

**PUBLIC QUESTION NO 1.**  
**Priority 1**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**18 JANUARY 2017**

Question asked by: Mr Woolford

Member to reply: Councillor Bonavia

**Question**

With the new housing benefit cap kicking in this month and Lewisham residents set to be one of the hardest hit communities, what is the Council planning to help local families facing the loss of £3000 a year?

**Reply**

The Benefit Cap was first introduced in August 2013 where families/single parents were restricted to a maximum of £26,000 per annum and single persons to a maximum of £18,200. There are currently 208 families/single parents and 2 single people affected with an average weekly loss of £88 per week.

The new reduced Benefit Cap of £23,000 for families/single parents and £15,410 for single people was introduced for the existing 210 households already subject to the higher cap in November 2016. The impact on these existing cases is increasing the weekly loss to £145 per week. In December, 660 new households were subject to the reduced cap. For these households, the maximum weekly loss is £57.69. The total Benefit loss by all affected households is estimated at £5m per annum.

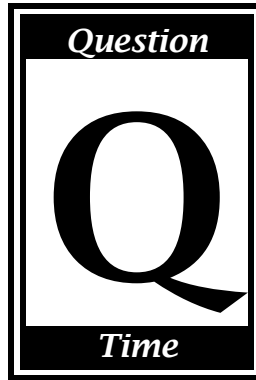
In 2016/17 the Council was awarded £1.5m Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to help those affected by all the welfare reforms including the Benefit Cap. The same amount of £1.5m is also available for 2017/18.

The Council is using DHP to help those struggling with all the welfare reforms including the Benefit Cap. Prior to the new Benefit Cap the Council helped 181 existing Benefit Cap cases with awards of DHP totalling £477K. These awards have been increased to cover the impact of the new Benefit Cap. The Council is also dealing with applications from new Benefit Cap cases. The number of awards is expected to increase significantly over the next few months.

The Council successfully bid for £50k additional money from the DWP to provide support to those affected by the Benefit Cap to mitigate the impact. This involves monthly engagement over a 6 month period to encourage households to better manage their finances (budgeting skills), look at alternative cheaper housing options and to help those affected into employment, the objective being to provide targeted support to encourage behavioural change and prevent homelessness once DHP funding stops.

The Council has developed a sustainability network across the borough, working closely with a number of housing associations and housing providers, to share knowledge and opportunity. A recent example of this was all households affected by the benefit cap being invited to a "Jobs Fair" hosted by Phoenix Community Housing Trust but organised by the local Jobcentre+. The Council is also working with 3<sup>rd</sup> sector information and advice agencies to ensure there are a range of places where those affected can get help and advice.

The Council works with Lambeth and Southwark on the implementation of all the welfare reforms and is working to jointly deliver support to those directly affected by the implementation of Universal Credit. In addition to this the Council works with Lambeth and the Lewisham Plus Credit Union to deliver the Local Support Scheme for those with immediate needs that are in exceptional hardship.



**PUBLIC QUESTION NO 2**  
**Priority 1**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**18 JANUARY 2017**

Question asked by: Bobby Dean

Member to reply: Councillor Egan

**Question**

Lewisham Council inspects 1 in 689 properties in the private rented sector each year compared to a London average of 1 in 54 - the worst enforcement rate in London. What action will the council take to ensure basic living standards are enforced as much as elsewhere in London?

**Reply**

The number of properties in the private rented sector (PRS) has doubled over the past decade; so have rents. There are over 30,000 homes in the PRS. We know standards in the PRS are extremely variable and there are landlords who will exploit the extreme housing need in the borough by providing poor accommodation.

Over the last few years central government have allocated additional monies to assist local authorities in tackling rogue landlords in the private rented sector but this additional funding has been very varied between boroughs. Lewisham was successful in securing an additional £90k over the last 3 years which we don't feel is enough given the scale of the growth in the PRS we are facing locally. So we have

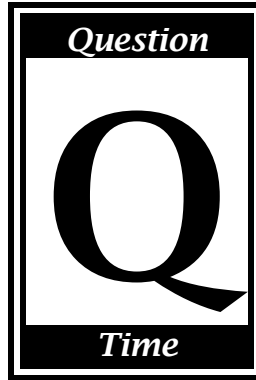
been looking at other ways we can improve standards and the Council's Mayor and Cabinet have now approved an additional base budget over the next 5 years for a landlord licensing scheme to drive standards in the private rented sector in the borough.

Before Christmas I hosted a Renters and Sharers Workshop at the Deptford Lounge to bring tenants and landlords together to discuss how, as a community, we can take ideas forward to improve standards. From this workshop there were many ideas and we are going to start with a programme, supported by Generation Rent, to work to inform Lewisham tenants of their rights so they have more capacity to report bad landlords and help others.

Over the last couple of years the approach of our PRS team in the Council has been to focus resources on the worst rogue landlords with multiple properties. We've already seen some successes:

- One of our problematic landlords has been driven out of business completely
- Two are in prison
- 10 have been prosecuted or have prosecutions pending
- 3 of the 15 are lifestyle criminals, using prolific changes of business and personal identities to evade effective enforcement, continue to offend, and require dedicated fraud investigators and the use of Proceed of Crime Act powers
- 4 multi-agency "raids" have been delivered
- 4 multi-agency case conferences have been held to develop joint enforcement strategies
- Participation in 2 prime time TV programmes exposing rogue landlords

Obviously with more resources we could do more, but given the level of funding we have, we are trying to maximise real impact.



**PUBLIC QUESTION NO 3.**  
**Priority 1**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**18 JANUARY 2017**

Question asked by: Rosalind Huish

Member to reply: Councillor Smith

**Question**

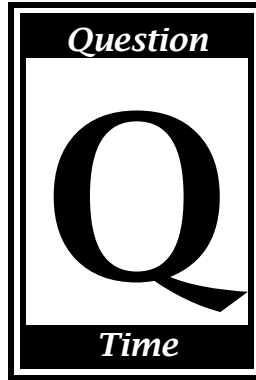
Concerns have been raised about the proposed compulsory purchase order of land around Millwall FC, in particular its potential to damage the future of the club - which plays such a vital role in our local community. What red lines would have to be crossed to trigger the abandoning of the CPO process and restarting discussions with the club on an alternative proposal for the land?

**Reply**

The Council recognises the vital role played by Millwall F.C. in the local community and has, throughout its deliberations on the proposed development at New Bermondsey, made clear its commitment to the continuing future of the Club. That commitment still stands.

The Mayor and Cabinet considered a lengthy, detailed report relating to the proposed compulsory purchase of land at New Bermondsey when it made its decision to approve the CPO in September last year. It will take a further detailed report when it reconsiders the matter. Those reports will be publicly available on the Council's website at [www.lewisham.gov.uk](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk).

When it reconsiders the matter, the Mayor and Cabinet will be guided by the statutory requirements which must be satisfied for it to approve the making of a compulsory purchase order and will only do so having carefully considered the further officer report, and the representations made by all parties. The Mayor and Cabinet will only confirm its original decision if, having considered all that material, it is satisfied that there is a compelling case in the public interest to do so.



**PUBLIC QUESTION NO 4.**  
**Priority 1**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**18 JANUARY 2017**

Question asked by: Emily Frith

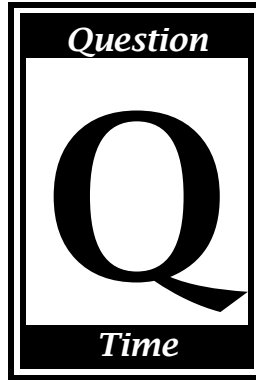
Member to reply: Councillor Smith

**Question**

Estimates suggest it will take two centuries for Thames Water to replace its 150 year old infrastructure at current rates. What action is Lewisham Council taking to put pressure on the company to speed up its repairs, so that residents and local businesses do not have to suffer from flooding and water shortages as we have done in the last two months?

**Reply**

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee has indicated that Thames Water representatives will be invited to attend the meeting on 23 January 2017 so that Members have the opportunity to fully discuss recent events and any backlog in the capital maintenance of their infrastructure.



**PUBLIC QUESTION NO 5.**  
**Priority 1**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**18 JANUARY 2017**

Question asked by: John Russell

Member to reply: Councillor Hall

**Question**

In light of a number of serious incidents of flooding in Lewisham caused by Thames Water infrastructure failures including: a sink hole in Lee High Road that swallowed a bus and the Police described as a 'Major incident'; flooding in Blackheath and 3 sinkholes in Forest Hill, two of which appeared under the main railway tracks, does the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny have any plans to use the powers available to him to call Thames Water representatives before his committee to hold them to account for their failures? Further will the Council be pursuing a claim for compensation for the cost the council has incurred as a result of these incidents?

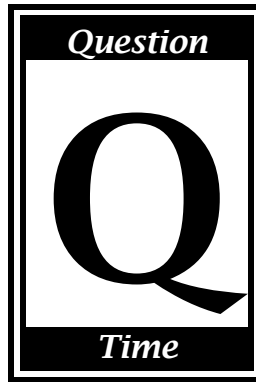
**Reply**

I have invited Thames Water representatives to attend the meeting on 23 January 2017 so that Members have the opportunity to fully discuss these matters with those directly involved. Below is a link to the agenda:

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=119&MIId=4198>

Reinstatement works, road closures and traffic management associated with mains bursts and leaks etc. are undertaken and funded by Thames Water direct. The Council may be involved in agreeing diversion routes, co-ordinating with other statutory undertakers and partner authorities and preparing temporary traffic order if required. The cost of legal works are recovered wherever possible.





**PUBLIC QUESTION NO 6.**  
**Priority 1**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**18 JANUARY 2017**

Question asked by: Mrs Richardson

Member to reply: Councillor Best

**Question**

From reading the final proposals on the Manor House Library for Mayor and Cabinet it appears that a special deal may be offered on the Business Rate for that building. If one accepts that Business Rate raises revenue for the public purse this will be a loss. Therefore, does the Council allow special dispensation for the other Lewisham community libraries?

If so, how much is collected from those running Blackheath, Grove Park, Sydenham, Crofton Park, New Cross, Forest Hill and Torridon Road? As regards the Lewisham Council run libraries, Deptford Lounge, Lewisham Central and Downham Leisure Complex, does the Library Service pay the full business rate for its share of each building, and if so how much is it in each case?

**Reply**

The community partners who have taken over the management of the community library buildings are responsible for the payment of the business rates for the buildings they occupy.

In relation to the existing community libraries, Age Exchange, who manage the Blackheath Village community library, are situated in Greenwich and do not pay business rates to Lewisham Council.

General information about Business Rates is available on the Council website at <http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/business/businessrates/business-rates-reductions-and-relief/Pages/default.aspx>. This page also includes the full Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

For the rates that apply to any building in Lewisham – including the community libraries, the Council offers a number of opportunities to reduce business rates. These include

- the Mandatory relief which is given to charities / friendly societies or the trustees of a charity and
- the Discretionary relief, whereby Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 empowers the Council to award certain businesses and organisations relief from rates. This relief can be awarded in addition to any mandatory relief to a body qualifying under Section 45.

It should be noted that central government reimburse the local authority in relation to the Mandatory relief.

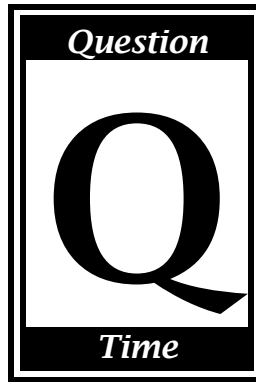
The Business Rates for 2016-17 for the new community libraries that are in the process of being transferred to community partners are

Manor House Library £26,589.50

Forest Hill Library £11,495.00

Torridon Road Library £12,673.50

In relation to the business rates for Catford, Deptford Lounge, Lewisham, and Downham libraries, these are paid by Corporate Assets as part of the Corporate budget and therefore do not form part of the Libraries budget.



**PUBLIC QUESTION NO 7.**  
**Priority 1**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**18 JANUARY 2017**

Question asked by: Mr Richardson

Member to reply: Councillor Best

**Question**

Recently the Council revised its bidding requirements for potential hosts to take on the management of Manor House and the Library in an effort to encourage some bidders as the initial set of requirements proved counter-productive following a 12-month search. Do you agree the new requirements are extremely attractive? However, an initial short list of 4, became 3 before a second event took place in the Manor House for the bidders to present their case to local stakeholders, of which we are one. None of these proved to be clear winner in our eyes.

Can you confirm that one of these three has been chosen as the 'preferred' bidder, or what the Council might term the best of the bunch? Is it true that that officers are under extreme pressure to deliver an outcome? Can the Council not revise the entire concept of a system of community library provision to deliver strong bids from quality providers with some chance of success, rather than sticking rigidly to what we have witnessed in the London Borough of Lewisham?

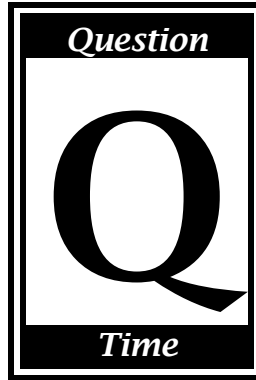
**Reply**

The original search for a partner organisation able to take responsibility for the Manor House building included a full repair and maintenance lease. Given the listed status of the building, the responsibility seemed onerous to all interested bidders. Indeed, this proved to be the major obstacle to a future collaboration.

For this reason, the Council re-opened the search, offering a number of flexible options based on the Council retaining responsibility for the fabric of the building. These included a Premises Management Agreement, or leases that excluded the full repair and maintenance for the whole building.

Following this search, three bidders have met a stakeholder group to present their view of the future provision of community benefits from the Manor House building, should they be successful. Their submissions have been evaluated and will be presented to the Mayor and Cabinet on 8<sup>th</sup> February.

The Council has recently agreed the model it wishes to pursue in relation to the development of community libraries and see no reason to change this. There are agreed criteria against which to evaluate bidders. I am confident that we will reach a solution for the community management of Mansion House which will be as successful as our other community libraries.



**PUBLIC QUESTION NO 8.**  
**Priority 2**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**18 JANUARY 2017**

Question asked by: John Russell

Member to reply: The Mayor

**Question**

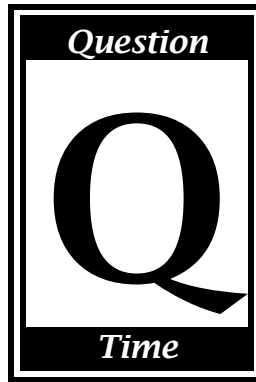
In light of a recent report showing that Lewisham's Secondary Schools have come bottom of all London schools for the quality of their educational outcomes with just 54% of Secondary schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted; GCSE grades achieved from A\* to C falling, and Progress 8 scores also falling, what plans does the Mayor have to improve the educational outcomes for Lewisham's secondary students? Will he consider setting up a wide-ranging task force to look at ways that Lewisham can work to improve GCSE and Secondary School outcomes?

**Reply**

Lewisham's Secondary Challenge was launched on Wednesday 9 November 2016. This is the collaborative of all secondary schools in Lewisham working with Lewisham Council to develop an outstanding secondary school sector. All state-funded mainstream secondary schools are part of the collaborative, regardless of status. The group has agreed a 4 year development programme of support and challenge that will help to achieve the vision of: *Every child achieving; every school outstanding; no one left behind.*

The Challenge has already developed a programme of work for the first year as well as a four year vision with challenging targets. All of our secondary schools have a tailored package of support as part of this programme.

We are confident that this collaborative approach across the secondary school sector will help ensure a stronger secondary education sector in Lewisham. Over the last 18 months, ten out of fourteen schools have recruited a new head teacher / head of school. Many of these new leaders have delivered school improvement in other boroughs and are working very effectively with established leaders in Lewisham to do the same here. We are ambitious for our young people and believe that they have the right to an excellent education and we are committed to all our secondary schools being good or outstanding and being schools of choice for local parents.



**PUBLIC QUESTION NO 9**  
**Priority 2**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**18 JANUARY 2017**

Question asked by: Mrs Richardson

Member to reply: Councillor Best

**Question**

Do you agree that having good IT resources in a public library is essential to support visits and access to information and education? (Refer the People's Network)

Currently the Manor House IT is still fully linked into the Lewisham Service, but has no printing facility as people cannot pay and this is impeding use. How does this work in each of the community libraries? Does each community library offer a different quality of IT service? Can the public expect to have full access to a good service without travelling to one of the 3 Lewisham run libraries, or are some of us less equal than others?

**Reply**

Good IT resources are indeed essential in a modern public library.

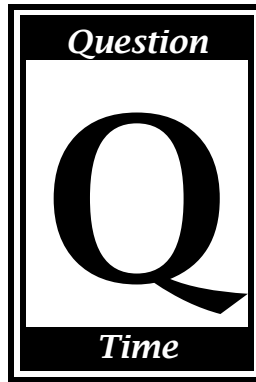
It should be noted that the current, interim provision at Manor House is not the same as it was when the building was fully staffed by library personnel. There is currently a reduced service which will endure until a new partner organisation takes over the building.

As in the other community libraries, once the new partner takes over, every link to the Council physical IT infrastructure will be removed, and the partner organisation will replace this with their own. This means that PC usage, access to the internet, printing, etc. will be restored – albeit on a network that is separate from the Council's.

The online services accessible through the Council's infrastructure today will be accessible through the partner's infrastructure.

The Library and Information Service is working to make more of its services available online and already offers books, audio books, newspapers and magazines online. This means that library users in a hub or community library, or indeed from their own home or on the go, can access online services free of charge.





**PUBLIC QUESTION NO 10.**  
**Priority 2**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**18 JANUARY 2017**

Question asked by: Mr Richardson

Member to reply: Councillor Smith

**Question**

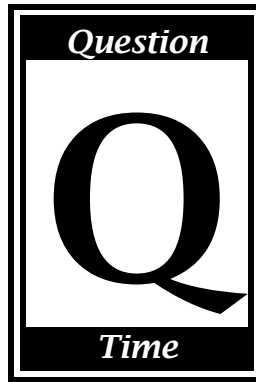
On the road opposite the front door marked No.99 Manor Lane, SE12 8LT and a metal side gate marked No, 101 Manor Lane SE12 8LT plus an unmarked side gate alongside a Pawnbroker store, there is NO garage to be approached or blocked, the gap between wall and pawnbroker is far too narrow to accommodate such a space, but there is a single yellow line.

Is this a new law? Something that may well rapidly expand across the Borough - or is it simply an error? The question really is why is it there? And if it is an error when can it be removed?

**Reply**

The section of yellow line was not introduced to accommodate access to the unofficial driveway between No 101 and the store at No 103 Manor Lane, which is too narrow to be used and does not have a legal crossover. Rather, the yellow line was introduced to create a clear demarcation between two parking bays which currently operate slightly different restrictions, with the purpose of making the use and the enforcement of the bays more clear.

The positioning of the yellow line opposite the unofficial driveway is purely incidental. However, we accept that this may appear mis-leading and we are currently reviewing this arrangement.



**PUBLIC QUESTION NO 11.**  
**Priority 3**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**18 JANUARY 2017**

Question asked by: John Russell

Member to reply: Councillor Daby

**Question**

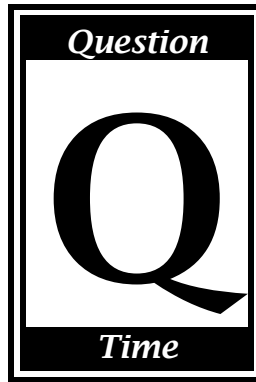
In light of the recent Government report on Lewisham's Youth Offending Service carried out by HM Inspectorate of Probation which found failings and areas for improvement to prevent high reoffending rates and the need for further work to ensure public protection, what plans are there to improve this service?

**Reply**

HMIP undertook a Full Joint Inspection of Youth Offending Work in Lewisham in September 2016. The inspection covered all partnership areas of youth justice service delivery in Lewisham. The HMIP report outlining the findings was published on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016. Lewisham Youth Justice Management Board is required to provide an Improvement Plan to HMIP by 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017. This Improvement Plan will be agreed by HMIP by 6<sup>th</sup> February 2017 and then the Youth Justice Board will be required to oversee the implementation of the plan. The outcome of the inspection clearly indicates the need for some changes across a number of services. Actions taken to date along with delivery against the *Draft* Improvement plan and Partnership commitment to making these improvements is now critical. Focus on this is a priority across all key partners and agencies

To date the following actions have been taken:

- Appointment of an independent Chair of the partnership Youth Justice Management Board for a one year period to ensure all aspects of the Partnership are contributing to the work on youth Offending.
- A review of other Boroughs post inspection approach and implementation of aspects of these
- A review of interventions being delivered to inform future delivery. A 'Back to Basics' approach to be implemented which provides the foundations for robust intervention plans to be developed from assessments, based on the Good Lives Model and Desistance framework that underpins the Youth Justice Boards required Assessment framework, plus learning from neighbouring Boroughs where an improvement in service delivery has been seen
- A review of staffing and deliverability with options for change. A full Workforce Development Strategy is being developed in line with this.
- Ongoing and systematic case audits
- A full review of Parenting Work will be completed across the partnership. This will identify clear pathways for Parents who have low, medium or high level need to prevent their children from offending.
- A general health provision will be commissioned which will support the screening of Speech and Language, support staff to tailor interventions to young people and support staff to escalate need to specialist services.
- A comprehensive Victim Work Plan has been developed and is being implemented.
- The implementation of an in-depth Performance management partnership group to ensure performance is linked to outcomes with detailed analysis of root cause to drive activity.
- The detailed Improvement Plan outlines the whole scope of actions required to make improvements and will be signed by HMIP in February 17 and reviewed by the Youth Justice Board and local Youth Justice Management Board.



**PUBLIC QUESTION NO 12.**  
**Priority 4**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**18 JANUARY 2017**

Question asked by: John Russell

Member to reply: Councillor Smith

**Question**

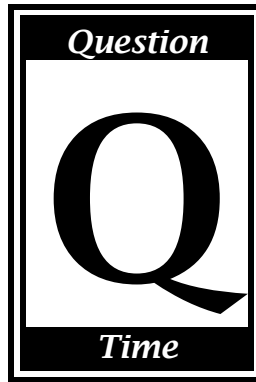
What plans does the Council have to improve the safety of the road crossing outside the Perry Vale side of Forest Hill station? Will the Council please consider adding a zebra crossing at this point across the B227 opposite the foot tunnel and the station exit?

**Reply**

A formal crossing has been considered at this location many times in the past, but has always been ruled out at the design stage due to the curvature of the road and the constraint this places on drivers' sight lines.

There are minimum sight lines which must be achieved to enable a crossing to operate safely, ensuring drivers have time to react and stop in time. These minimum distances are based on observed vehicle speeds on the approaches to the proposed crossing location.

Following the implementation of the Borough-wide 20mph limit, it may be possible to review this position should the post-implementation surveys reveal that speeds have dropped sufficiently. This may or may not be achievable, but the feasibility can be considered as part of next year's prioritisation of remedial measures associated with the Borough-wide 20mph limit.



**PUBLIC QUESTION NO 13.**  
**Priority 5**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**18 JANUARY 2017**

Question asked by: John Russell

Member to reply: Councillor Onikosi

**Question**

Will system of collecting traders' bagged waste twice times a day that is in place on Dartmouth Road Forest Hill be extended to incorporate the small parade of shops on the B227 Perry Vale? This section of shops is blighted by the lack of a traders' waste collection service. Are you aware the pavements are regularly blocked by overflowing rubbish bins and this reduces trade?

**Reply**

The Commercial Waste Sales Team will visit the businesses along that parade who have contracts with the Council to check if any upgrades or extra collections are required. They will also remind them on how to store and when to present their waste. Any businesses who are on contracts with a private waste collector or are found not to have a waste contract, will be visited by an Enforcement Officer to inform them of their responsibilities and/or they will be served an enforcement notice if necessary.