does collate a quarterly performance report, but this is neither shared at council committee meetings or made public. Will the council commit to publishing these reports in future and also making public its quarterly performance reports from the last four years?

Reply

The Council is committed to publishing its performance reporting going forward. The historic reports have been removed from the website in error and will be uploaded again. We acknowledge there has been a gap in performance reporting over the last few years whilst we firstly reevaluated effectively reporting on our priorities with the introduction of our Corporate Strategy in early 2019, and then shifted our resources and priorities to responding to COVID, however as we emerge from our COVID response, the Council is reviewing its performance management approach and will be regularly publishing performance information later this year.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 25

Priority 2

Question asked by: Mark Morris

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie Davis

Question

Please state how many temporary homeless households there currently are in Lewisham and what number of these households are placed in temporary accommodation outside of the Borough. Please also state what was the position a full year ago.

Reply

As at 12th July 2022, there were 2,767 households placed in temporary accommodation (TA). Of these, 57% were in TA within Lewisham, 25% were in TA within SE London and 18% were in TA outside of Lewisham and SE London.

As at 12th July 2021, there were 2,614 households placed in TA. Of these, 60% were in TA within Lewisham, 24% were in TA within SE London and 16% were in TA outside of Lewisham and SE London.

The Council strives to make all placements in borough or as close to borough as possible.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 26

Priority 3

Question asked by: Patricia Richardson

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Brenda Dacres

Question

Some local residents recently received a public notice from the London Borough of Lewisham Planning department.

It was dated 22/6/2022, property reference LE/995/A/TP, council reference DC/22/126997. Residents were advised to reply by 22/7/2022, barely a month.

What are the statutory requirements for the time allowed for comments?

There is no mention on the leaflet of a public presentation, public meeting, contact with developers and councillors, council officers.

Will such events be held?

There is no mention of a time-line of the steps involved in the progress of the proposed development to inform the public. Will this be available to the public?

The leaflet refers to a "proposed development at Leegate Centre" and then to "the application." Does this mean the same in terms of planning law?

The leaflet delivered seems incomplete in many respects. Will the council planning department be clear about its responsibilities to the public, how the public is informed and what the public can expect?

Reply

The statutory period for responses relating to Public Notices for EIA development is 30 days.

The Neighbour letters circulated to residents includes case officer contact details; a link to the submission plans and documents; and Planning Committee meeting details. The planning description correctly sets out the site address and development proposal. Further details about what to expect after commenting on a planning application are included in acknowledgement letters that are sent to all those who comment, as well as information available on the Council website at:

<https://lewisham.gov.uk/myserives/planning/find-comment-planning-applications/guide-to-commenting-on-planning-applications>

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 27

Priority 3

Question asked by: Peter Richardson

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

This question concerns the street trees on Eastdown Park between the Dermody Hill junction and the Wisteria Road junction.

These trees have been pollarded and as a consequence there is massive growth around the trunks to ground level. Those on the right hand side of the road from Dermody Hill to Wisteria Road seem to have more growth than those opposite. Attempts have been made for the first 2 trees to cut back the growth. However, because the rest are flourishing the growth is badly reducing the pavement width for pedestrians and beginning to cover the parked cars.

Will the council say who is responsible for monitoring the tree growth and dealing with the damaging consequences to be seen? Can anything be done to free up the pavements? This is a narrow busy road and the tree growth adds to the problems for pedestrians and residents.

Reply

The Council's Tree Service is responsible for ensuring that the shoots that grow from the base of trees in Council ownership are removed if they are blocking pavements. This is part of our annual tree maintenance programme. There is an active program/team carrying out this work and the area around Eastdown Park is included within that. It is anticipated that works in this vicinity should be completed by mid- August 2022.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 28

Priority 3

Question asked by: Alan Hall

Relevant Directorate: Chief Exec's

Member to reply: Chair of Audit Panel

Question

May I ask the Chair of the Council to outline the terms of reference and responsibilities of the Audit Panel?

Reply

The Constitution states:

9.3 The Council will also appoint an advisory Audit Panel as set out in the first column of the table below with the composition set out in the second column and the terms of reference set out in the third column

Audit Panel	Composition	Terms of Reference
Audit Panel	Consisting of 6 non executive Councillors, one of whom shall serve as chair and up to 4 independent co-opted members	(a) To receive, review and where appropriate advise as appropriate and make recommendations to the Council * on the following matters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="815 1424 1385 1529">• The review and approval of the Council's Internal Audit strategy, plans and resources.<li data-bbox="815 1570 1385 1742">• Internal Audit progress reports on a quarterly basis summarizing the audit reports issued and performance of the Internal Audit function.<li data-bbox="815 1783 1385 1888">• The annual report of the Council's Head of Internal Audit and Inspection Agencies<li data-bbox="815 1928 1385 2036">• Reports from Internal Audit on the implementation of agreed recommendations where

		<p>management have failed to undertake the necessary actions within the planned audit time frame.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The external auditor's Annual Plan, relevant reports, and reports to those charged with governance. • External inspection reports and specific reports as agreed with the external auditor • The monitoring of the effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements, the control environment and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements. • An overview of the Council's Constitution in respect of audit procedure rules, contract procedure rules, and financial regulations. • The Council's assurance arrangements including the Statement of Internal Control. • The Council's Annual Statement of Accounts, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are any concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Executive. • The external auditor's opinion and reports to members, and monitoring of management action in response to issues raised by external audit.
		<p>* Any advice and recommendations made by the Audit Panel shall be referred to the Chief Executive and/or Executive Director of Corporate Resources who shall refer the matter to the appropriate Council decision maker for consideration.</p>

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 29

Priority 3

Question asked by: Lee Powell

Relevant Directorate: Corporate Resources

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

Question

Lewisham's Local Democracy Review recommended "that the Council take an open data approach, namely that it seeks to provide (subject to legal constraints such as personal data) all the information it holds on an easily accessible platform for our citizens to interrogate and also use for their own purposes". Please can you tell us whether there is a platform or, if not, what plans there are to provide one?

Reply

Information can be found on the Council's open data and transparency page
[Lewisham Council - Open data and transparency](#)

Further data is also published on the observatory page
[Lewisham Observatory – Welcome to the Lewisham Observatory site](#)