

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 1

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Matthew Sparkes

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

The changes proposed by TfL to Catford's roads provide a lot of advantages, but there appears to be nothing in the plans to stop Sandhurst/Sanglely Road becoming even more of a rat-run than it currently is. Changes could lead more people to seek a shortcut for part of the South Circular along this residential road. What is the Council doing to ensure this doesn't happen?

Reply

We have been working in partnership with TfL to make changes to the South Circular Road - part of the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) to provide a better experience for pedestrians and road users in Catford Town Centre.

There is continuous dialogue on assessing the impacts to surrounding roads in Catford. Road safety audits are a standard feature of improvement schemes such as the A205. Audits are undertaken at initial design through to final completion as well as after construction. There will be local improvements and restrictions put in place to re-route traffic to minimise delays.

The proposal on the route for the A205 including the key additional measures, key documents as well as questions are covered in the consultation document available at <https://haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/catford-town-centre>

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 2

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Matthew Sparkes

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

Pavement parking is illegal everywhere in London, except where explicitly exempted by councils. I recently asked Lewisham Council for details on the exemption made for Sandhurst Road as there is precious little room left for pedestrians, but I was told that the decision was made 30 years ago and the paperwork cannot be found. Will Lewisham Council reinvestigate whether pavement parking is properly allowed here and whether it should be changed given its ambitions under the Sustainable Streets programme?

Reply

Addressing pavement parking in the borough is part of a wider agenda to improve the public realm and create more space for pedestrians, wheelchair users and people with buggies.

Pavement parking in Sandhurst Road will be reviewed through the Sustainable Streets programme and where possible, parking will be moved onto the carriageway, which is expected to be carried out next year.

More widely, the Council has issued more than 4,000 PCN's for footway parking offences across the borough in the last year and we will continue to seek to enhance our enforcement regime with regard to cars obstructing pavements and blocking drives.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 3

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Mark De-Laurey

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

The council have introduced more EV trickle charge (low wattage EV charges) power points in to the borough. However, the parking spaces next to these charging points have not be segregated for EV cars only. This means that fossil fuel vehicles can and do park right next to the EV charging point preventing EVs from charging. Do the council accept that is is an oversight, and will they take steps to address this issue?

Reply

A number of EV charging points have been installed with the intention of further formalising these in due course. Segregation for electric vehicles only, where this is not already the case, will be implemented as part of the next stages of the EV charging implementation plan along with introduction of dedicated bays. These proposals will be outlined in a revised EV charging strategy due to be presented to the Council's Mayor and Cabinet on the 19th July.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 4

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Mark De-Laurey

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

What are the council doing to reduce car ownership on the following roads inside the LTN?; Dallinger Rd, Holme Lacey Rd, Micheldever Rd, Southbrook Rd, Leahurst Rd, Upwood Rd, Cambridge Drive, Leyland Rd, etc. Where car ownership is at its highest in the borough according to the 2021 Census, and where Roads resemble a parking lot. On street parking in this area does nothing to promote active travel or kids playing in the Road.

Reply

A change in car ownership, including on the roads in question, requires a change in cultural approach to travel. As with all tasks in encouraging a cultural change in approach by residents this is expected to take time and possibly over several years.

The primary aim of the Lewisham and Lee Green LTN is to encourage people to walk and cycle more whilst also improving air quality and public health, reducing noise pollution, and making roads safer, which are all in line with the Council's longer term aims for the whole borough. LTNs achieve this by restricting motor vehicle through traffic within a residential area while maintaining and improving accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

In addition to restricting through traffic and creating an environment that supports non-car based travel, the Council is also implementing a series of additional complementary measures within the LTN and surrounding areas to further encourage long-term behaviour change towards sustainable forms of travel. These measures include school streets, more trees and green spaces, additional bike hangars and cycle stands, improved pedestrian crossing points, and new seating areas. These are aimed at encouraging residents to take up more sustainable forms of travel and reduce car dependency whilst increasing amenity in the local area.

All information and data collected to assess the performance of the LTN can be found in the monitoring reports presented to the Council's Mayor and Cabinet in September 2022. Please see the two links below for copies of the reports:

<https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=6495&Ver=4>

<https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=7912&Ver=4>

As part of the Sustainable Streets programme, we have committed to reviewing all our current CPZs which will give us the opportunity to look at the parking layout and hopefully reduce some of the pavement parking that is affecting some of the roads mentioned. We may also review and change the parking times to discourage non-residents parking in these areas.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 5

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Temitope Fisayo

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

There have been a spate of road accidents on Shardeloes Road in the past six months. Driving speed is the biggest contributor to road accidents. Will the council take steps to reduce driving speeds on Shardeloes Road, such as installing speed cameras, introducing chicanes, or widening the pavement?

Reply

Our records indicate that there have been very few collisions on Shardeloes Road over the past five years. However, we understand that there may have been an increase during the last six months. We are awaiting formal accident and collision data from the Police and will review this once available.

Should the data indicate any particular issues we will assess the need for road danger reduction measures on Shardeloes Road. There are high demands for such measures and available funds to implement them are limited. The Council will determine the priority of schemes after reviewing data from across the borough. We will soon be publishing a new piece of work which will allow us to prioritise safety implementations using metrics including speed, traffic volumes and collision data, but will also take account of the importance of the street in terms of its situation in the borough, for example proximity to schools and its use by pedestrians and cyclists.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 6

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Elena Miles

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor James-J Walsh

Question

Can the Mayor and council assure residents that Grove Park library will continue to run and provide a library service in this area after this month? Many residents are not be able to travel to use the borough's other more central libraries, and many will be unable to travel to visit after school, for example

Reply

Lewisham Council is committed to delivering an accessible local library service right across our borough.

The current leaseholder of three of our local community libraries, Crofton Park, Sydenham and Grove Park, has issued notice to end the leases. We have a new provider in place already for Crofton Park and Sydenham community libraries and we are working very hard to explore opportunities with community partner organisations and stakeholders already supporting libraries in our borough to take on the opportunity at Grove Park.

The current leaseholder have said they will remain in place until we can complete the smooth transition to a new provider, ensuring that Grove Park Community Library will continue to stay open.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 7

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Kate Tong

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor James-J Walsh

Question

I would like to ask why the proposed closure of Grove Park library has been kept so quiet (we have only just heard about it now) and the reasons behind the decision to close?

Given the emphasis on encouraging people, especially children to read we are taking away a valuable resource to the area with little public consultation about the reasoning.

Reply

Lewisham Council is committed to delivering an accessible local library service right across our borough.

The current leaseholder of three of our local community libraries, Crofton Park, Sydenham and Grove Park, has issued notice to end the leases. We have a new provider in place already for Crofton Park and Sydenham community libraries and we are working very hard to explore opportunities with community partner organisations and stakeholders already supporting libraries in our borough to take on the opportunity at Grove Park.

The current leaseholder have said they will remain in place until we can complete the smooth transition to a new provider, ensuring that Grove Park Community Library will continue to stay open.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 8

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Emma Raha

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor James-J Walsh

Question

Can you confirm when you plan to consult with local residents regarding the future operations of Grove Park library? If so, please provide a timeline for when this will happen.

Reply

Lewisham Council is committed to delivering an accessible local library service right across our borough.

The current leaseholder of three of our local community libraries, Crofton Park, Sydenham and Grove Park, has issued notice to end the leases. We have a new provider in place already for Crofton Park and Sydenham community libraries and we are working very hard to explore opportunities with community partner organisations and stakeholders already supporting libraries in our borough to take on the opportunity at Grove Park.

Officers have already undertaken a community stakeholder engagement exercise together with the local ward Councillors. Once a new provider had been identified and appointed, we will send out a press release and communicate arrangements with the staff, volunteers, community stakeholders and residents. The Library service and the new provider will also undertake a series of engagement activities to local residents and friends groups once the library is transferred.

The current leaseholder have said they will remain in place until we can complete the smooth transition to a new provider, ensuring that Grove Park Community Library will continue to stay open.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 9

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Alex Raha

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

The Council's priorities detailed in its Corporate Strategy, Climate Emergency Action Plan, Transport Strategy, Cycle Strategy and Air Quality Action Plan all state ambitions to provide protected cycle lanes from Deptford to Downham.

Please can you provide an up -to -date timeline for when the Council will bring forward public consultation and delivery timelines for public realm improvements (including protected cycle lanes & improved pedestrian crossings) along the section of highway the Council is the highway authority for; Deptford Church Street and Brookmill Road ?

Reply

The council has been developing a number of cycle schemes to improve the cycle infrastructure between Deptford and Downham. Designs are currently being considered for a segregated cycle lane along Deptford Church Street between the A2 Deptford Broadway/Deptford Bridge and the A200 Creek Road. It is proposed this will tie in with the development of the Thames Tideway Tunnel.

At present we are considering a phased approach to delivering the scheme and we are developing a programme of work with our contractors.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 10
12 July 2023

Question asked by: Cairis Grant-Hickey

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor James-J Walsh

Question

I would like to know the future plan for Grove park library and why residents (& staff!) were not consulted or informed about it's imminent closure?

Reply

Lewisham Council continues to be committed to delivering an accessible local library service right across our borough. There has not been any proposal or plans to close Grove Park Community Library, which is why there has not been any communication or consultation in relation to the closure of the library.

The current leaseholder of three of our local community libraries, Crofton Park, Sydenham and Grove Park, has issued notice to end the leases. We have a new provider in place already for Crofton Park and Sydenham community libraries and we are working very hard to explore opportunities with community partner organisations and stakeholders already supporting libraries in our borough to take on the opportunity at Grove Park.

Officers have already undertaken a community stakeholder engagement exercise together with the local ward Councillors and the (non London Borough of Lewisham) staff at the Library. Once a new provider has been identified and appointed, we will send out a press release and communicate arrangements with the staff, volunteers, community stakeholders and residents via a series of engagement activities.

The current leaseholder have said they will remain in place until we can complete the smooth transition to a new provider, ensuring that Grove Park Community Library will continue to stay open.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 11

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Jess Horsfall

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor James-J Walsh

Question

How best do we go about keeping Grove Park library operating for the local community? As a parent of a child at Coopers Lane primary school it is well used by friends and the local community. It would be a real loss, and not another library service so close by. The selection of books is great for kids and it is a community hub for the children.

Reply

Lewisham Council is committed to delivering an accessible local library service right across our borough. There are no plans or proposals to close Grove Park Library. The current leaseholder of three of our local community libraries, Crofton Park, Sydenham and Grove Park, has issued notice to end the leases. We have a new provider in place already for Crofton Park and Sydenham community libraries and we are working very hard to explore opportunities with community partner organisations and stakeholders already supporting libraries in our borough to take on the opportunity at Grove Park.

Our intention is to be able to appoint a local community stakeholder to take on the lease and the service level agreement to continue to deliver locally relevant activities and library services at Grove Park Community Library. This will ensure that it continues to be a valuable community asset which is well used by schools, children and all within the Grove Park community.

The current leaseholder have said they will remain in place until we can complete the smooth transition to a new provider, ensuring that Grove Park Community Library will continue to stay open.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 12
12 July 2023

Question asked by: Judith Barrett

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

The Council's web page 'Improvements to Sydenham Park Bridge' published 15/11/22, says:

'We've looked into potential options to replace the steps, as part of our longer-term plans to make it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to cross the bridge. We plan to start the initial designs for a stepped ramp later this financial year [i.e. before 5 April 2023]. Once these designs are completed, we'll identify funding to help us finalise the designs and implement the scheme.'

What stage are the initial designs for the stepped ramp at now, and by what date they will be finished?

Reply

The approaches to the bridge on both sides are constrained, but a feasibility study established that it is possible to construct a stepped ramp in the available space. Further to the initial study a consultant was appointed to review the project and its risks. One of the initial risks identified is the cost of moving utilities (electricity, telecommunications etc) as a number of the statutory providers use the location to cross the railway line.

The study has assumed an agreed outline structure and will investigate the feasibility and costs associated with utility diversions. A review of the utility locations is expected by the end of July 2023. All investigations and information will inform a realistic cost of the overall construction and installation of the ramps.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 13
12 July 2023

Question asked by: Marcus Mayers

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie Davis

Question

With reference to Q22 of 17.05.23 what proportion of repairs for each red hazard were resolved within the target timescale in 2021 & 2022? Please show figures for each item separately for both 2021 & 2022 (one column for each year please).

Reply

Our systems are unable to easily report on the individual types of work as these are description based and free typed by the person raising the order. However, we can report on completions by trade type:

FY	0 - Not Completed with target	1 - Completed within target	Grand Total	% Completed within target
2021/2022				
Brickwork	68	480	548	87.6
Carpentry	132	746	878	85
Drain Jetting Repair	281	145	426	34
Electrical	327	531	858	61.9
Glazing	41	253	294	86.1
Locks	2	5	7	71.4
Plumbing	628	1970	2598	75.8
Roofing	1	1	2	50

FY	0 - Not Completed with target	1 - Completed within target	Grand Total	% Completed within target
2022/2023				
Brickwork	98	465	563	82.6
Carpentry	106	687	793	86.6
Drain Jetting Repair	9	17	26	65.4
Electrical	108	851	959	88.7
Glazing	13	49	62	79
Locks	2	5	7	71.4

Plumbing	341	1386	1727	80.3
Grand Total	2765	7984	10749	74.3

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 14
12 July 2023

Question asked by: Marcus Mayers

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie Davis

Question

During 2021 and 2022 what proportion of emergency repairs were resolved within 24 hours and how many urgent within 3 days? Please show the two sets of figures for each year separately.

Reply

Our systems are unable to easily report on the individual types of work as these are description based and free typed by the person raising the order. However, we can report on completions by trade type:

FY	0 - Not Completed with target	1 - Completed within target	Grand Total	% Completed within target
2021/2022	EMERGENCY JOBS (24HOUR)			
Brickwork	68	480	548	87.6
Carpentry	132	746	878	85
Drain Jetting Repair	281	145	426	34
Electrical	327	531	858	61.9
Glazing	41	253	294	86.1
Locks	2	5	7	71.4
Plumbing	628	1970	2598	75.8
Roofing	1	1	2	50

FY	0 - Not Completed with target	1 - Completed within target	Grand Total	% Completed within target
2022/2023	EMERGENCY JOBS (24HOUR)			
Brickwork	98	465	563	82.6
Carpentry	106	687	793	86.6
Drain Jetting Repair	9	17	26	65.4
Electrical	108	851	959	88.7
Glazing	13	49	62	79
Locks	2	5	7	71.4

Plumbing	341	1386	1727	80.3
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Grand Total	2157	7591	9748	78
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FY	0 - Not Completed with target	1 - Completed within target	Grand Total	% Completed within target
2021/2022	URGENT JOBS (3DAY)			
Brickwork	3	10	13	77
Carpentry	2	3	5	60
Drain Jetting Repair	1	7	8	88
Electrical	2	9	11	82
Electrical AFD Work	1	1	2	50
Multiskilled	5		5	0
Plumbing	3	8	11	73
Welding	2		2	0

FY	0 - Not Completed with target	1 - Completed within target	Grand Total	% Completed within target
2022/2023	URGENT JOBS (3DAY)			
Brickwork		7	7	100
Carpentry	7	1	8	13
Drain Jetting Repair	1		1	0
Electrical	9	20	29	69
Electrical Programme	2	2	4	50
Glazing	2		2	0
Multiskilled	1		1	0
Painting	1		1	0
Plastering	1		1	0
Plumbing	5	7	12	58

Grand Total	48	75	123	61
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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 15

12 July 2023

Question asked by: William Miles

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor James-J Walsh

Question

What initiative has the Council taken to keep Grove Park and Crofton Park community libraries open since the leaseholder pulled out? Why has it been handled in such secrecy and is anything being done to preserve the jobs for the workers there?

Reply

Lewisham Council is committed to delivering an accessible local library service right across our borough.

The current leaseholder of three of our local community libraries, Crofton Park, Sydenham and Grove Park, has issued notice to end the leases. We have a new provider in place already for Crofton Park and Sydenham community libraries and we are working very hard to explore opportunities with community partner organisations and stakeholders already supporting libraries in our borough to take on the opportunity at Grove Park.

At Grove Park, Officers have already undertaken a community stakeholder engagement exercise together with the local ward Councillors and the non-London Borough of Lewisham staff at the Library. Once a new provider has been identified and appointed, we will send out a press release and communicate arrangements with the staff, volunteers, community stakeholders and residents.

The deadline for community stakeholder to submit an expression of interest has now passed and we are in the process of reviewing them to appoint a new leaseholder and provider at Grove Park Community Library.

The current leaseholder have said they will remain in place until we can complete the smooth transition to a new provider, ensuring that Grove Park Community Library will continue to stay open.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 16

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Michael Bachmann

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

Question

The Council claims there was no cover up over the Council's failure to answer Freedom of Information requests (Q45 of 17.05.23). The ICO press release refers to the huge disparity between the information published on the Council's website and its appalling performance in reality. How does the Council explain that discrepancy?

Reply

Thank you for the question. It is not a 'claim' there was no cover up – it is the factual position. The Council readily acknowledged that its performance in responding to FOIs fell short of the level expected. Since receiving the ICO's Enforcement Notice, the Council has significantly improved performance. 88.6% of the historic FOI requests have been responded to and responses to current FOIs is much improved.

The FOI Enforcement Notice will be fully complied with ahead of the 6 month deadline of 16th September 2023.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 17
12 July 2023

Question asked by: Michael Bachmann

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

How many fines has the Council issued in each of the last 3 years for leaving an engine running while a vehicle is stationary and how much was actually collected? Please specify figures for each year separately.

Reply

The Council has a wide range of measures in place across the borough to improve air quality, including those to deter engine idling, which involves an ongoing programme of awareness, education and enforcement to bring about positive behaviour change.

The issuing of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) in Lewisham for engine idling was first introduced in January 2021, with particular focus around schools. In accordance with London-wide guidance, the Council's enforcement officers will routinely approach any vehicle seen engine idling and ask the driver to either switch off the engine or move the vehicle to a location where it can be safely parked. This action is normally successful, however if the driver refuses to move the vehicle or continues to engine idle, the enforcement officer will then issue a PCN.

The number of PCNs issued since January 2021 is shown in the table below:

Year	PCNs Issued	Amount collected
Jan-21	1	£0
Mar-21	2	£120
Jun-21	1	£40
Jul-21	5	£315
Aug-21	8	£445
Sep-21	2	£145
Oct-21	3	£210
Nov-21	2	£80
2021 Total	24	£1,355
Mar-22	2	£130
Apr-22	4	£260
May-22	4	£170
Jun-22	5	£365

Jul-22	4	£225
Sep-22	2	£169
Nov-22	1	0
2022 Total	22	£1,319
Feb-23	1	£40
Apr-23	2	£80
2023 YTD	6	£120
Grand Total	49	£2,794

As part of the Council's ongoing programme to address engine idling across the borough, we will be reviewing our approach to the enforcement of idling offences, particularly around schools, to further help deliver the behaviour change necessary to tackle this important issue.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 18
12 July 2023

Question asked by: Mark Morris

Relevant Directorate: Corporate Resources

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

Question

Mayor and Cabinet papers of 21 June 2023 state that as of the 31 March 2023, 92.8% of Lewisham council tax due had been collected which remains (3.2% or £5.5m) below the targeted level of 96% and at the same date 96% of business rates due had been collected which remains (3% or £2m) below the targeted level. Please explain the reasons why Lewisham Council is missing its own targets and that it is in the bottom 20 councils in England for actually collecting council tax, and the 7th lowest in London.

Reply

In 2022/23, we were still recovering from Covid and the country was subject to a cost of living crisis that was very much beyond our control. In March 2022 there were 15,403 households in arrears with their council tax and by the following year – in March 2023 this had increased to 19,485. As a result of this, debt with just these households increased by over £4m.

To try and improve this, a number of changes have been made in both the CTAX and business rate sections. Until recently both had significant backlogs which are now cleared which is beginning to enable both services to release more resources to focus on collection rather than account administration.

Other proposed and imminent changes are;

- Implementing new data sharing with HMRC that will enable us to fast-track collection through applying for attachments of earnings and benefits;
- Using credit referencing to establish propensity to recover debt which will inform us on where best to target our resources;
- New take-up activities, targeting households where we believe they would be entitled to CTAX support and to encourage them to make applications;
- Improving notification letters, to make them clearer and ensure they are not an impediment to residents paying;
- Targeted text and email campaigns to residents to encourage direct debt payments and take-up of discounts / reliefs.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 19

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Mark Morris

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie Davis

Question

The paper Housing Futures Progress Report as part of the Mayor and Cabinet papers on the 21 June 2023, states that the estimated costs for the transition of services from Lewisham Homes to Lewisham Council for the financial year 2023/24 will be between £3.3m and £3.9m. Does the Mayor believe that the cost benefit analysis undertaken before a decision was made to start the transfer process at Mayor and Cabinet on 7 December 2022 was sufficiently rigorous considering the extensive expenditure now being involved?

<https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s105284/Housing%20Management%20Appendix%203%20Cost-benefit%20Analysis.pdf>

Reply

Thank you for your question. The decision to bring Lewisham Homes in house was led by the need to better respond to the new regulatory environment, the lack of advantages to having an ALMO and the desire to improve services for residents. At the time, many of the costs associated with the transition were unknown or unable to be calculated.

Since the decision, strong progress has been made and further information, discovery and detailed analysis of costs, carried out. The detailed implementation plans, including lessons learned from transferring some services in advance of the October transfer date have revealed a much better understanding of costs associated with the transfer and a clearer understanding of actual costs that was not possible pre-December.

The level of once-off costs for the transition represents c3% of the annual turnover of the Lewisham Homes company of £100m. Within this is a significant element of technology investment which was already part of the Lewisham Homes improvement journey which included getting closer to the Council's systems and infrastructure. However, these actions were delayed with the focus on Covid and new compliance priorities. They are therefore now falling into the transition activities as these have to be done to enable the Lewisham Homes staff to transfer to the Council. The main areas of cost relating to the transition, are attributed to Programme resources including professional services, one off redundancy costs and IT.

The complexity of the programme requires a corporate led approach with dedicated resources in place to ensure residents experience as little disruption to services as possible and staff have a positive experience accessing the right tools to be able to do their job.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 20
12 July 2023

Question asked by: Alan Hall

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Brenda Dacres

Question

The former Inner London Education Authority outdoor learning centres:

- Bryn Coedwig Outdoor Education Centre, Alberllefenni, Machynlleth, Powys, Wales
- Tyn y Berth Centre, Corris, Machynlleth, Powys, Wales.
- Horton Kirby Centre, Horton Road, Horton Kirby, Dartford, Kent

transferred to Lewisham Council. Can the cabinet member outline their current ownership and any plans that the Council may have in relation to these properties?

Reply

At Mayor and Cabinet on 15th January 2020 it was agreed that officers were authorised to dispose of these three sites and that process is currently ongoing.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 21

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Mark Bennett

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: The Mayor, Damien Egan

Question

This question is for the Mayor: The Casey report highlighted the Met's lack of local accountability. Sadly unlike other boroughs Lewisham relies on just one person to provide what limited accountability is available but with no record of subjects raised or issues resolved. At his meeting on 5th December did the Mayor ask the local police commander how many police officers accused of domestic abuse are still working in Lewisham and what was the answer?

Reply

This issue was discussed at length at the December meeting between the Borough Commander and the Mayor. The Borough Commander was unable to confirm the exact number of Lewisham Officers accused of domestic abuse because of a number of factors including the three borough Basic Command Unit (BCU) Structure, the fact that investigations are often being undertaken by forces where the officer lives rather than works i.e. not the Met and that some officers may not have fully disclosed all relevant information. However, Council officers have formally requested the information via FOI channels at the central Met headquarters and await a response.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 22

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Mark Bennett

Relevant Directorate: Corporate Resources

Member to reply: Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Question

This question is for the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny: The Council's auditor has expressed concern in the accounts about the inability of Lewisham Councillors to properly scrutinise the Council's activities because of a lack of information. Has the Chair raised this problem with the Council?

Reply

Overall the Council has recognised strong and effective scrutiny arrangements in place. One recommendation by the external auditors was in respect of improved performance reporting which has subsequently been actioned.

The Council operates on the principle of transparent and open reporting and has extensive scrutiny arrangements. These arrangements are Member led with, an overarching overview and scrutiny committee, six select committees for defined areas of activity, and the option for additional task and finish reviews. Each Committees sets its own work programme, usually a mix of pre and post decision scrutiny, policy development and performance monitoring, with the aim of improving Council services and outcomes for residents. As Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, I feel that scrutiny is robust in its approach and able to effectively exercise its duties.

In terms of the financial impacts of the Council's activities these are subject to an annual external audit which concludes with an opinion on the financial statements and a conclusion on the arrangements for delivering value for money. The Council's Audit and Risk Committee (formerly Audit Panel), with independent Members, scrutinises these reports and presents them to Full Council. These steps predate and are in-line with the recent Redmond review recommendations for effective audit scrutiny and reporting arrangements.

In the most recent auditor reports, taken to Council in January 2023, the auditors confirmed that they anticipated providing an unqualified financial statement opinion and a positive value for money conclusion. The value for money wording was: Overall, arrangements to secure economy, effectiveness and efficiency are appropriate. Improvement recommendations have been made but these are suggested as methods of achieving best practice as opposed to correcting underperforming arrangements at the Council.

As part of the continuous improvement journey, the Council has launched a new performance dashboard to help Councillors and the public follow what is working well

in line with the Council's priorities. A most recent Corporate Performance report is available on the Council website.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 23

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Josh Lucas Mitte

Relevant Directorate: Chief Executive

Member to reply: Councillor Juliet Campbell

Question

Further to Q25 of 17.05.23: when will the Council publish its response to the Disabled People's Commission report about borough-wide access and why does it prevent Lewisham supporting the Equal Pavement Pledge?

Reply

The Council intends to publish its response to the Disabled People's Commission (DPC) report in October 2023. This response will include a full review of the recommendations contained within the report, including those focused on borough access, as well the extension to the report entitled: "Pavements, roads and crossings". The Council intends to use its response to the Commission's report to tackle a wide variety of issues affecting deaf and disabled residents in a cohesive manner, and it will consider the Equal Pavement Pledge as part of its response to the DPC report.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 24

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Josh Lucas Mitte

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

From Q20 of 17.05.23: what proportion of the 48% increase in food waste collected comes from primary school collections?

Reply

It isn't currently possible to isolate the proportion of food waste recycling collected from schools as it is collected as part of our domestic food waste rounds. The scheme operates via the existing domestic collection service in order to keep costs as low as possible, limit vehicle journeys and improve efficiency.

To date we have 48 schools successfully operating on the scheme and their support has contributed to an increase in food waste recycling. We are currently engaging with additional schools to gain their participation as we expand the programme.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 25

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Julia Webb

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Andre Bourne

Question

Glendale's contract apparently excludes trees, and Lewisham department is responsible for the maintenance of trees in Lewisham's parks. Home Park contains a number of specimen trees, including a magnificent cedar, from its time as the parkland of a big house. The trees have been neglected for decades; without maintenance pruning they have become top heavy, and therefore vulnerable to high winds. A section of the cedar tree crashed onto the path recently; fortunately nobody was hurt. The tree is sound, and just needs thinning. Please can you commit to a safety audit of the Home Park trees?

Reply

The trees in Home Park are individually inspected every four years as part of the borough wide parks tree condition survey.

The condition survey for Home Park was completed in February 2023.

The Cedar tree mentioned is indeed sound, The Council's Tree Service Managers' opinion is that limb fell from the tree due to, 'Summer Branch Drop' (SBD) which is not foreseeable and can occur during periods of hot dry weather followed by heavy rain fall.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 26
12 July 2023

Question asked by: Julia Webb

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Brenda Dacres

Question

Given the departure of the Director of Planning while Lewisham is relying on delegated power, how will the new slimmed-down Planning Committee system cope? As there are vacant posts in the planning department, will an external and experienced acting director be appointed?

Reply

An interim Director of Planning has been appointed and is working alongside the current Director to ensure a smooth transition as she departs.

There are no concerns about the ability of the Service to cope with making delegated decisions during this period.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 27

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Sian Hill

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

The Council has previously stated that if there is a major traffic incident or event locally then it will suspend the operation of the LTNs. If LTNS have ever been suspended in these circumstances please can the Council confirm how any suspensions have been publicised? If a suspension is not adequately publicised and drivers think that PCNs will still be issued (as was initially the case when Lee Green flooded in January 2023), a suspension will have no effect and there will be increased pollution and delays on surrounding roads.

Reply

In the event of a major traffic incident or event impacting the Lewisham and Lee Green Low Traffic Neighbourhood the Council publicises the temporary suspension of the LTN via the corporate website and the council's numerous social media channels. This is to make residents and businesses aware of the suspension and allow them to adapt their journeys accordingly. The same channels are then used to advise when the temporary suspension ceases.

To date, we have introduced two suspensions of the LTN following incidents affecting the wider highway network, which we published on the Council's web site and social media. This included the Lee Green flooding incident in January 2023.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 28

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Eric Kentley

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Louise Krupski

Question

With the Council's intention to extend CPZs in the borough combined with the increasing number of electric vehicles, there will inevitably be a further reduction in the number of planted front gardens. As well as diminishing the green assets of the borough, this will in turn lead to a greater risk of flooding as many paved-over front gardens are completely impermeable. What will the Council be doing to ensure that the permitted development regulations on the use of permeable materials is enforced?

Reply

The Council recognises that applications for crossovers may increase as a result of this programme, which would reduce the amount of permeable surfaces in the borough. A sample survey of a number of streets included in the proposed zones will be undertaken six months after implementation to understand if this gives rise to any increase in crossovers and/or hardstandings in those areas. Officers from highways and planning are also proposing to prepare guidance for those wishing to provide hardstandings to promote best practice as well as ensure that, as a minimum, permitted development rights in the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended) are followed.

Where a certificate of lawful development is applied for, the Council will always undertake an assessment to determine whether a scheme complies with permitted development rights. In other cases, the Council's enforcement team will investigate in all cases where a report of a potentially unauthorised hardstanding is received. To help reduce any impact further, a report will be presented to the Council's Mayor and Cabinet on the 19th July seeking approval to adopt a new EV Strategy for the borough, which will include investigating the potential for residents who live in CPZ areas to charge EV's from their homes using new pavement gully technology.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 29
12 July 2023

Question asked by: Diana Cashin

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie Davis

Question

In the Public Questions and Answers of 17th May, Cllr Davis stated that "the Council's formal White Ribbon accreditation has recently lapsed". When exactly did it lapse?

Reply

Representatives from White.Ribbon.org, confirmed that the accreditation lapsed in March 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The council have now re-registered as an ambassador, a new application has been made to White.Ribbon.org, and we await confirmation of the application submission.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 30

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Diana Cashin

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie Davis

Question

Has West Yorkshire's "parks safe for women initiative" provided any practical lessons for Lewisham?

Reply

Thank you for your question. Lewisham's wonderful parks should be a resource for all of our residents and no one should feel unsafe using them. The Head of Parks, Sport and Leisure and the Violence Against Women and Girls Programme Manager for Lewisham are founding members of the Parks for London Women (PLF) Safety Group, taking responsibility for driving forward the change required. The group aims to use the latest research to explore ways to improve safety in parks for women and girls, such as developing methodologies for assessing sites to make them safer; identifying and promoting ways to report incidents; and developing guidance for women and girls using parks and attending park events.

Representatives from Lewisham Council have met with Dr Barker from the University of Leeds to discuss the research. Findings included practical lessons such as fostering well-used parks with organised activities and other opportunities that encourage more women and girls to use them. According to statements research participants made to Dr Barker, "the presence of other women and girls/ other park users of a similar identity signal a safer place".

Further findings by Dr Barker included managing signs of disorder, as this mattered more to feeling safe than tidy grass and flowerbeds. There were other practical lessons identified such as ensuring a visible and approachable presence of parks staff and wider authority figures amongst others.

Lewisham are looking at ways of operationalising the practical lessons of the research to improve the safety of women and girls within our open spaces. In addition, the PFL group are working to develop a toolkit for parks officers that will enable them to implement strategies to reduce the barriers to Women and Girls in parks and open spaces, a toolkit which Lewisham will benefit from.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 31
12 July 2023

Question asked by: Billy Shah

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie Davis

Question

The officer's advice on the planning application for 1 Creekside said a planning obligation should be included that occupiers/residents at the lower three floors should be notified of the potential air pollution risks to human health and warned against opening their windows. Now that the Council have taken over the development and it is occupied, what information has been given to residents about the health risks of living there?

Reply

All planning conditions for 1 Creekside have been discharged. There were no conditions stipulating notification to occupiers/residents at the lower 3 floors being notified of potential air pollution risks.

The Section 106 obligates the following in relation to pollution risks and notifications to occupiers of commercial and shared ownership units at ground and first floor levels as follows:

- that the Private Residential Units Marketing Strategy and Shared Ownership Marketing Strategy each contains information explaining how prospective occupiers of the Residential Units located on the first floor of the Development
- will be advised of the air pollution risks associated with occupation of that Residential Unit, and;
- will be advised that the Residential Units have
- been designed to exclude noise and air pollution when the doors and windows are closed.
-

A welcome pack has been provided with required information contained within for commercial units.

Shared owners have signed a waiver confirming that they have been made aware of pollution risks.

The Council is currently developing designs for a public realm improvement scheme for Deptford Church St which will improve the segregation of highway for sustainable travel modes and reduce car dominance. These designs are planned to be consulted upon later this year.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 32
12 July 2023

Question asked by: Billy Shah

Relevant Directorate: Corporate Resources

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

Question

The 2021/22 audit reported that Lewisham had significant credit balances on Council Tax and NNDR accounts due to residents and businesses. How many residents and business are owed money by Lewisham and what is the total amount owed?

Reply

We have a number of tenants and businesses that are in credit with their accounts.

These are:

Business Rates

5,841 accounts holding credits totalling £15,697,983. Of this, £7,672,678 are over 6 years old.

Council tax

72,851 accounts holding credits totalling £10,630,803 of which £5,959,738 are over 6 years old.

The Council proactively contacts individuals with credits balances on their accounts to apply refunds due. However, many people leave the Borough without providing forwarding details. Individuals can apply for a refund by completing a form via the Council's website.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 33

12 July 2023

Question asked by: Peter Arbszajtys

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Andre Bourne

Question

Why are there a number of allotment sites mismanaged with most plots on each of the sites not being offered to public from the “waiting list” for at least 10 years now and what sort of “financial resources” do council officers need to offer allotment plots to applicants on waiting list?

I have contact details of applicants for plots on unused allotment sites who applied for plots over 10 years ago as well as contact details to last the plot users who gave away their plot in 2013 and plot has not been used ever since and has been abandoned.

Reply

In the last 10 years, all Council-owned allotment sites have had new tenants allocated from the waiting list.

There is plot turnover on the majority of the 37 allotment sites.

Overgrown and long-term vacant plots are an issue on several sites. Allocation of those plots is currently underway with additional staffing to assist with this.

Inspections are taking place on Council-managed sites and this will ensure that plots are being well used.

A recent estimate indicated that the average waiting time for an allotment in Lewisham is 7.4 years. On some sites the waiting lists are long with people waiting ten years or more, particularly where sites have a small number of plots or are in popular locations. This will continue to be the case after allocation of the relatively small number of overgrown and long-term vacant plots.

People on the waiting lists who would like an update on their application may contact allotments@lewisham.gov.uk and will be sent their current waiting list report.