

PUBLIC QUESTION NO 1.

Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Martin Allen

Member to reply: The Mayor

Question

Can you outline the current figures for sums in reserves with an explanation as to why reserves are needed and what legal requirements exist in relation to maintaining reserves in local government?

Is there any intention or impediment to drawing on reserves to protect services to Lewisham residents?

Reply

The detail on the current reserves balances is set out in the extract below of the response from Mayor and Cabinet (M&C) to the Public Accounts Select Committee (PASC) received by them on the 16 November 2017.

Reserves are held for two reasons and all Councils will hold reserves in both these categories.

- The first (particularly in respect of capital works) is for technical accounting reasons and these are termed unusable reserves in the Council's accounts.

- The second is to enable work to be planned over more than one year and executed in a manner consistent with the statutory obligation on the Council to set a balanced annual budget. These are termed useable reserves.

There are strict impediments to drawing on the unusable reserves. There are no impediments to drawing on useable reserves to fund services.

As the detail provided below (drawn from the Council's audited accounts) sets out, the Council has been using reserves for the past three years to cover:

- financial obligations and risks that extend beyond one year;
- savings gap to enable the setting of an annual balanced budget;
- service overspends as the current (and continuing) savings required take longer and are harder to implement; and
- one-off and investment costs related to the service changes needed to be able to operate with reduced budgets.

Extract on Reserves from M&C response to PASC on 16 November 2017

Introduction

The use of reserves is not a solution to the year on year loss of grant funding the Council is dealing with and continues to face.

The Council does not have reserves, other than £13m, which are not identified to specific purposes. The £13m is the minimum level regarded as prudent for an organisation of the scale of the Council and meet the statutory obligation to hold reserves.

Many of the other reserves are ring fenced to specific purposes such as housing and schools or as part of committed capital investment plans. For the last three years and again this year the Council has used reserves to set a balanced budget. Without reserves the Council would have to make immediate disruptive in-year cuts in the event of any unforeseen events.

As per the audited financial statements (see the Movement of Reserves Statement and Note 9), the Council currently holds the following 'usable' reserves:

- Earmarked reserves £150m;
- Capital works, including repairs £109m;
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) £57m; and
- General reserve £13m.

Earmarked Reserves

The earmarked reserves of £150m are committed to areas of ongoing activity, spending on which extends beyond one year, and for certain anticipated priorities via the specific earmarked reserve.

The majority of earmarked reserves, £79m, are committed to underpin the following ongoing activities:

- PFI sinking funds (principally schools) to protect assets £24m;
- New Homes Bonus to support service growth as used in recent budgets £20m;

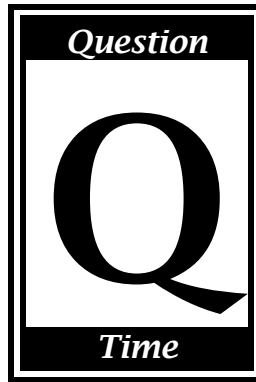
- Schools balances £17m;
- Self-insurance reserves held to limit the level of premium and tax paid £17m; and
- Capital programme spend £1m.

The specific earmarked reserves of £71m are set aside to fund a range of priorities, including:

- Monies to fund the transformation and redundancy costs of implementing savings and changing the Council;
- Pension obligations, mainly for legacy London arrangements;
- Capital projects – highways and estate – to be funded (not from grant); and
- Corporate & Directorate projects – e.g. ICT changes, elections, and other areas of budget priority or pressure.

Conclusion

The Council does review its reserve position regularly and will do so again as part of preparing the 2018/19 budget. As noted above, this has to be done with great caution as reserves can only be used once.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 2.

Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Rosalind Huish

Member to reply: Councillor Onikosi

Question

On 23 November 2017 a number of regular users of Beckenham Place Park undertook a count of the new trees (the majority being whips) that have been planted by the Council. According to Lewisham's website, and a leaflet on circulation via the cafe at Beckenham Place Park, the Council claims to have planted 12,000 trees so far (i.e. as at November 2017). However, the park users' count indicates less than 8,000. The count for 10 sites is given below, please advise the sites that must have been missed to account for the 4,000 shortfall:-

Site 1: to the left of the entrance of the driveway from Beckenham Hill Road, into the park, bordering the railway line, the count was approximately 800.

Site 2: on the right hand brow of the former 15th golf hole diagonally opposite the site of the proposed lake, the count was approximately 800.

Site 3: former 16th golf hole, the count was approximately 175

Site 4: former 17th golf hole, the count was approximately 740

Site 5: former 18th golf hole, the count was approximately 300

Site 6: former 1st golf hole, the count was approximately 250

Site 7: former 3rd golf hole, the count was approximately 200

Site 8: bordering Beckenham Place Park residences, the count was approximately 500

Site 9: the area between the gates leading to Beckenham Place Park residential and up to the pond, the count was approximately 2,555

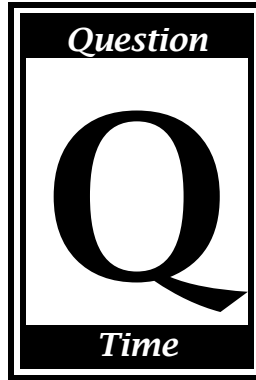
Site 10: from the pond down towards the entrance of the driveway, the count was approximately 1,400

Total 7,720. This may be an under count or an over count. Even allowing for a generous undercount and rounding up to 9,000, that still leaves 3,000 unaccounted for.

Reply

Volunteers and contractors have planted 5 acres (over 20,000m²) of new native woodland so far. On average our specification for this planting is for trees to be planted at 1.5 metre intervals and this is clearly visible in the park. To cover the 20,000m² at this density would require approximately 14,000 trees and we have received and planted 12,325 to date. We are satisfied that the planting has been carried out in line with this specification.

It should be noted that since planting, where a tree has failed to grow these have been removed. It is expected that a proportion of new planting will fail, which is why the density of planting is greater than the final density of the woodland.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 3.

Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Mark Morris

Member to reply: Councillor Maslin

Question

Please state for the year 2017 the number of looked after children that:

1. Had been placed inside the borough who had been missing for 24 hours or more.
2. The number of looked after children that had been placed outside the borough who had been missing for 24 hours or more.
3. The number of incidents of looked after children going missing from placements within the borough for 24 hours or more.
4. The number of incidents of looked after children going missing from placements outside of the borough for 24 hours or more.

Reply

Between 1st January 2017 and 31st December 2017 there were:-

11 looked after children (2.6%) that had been placed inside the Borough missing for 24 hours or more (as per question 1), with a total of 17 missing episodes (as per question 3).

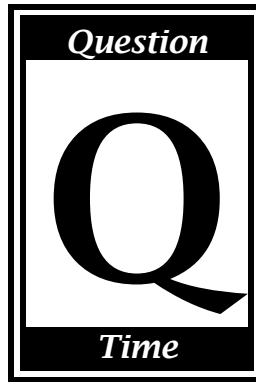
36 looked after children (5.1%) that had been placed outside the Borough missing for 24 hours or more (as per question 2), with a total of 77 missing episodes (as per question 4).

Statistical returns to the Department for Education indicate that Nationally in the year ending 31 March 2017 there were 10,700 children looked after who had a missing incident, which equates to 10% of the 102,590 children looked after children during the year. There were 60,720 missing incidents, which is an average of 5.7 missing incidents per child who went missing.

Although the Lewisham picture (5% of children had missing incidents) compares favourably with the national average we are not complacent and always cognisant of vulnerability of this group and are proactive in addressing need and risks. In line with this we have:

- Developed and launched a comprehensive Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Strategy.
- Hold multi-agency operational weekly meetings regarding vulnerable young people within the strategy to provide oversight and ensure robust support plans are in place.
- Developed a Missing Exploited and Trafficked sub group of the Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board which looks at trends and themes.
- Have commissioned an independent voluntary group with expertise in this area to undertake return interviews for our missing children.
- Have ensured regular reporting on missing, exploited and trafficked young people to both the LSCB and CYP Select Committee.

We will continue to review our response and support to this vulnerable group.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 4.

Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Bobby Dean

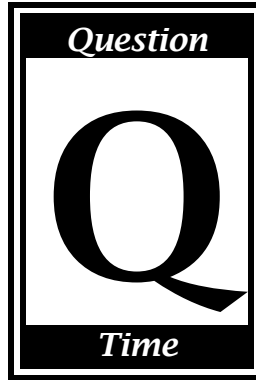
Member to reply: Deputy Mayor

Question

Can the Council explicitly rule out the compulsory purchase of land leased by Millwall around the Den and commit to finding an amicable solution with the Football Club?

Reply

Any decision in relation to the land at Surrey Canal/New Bermondsey would be an entirely new decision. The Council continues to be committed to Millwall F.C. remaining in the borough and urges all concerned to seek a solution that reflects the interests of all parties.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 5.

Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Carol Spurling

Member to reply: Councillor Best

Question

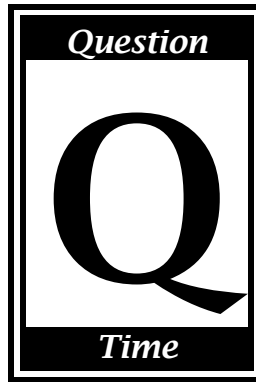
What were the enrolment and completion figures for the Summer Reading Challenge, 2016 and 2015, for each library in Lewisham?"

Reply

The numbers of starters and finishers for the Summer Reading Challenge in 2015 and 2016 are as per the table on the next page:

Summer Reading Challenge

Hub Libraries	2015		2016	
	Starters	Finishers	Starters	Finishers
Catford	476	234	432	257
Deptford Lounge	340	194	293	143
Downham	541	305	534	295
Lewisham	414	233	441	262
Community libraries				
Blackheath	123	78	113	69
Crofton Park	100	39	96	36
Forest Hill	532	290	559	272
Grove Park	48	18	77	29
Manor House	464	252	365	202
New Cross Learning	99	56	75	24
Pepys	10		4	1
Sydenham	155	71	122	61
Torridon Road	264	144	282	158
	3,566	1,914	3,393	1,809



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 6.

Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Mrs Richardson

Member to reply: Councillor Best

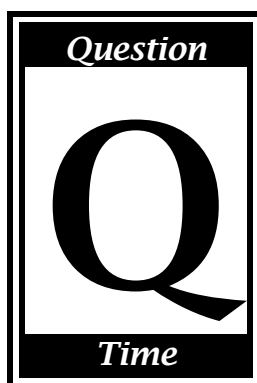
Question

I refer to the issue of the lease between V22 and the Council. What legalities are involved and where the Council, as representative and accountable to the people, stands. Prior to the lease being signed, it was stated by the Council that the agreement between the 2 parties involved a tenancy at will. Would the Council explain what this means and what responsibilities, duties and requirements existed on either side? Public notices stated that the drive was now in the ownership of V22, along with its management of the building. Is ownership now the correct term to describe the position of what was once a publicly owned building?

In addition it has been stated that it "is not unusual for there to be a fairly protracted period of detailed negotiations prior to signing. This includes going through every aspect of the building in detail, ensuring up to date certificates for plant etc are in place and a proper handover takes place." Does this involve any reference to the list of required maintenance as noted in the structural report commissioned by the council in late 2015?

Reply

While not stated, it is assumed that Mrs Richardson refers to the Manor House building in Lee. A Tenancy at Will is a recognised legal property tenure. It is often used prior to a lease being formally completed. The term 'ownership' in relation to the drive is misleading, 'management' would be more accurate as the land and building remain in the ownership of the council. The delay to the signing of the lease relates to the time it is taking for the council to provide V22 with a complete list of documentation for the building and it's plant.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 7.

Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Anthony Crowther

Member to reply: Councillor Onikosi

Question

Lewisham's Air Quality Action Plan for 2016-2021 contains no direct actions for 4 out of the 8 Greater London Authority Air Focus Areas in Lewisham.

It is stated in this document that there will be a review of all of these areas by April 2017 with the potential of actions.

- Has this review happened?
- Is there a report that is available to the public?
- What direct actions are to be taken relating to the 4 areas which previously had no direct actions?

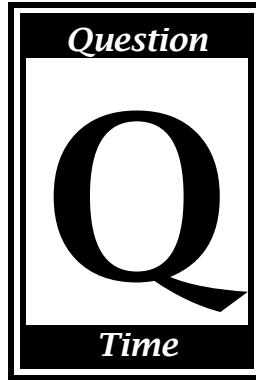
Reply

The London Local Air Quality Management requires Lewisham Council along with other London boroughs to submit to the Greater London Authority an Annual Status report. This report provides a detailed overview of air quality in the London Borough of Lewisham. The report shows progress on actions over the year, along with monitoring data and details on developments. The 2016 year reporting was

submitted in April 2017 but before publication we need to await approval from the GLA and DEFRA. The approval was only received just before Christmas and the Annual Status report (ASR) with progress on actions can now be viewed by the public on the webpage: <https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/environment/air-pollution/Pages/Air-quality-reviews.aspx>

The ASR provides details on the Air Quality Focus Areas (AQFAs) and you'll notice that within this report further actions are included in relation to additional AQFAs. Table K1 in the 2017 ASR report identifies areas of work being carried out within a further 3 AQFAs, increasing the projects within 7 of the 8 AQFAs. It should also be noted that where future opportunities and funding is made available the potential for air quality improvements in these areas will be prioritised and this aspect is reported, on a yearly basis, to the GLA through the ASR.

Lewisham Council is actively working to bring improvements to air quality: <https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/environment/air-pollution/Pages/What-we-are-doing-to-improve-air-quality-in-Lewisham.aspx> . It is also campaigning to encourage residents to sign the air quality pledge: <https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/environment/air-pollution/Pages/Sign-our-clean-air-pledge.aspx>



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 8.

Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Carol Hope

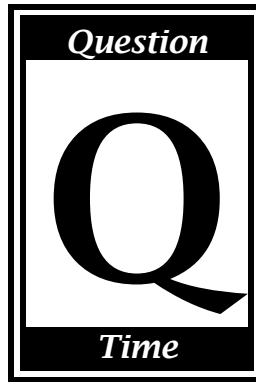
Member to reply: Councillor Onikosi

Question

On the website and in a printed leaflet available at the mansion house cafe in Beckenham Place Park it is stated that removing areas of scrub and undergrowth “will enhance the feeling of space and openness which is valued by many park users.” Please explain the source of the statement that many park users prefer an open landscape compared to what is already there.

Reply

Public consultation prior to preparation of the plans for the park highlighted that local residents felt that restoration of the heritage setting of the buildings and restoring the designed landscape were important considerations. Removal of scrub and undergrowth, together with some crown lifting is an important step in restoring views across the parkland at Beckenham Place Park and achieving these aims. Improved views also contribute to the feeling of safety, which was highlighted as a key issue during public consultation.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 9.
Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Mr Richardson

Member to reply: Councillor Best

Question

Some problems have been noted by members of the Saturday Reading Group which meets on the 2nd Saturday of each month at Manor House Library which require Lewisham Council to clarify. It appears that only 1 hour is guaranteed by the Manor House management for the Group to discuss each book most recently read, in the Baring Room, which is the room made available by agreement of both V22 and Lewisham Library Service for such meetings to take place. Has a time limit on these meetings been agreed?

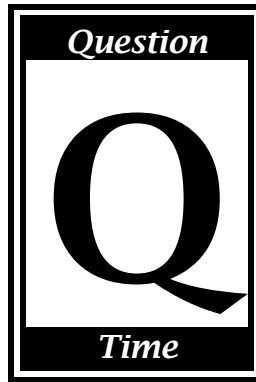
Furthermore, since the kitchen that was adjacent to the Baring Room has unilaterally been withdrawn from public access, Reading Groups and other users are now required to partake of catering facilities in a kitchen on the 2nd floor, which is both cumbersome to reach and time consuming to use, resulting in valuable discussion time being wasted. This is puzzling, since during the early Stakeholder meetings, the issue of the 1st floor kitchen was meant to be reviewed by the Stakeholders group before any action by the Management was to take place. We have this in writing. To my knowledge, there has not been any official review of this situation. Why so? Have all the terms of the lease finally been agreed and are they available to the public?

Reply

There has been no limit set by the council on the reader group's usage of the Baring Room. It will be a matter of ensuring a good range of access to that space by different groups. The library service would be happy to facilitate a discussion with V22 and the Saturday Reading Group to resolve this.

I refer to the letter from Aileen Buckton to you of 25 October 2017 which states 'In relation to the first floor kitchen there has been a difference of interpretation of what was agreed at the stakeholder meeting. Having looked at the minutes it was not stated that the issue would be discussed again at the next stakeholder meeting but Tara Cranswick following representations from Cllr Mallory and Liz Dart did agree to reconsider the options with her staff prior to implementation. They did this and decided that given that they could only afford to retain one kitchen that the one on the second floor was the best option. It provides a break out space where staff, volunteers and other building users can sit. In addition the kitchen on the 1st floor lent itself better to conversion to an income generating studio space.'

The lease is not a public document but the general terms of the lease were outlined in a public Mayor and Cabinet report. These terms have not changed.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 10.

Priority 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Chris Maines

Member to reply: Councillor Egan

Question

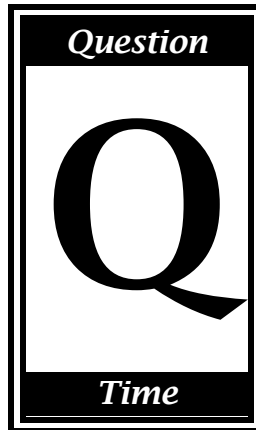
How many residential properties in Lewisham have been empty for six months or more? Of these, how many have been empty for two years or more, have been empty for five years or more, and how have been empty for 10 years or more?

How many Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO) to take over properties that have been empty for at least two years have Lewisham Council used in each of the last four years?

Reply

The latest return to DCLG in October 2017 regarding long term empty dwellings recorded that 939 dwellings in Lewisham borough were empty for at least 6 months. This amounts to 0.74% of the borough's 126,823 housing stock which is registered for Council Tax payment. Within this 939 figure are 253 owners being charged a Council Tax premium of 150% on properties empty for 2 years or more. 83 dwellings have been empty for 5 years and 4 dwellings have been empty for more than 10 years.

Over 50 Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) notices have been served on owners of empty dwellings following investigation, that were the subject of complaint, nuisance and visibly empty. Lewisham Council was one of the first local authorities in the country to serve an EDMO in 2010. The vast majority of owners of empty dwellings respond to a notice and engage with the Council. It is often the case that owners of empty dwellings may have valid and perfectly justifiable reasons for leaving their property empty. For example, it may be an owner's second home, they could be working abroad, undergoing repairs to the property, receiving care or giving care to others.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 11.

Priority 2

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Rosalind Huish

Member to reply: Councillor Onikosi

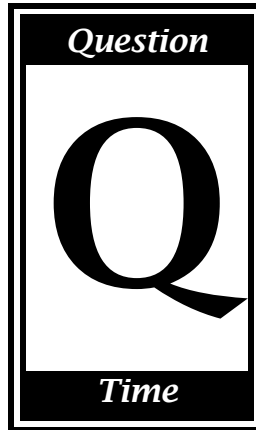
Question

The Council website and leaflet entitled “Tree works and habitat improvements in Beckenham Place Park” says that much of the timber cut will be used in the park and most of this wood will be processed and stored off site and brought back for future use. Please advise what percentage (ball park figure) of cut timber will be used in the park, what kind of storage facility will it be stored in, whether it is a Council storage facility and who will do the processing of the timber before it is returned to the park.

Reply

A list of the timber specified for re-use in the park can be provided by the project team, but it is not possible to estimate what proportion of the overall timber will be used in the park. Details of the timber specified for re-use can be requested from bppfuture@lewisham.gov.uk

The Council’s appointed tree contractor Beeches Tree Care will prepare and store the timber materials on site for re-use. The materials require minimal processing prior to re-use.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 12.

Priority 2

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Mark Morris

Member to reply: Councillor Onikosi

Question

Please state how many electric charging points have been introduced into Lewisham since the commencement of the current London Plan in 2016 as part of Lewisham Council implementing Policy 6.13 of ensuring that 1 in 5 parking spaces in new developments (both active and passive) provide an electrical charging point to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles.

Reply

The number of individual spaces (either car parking spaces, or EVCP active / passive enabled spaces) is not monitored. The details of individual planning applications, including their respective officer reports (where the number and type of spaces is generally recorded), and planning decision notices (where the required number and type of spaces is specified) are all available online here:

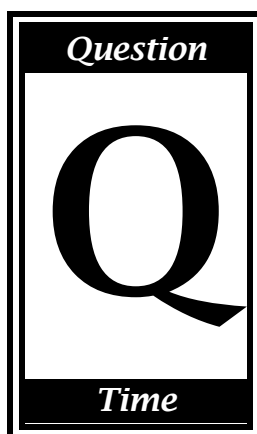
<http://planning.lewisham.gov.uk/online-applications/search.do?action=advanced>

You may wish to refine any search by the dates relevant, by 'Application Type' ('Full Planning Permission') 'Decision' ('Granted') and select 'Development Type' categories with 'major' in their titles, to identify the most relevant types of permission. Alternatively, reference can be made to the GLA website, which records the details of applications referred to the Mayor of London, here:

https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search?scheme_title=&postcode=&borough=All&planning_authority=1724&lpa_case_number=&gla_case_number=&paws_decision_date_from=&paws_decision_date_to=&=Search

Please note that the requirement for developments to provide a proportion of EVCP spaces was in existence prior to the 2016 iteration of the London Plan, and will therefore have been secured in applications assessed prior to it's adoption.

The Council is very keen to install a network of electric vehicle charging points, to support the take up of electric vehicles. As well as approaching this through the planning system, the Council is working with the Source London scheme to introduce a network of charging points on the public highway and car parks. Through this scheme, there are already 25 charge points across 10 sites, and we are working with Source London on a further 34 points across 16 new sites. We are currently developing a new strategy which will aim to deliver EV charge points throughout the Borough, as well as consideration of alternative options to sit alongside the Source London scheme, including working with TfL on the introduction of rapid charging points.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 13.

Priority 2

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Bobby Dean

Member to reply: Deputy Mayor

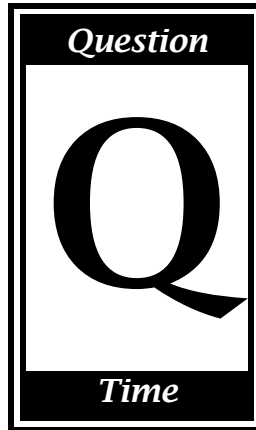
Question

The newly established free local community newspaper, The Lewisham Ledger, recently highlighted that the Council doesn't appear to publish comments on planning applications online. In the interest of transparency, can you explain why comments are not published promptly?

Reply

The Planning Service does not publish comments on planning applications on-line. However, the number of comments received is published and this figure is updated daily. The Planning Service receives thousands of comments each year and does not have the resource to read each response and redact any personal details prior to it being published on the web.

For anyone wishing to view the comments for a specific application the Planning Service collates the comments and sends them a redacted copy. Planning Officers summarise all comments received in their delegated or committee reports.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 14.

Priority 2

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Anthony Crowther

Member to reply: Councillor Onikosi

Question

Recent changes to recycling are to be welcomed as an overdue effort to improve Lewisham's low rates of recycling. However there are many items which residents used to be able to recycle but no longer are able to (for example textiles and plastic carrier bags).

Does the Council have a list of materials that used to be collected for recycling but no longer can be? Will this information be published on the Council's website with an explanation for why these materials are no longer collected for recycling?

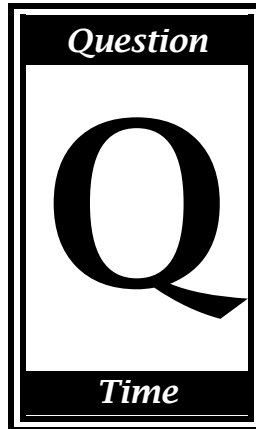
Reply

The list of materials that can be collected for recycling has remained unchanged since the commencement of the new recycling contract in 2015. Textiles are classed as objectionable material and residents have been encouraged to recycle their textiles at clothes banks across the borough, to reuse or deliver to charity shops.

This is so that the quality of the textiles remains in a good condition, with no contamination, as previously found when collecting from the wheelie bin. Residents are encouraged to reuse carrier bags rather than dispose of them in the recycling bin. Carrier bags have always been classed as an 'objectionable' material at the MRF (Material Recycling Facility), but will be recycled if received onsite.

Recycling wheelie bins are currently being re- stickered with new up to date stickers providing information on what can be recycled. Textiles have now been removed from the stickers.

We are currently reviewing the contents of the recycling pages on the web site and will update accordingly.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 15.

Priority 2

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Carol Hope

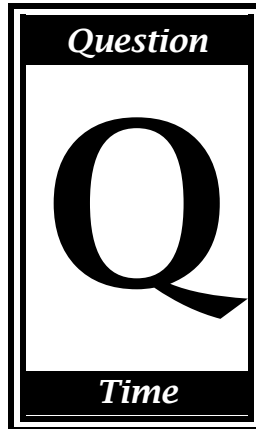
Member to reply: Councillor Onikosi

Question

On the website and in a printed leaflet available at the mansion house cafe in Beckenham Place Park, it is stated that relatively young trees planted in the 1990s on the golf course “offer little habitat value.” Who made this assessment and what is the evidence for the statement?

Reply

This is a comparative statement made by the project team, these isolated young and often short lived trees offer less habitat value than for example the veteran oaks, native woodland, meadow and woodland fringe in the park.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 16.

Priority 2

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Mr Richardson

Member to reply: Councillor Bonavia

Question

In February 2018 Lewisham Council will be presenting its budget for the financial year 2018-19.

In May 2018 elections will take place in the borough to elect a new Council and even a new Mayor. In view of the fact that so many, possibly the majority, of all services available to the residents of Lewisham are outsourced to private companies, charitable organisations and/or ALMOs, has the concept of a Borough Council retained any reason for it to continue?

What exactly are you responsible and accountable for?

Reply

The Council has been faced with cuts to its budget from central government year on year since 2010: our estimate is that the cumulative cut from the period 2010 to 2020 will amount to over a 60% reduction of the Council's annual general budget.

The impact on the Council of these cuts has been very significant: the Council's staff headcount is now around half of what it was in 2010.

Despite the reduction in our resources, our responsibilities to provide public services remain largely the same; in some cases they have even increased since 2010, such as our duty to oversee public health services.

All this means that the Council has to make difficult choices on how to maintain a level of service that our public is entitled to expect.

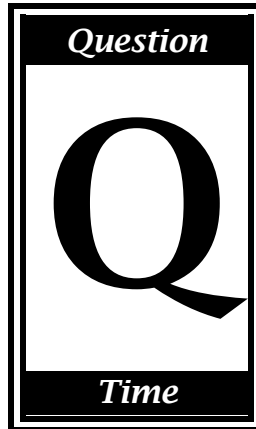
In making those choices, our approach is to get the best value for money to maintain and ideally improve the quality of every service. In many cases, that has in fact led to bringing certain services "in house."

One large example has been the ending of the Council information technology service contract with Capita which has been replaced with a joint "in house" service comprising Lewisham, Brent and Southwark Councils. This has enabled us to upgrade our IT infrastructure and better equip both our staff and the public in delivering and accessing our services.

Another example has been bringing "in house" our enforcement service (previously known as bailiffs) which has enabled us to collect more debt, but also in a more sensitive manner.

A full list of Council services are available on the Council web site and achievements in the last year include investments in housing, the environment and health & social care services. We look forward to working hard in 2018/19 with others to achieve more than we could achieve alone. We will be advocating strongly for improved investment in locally affordable housing, transport and health & social care as well as backing an ambitious bid for Lewisham to become the Mayor of London's choice for 'borough of culture'.

Despite the huge challenge from much fewer resources, our great ambitions for the borough remain, and we work to make sure that every penny of service spend is used to best effect to meet the needs of the community we serve. We will also continue to use the power of our democratic voice to speak up for the borough's interests and work with others with a common interest in making for the very best future for the people of Lewisham.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 17.

Priority 2

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Mrs Richardson

Member to reply: Councillor Best

Question

The Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee produced a report in July 2017 stating on page 3 para 6 "The Lewisham Approach" 6.1 "The Library and Information Service in Lewisham has no equal nationally. These are the concepts and practices that make us unique."

The latest CIPFA figures, those for 2015/16 and 2016/17, including each individual library, show an alarming collapse in issue figures and, in spite of the increase in population in Lewisham since 2010, as well as the long opening hours, the visits figures are marking time. In general the various ways of running the public library service across the country, shows a marked downturn in issues, visits and budgets. Is it not the case that the Lewisham model works no better than any other library service?

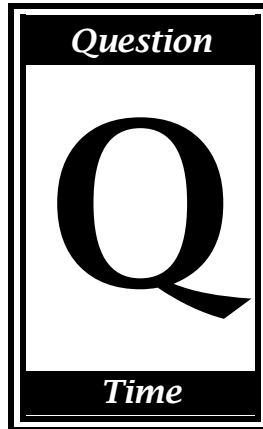
Reply

The statement that Lewisham's Model has "no equal" means that Lewisham's approach is not the same as that of other local authorities, and it does not imply a quality judgement on itself or others.

However, since 2010, visits to Lewisham's libraries have increased, satisfaction with the Service has increased, the number of service points in the borough has increased, and use of eResources (eBooks, eAudio, electronic newspapers and magazines) has greatly increased.

It is true that the issue of books has decreased, but so it has nationally. The Lewisham's Library and Information Service, however, has managed – in spite of much reduced resources – to engage in new ways with the local communities it serves.

We believe it has been possible to galvanise local talent and energy to develop new programmes which complement library services as well as being able to continue to run a public service in all of our buildings.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 18.
Priority 3

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Mark Morris

Member to reply: Councillor Egan

Question

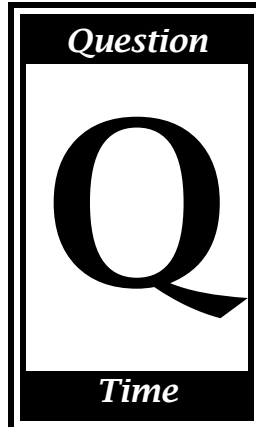
The Royal Borough of Greenwich recently announced the policy of commissioning an independent fire safety expert to review the fire risk assessments for its housing blocks. Once the revised assessments have been completed, they will be entered into a bespoke system on standardised templates. This will enable the production of summary reports suitable for publishing. The Royal Borough will then begin to publish the fire assessment reports on its website by the end of January, starting with the assessments for the borough's six 24 storey high-rise blocks.

Will Lewisham Council be adopting a similar policy of making fire assessments reports fully available to the public as recommended by the Information Commissioner Elizabeth Denham?

Reply

All fire risk assessment (FRA) reports are released when requested. FRA reports are available and discussed directly with residents and with tenant management organisations whenever residents ask to do so. Officers, working closely with

Lewisham Homes, are reviewing the most appropriate way for fire risk assessments to be published, to ensure that the often very technical information is as clear and understandable to residents as possible.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 19.

Priority 3

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Bobby Dean

Member to reply: Councillor Egan

Question

Is the Cabinet member aware that according to a well-researched campaign group, the Borough of Lewisham hosts over fifty unlicensed HMOs, where residents are living in cramped, poor conditions with no common space. Vulnerable people are being deliberately referred into these properties and charged the self-contained rate of LHA for what is shared accommodation. What are the Council doing to follow up on this claim?

Reply

There are currently 331 licensed HMOs in Lewisham. 267 are mandatory licences and 64 are additional licences.

The Council is aware of the campaign group which has highlighted properties in poor condition. These properties are two storey HMOs that are not currently licensable under either the existing mandatory or the additional licensing schemes in place in Lewisham. However enforcement action is still pursued using the Council's general enforcement where the required property standards are not met.

The Council currently operates two separate licensing schemes to improve conditions in the Private Rented Sector. The two schemes are:

- **Mandatory licensing scheme** relating to all HMOs that are three storeys or above with shared bathroom or kitchen facilities, where there are at least five people living in two or more households. This is a mandatory scheme operated by all Councils across the country.
- **Additional licensing relating** to HMOs above commercial premises where there are at least three people living in two or more households, or poorly converted privately rented self-contained flats. This scheme has been operating since February 2017 and is Lewisham specific.

The reasons for adding an additional licensing scheme in Lewisham was because all available data highlighted that the poorest standards, conditions and hazards in the private rented sector are to be found in shared accommodation and within flats over commercial properties and data was available to support the case.

However the Government has just announced its intention to extend mandatory HMO licensing from April 2018 for properties regardless of the number of storeys (occupied by 2 or more households comprising 5 or more individuals) as well as HMOs in a building or converted flat where there are shared facilities. If the properties mentioned in the question fall into this category the Council will be able to license them from April 2018.

Whilst the extension of the mandatory scheme will assist the Council in tackling concentrations of smaller HMOs under 3 storeys, work is also underway outside of this to address poor conditions including disrepair and/or nuisance reported from local residents.

Housing Licensing & Enforcement officers in the Private Sector Housing Agency (PSHA) are regularly identifying licensable properties; taking enforcement action where landlords refuse to co-operate; and tackling the sharp end of bad practice through a small rogue landlord team.

The team rolling out a programme of monthly street surveys in specific areas targeting particular streets and visiting them over two - three days, flooding the area with enforcement staff. Officers are assertive about their requirement to get into a property to inspect, and serve Notices immediately if access to the property is refused. Areas are selected based on data and research – and this is overlaid by substantial local knowledge within the team. The two most recent surveys targeted Telegraph Hill and Lee Green and in January 2018 the survey will focus on key streets in the wards of Bellingham, Downham and Whitefoot. Intelligence from this

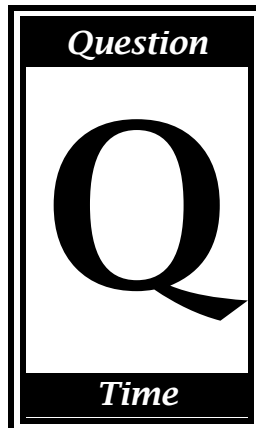
survey will be recorded ready for the introduction of the Government's licensing scheme extension in April.

Any intelligence gathered will also be given to planners as part of collating evidence to consider introducing an Article 4 Directive which would require the submission of a planning application prior to conversion of a single property into multiple units of accommodation. A review was completed in April 2016 to consider if there was sufficient evidence for the Council to implement any Article 4 directives in specific wards where local residents expressed concerns. Unfortunately at that time and on the strength of the data and evidence available the implementation of Article 4 Directions could not be justified. Consideration is being made currently to assess if additional data and resources are available to make a reassessment of Article 4 Directions viable.

Outside of direct enforcement and intervention by the licensing and enforcement services the PSHA is also an active member of a joint 12 Borough cross London project - London Lockdown. This project – now partly funded by DCLG - collectively targets private landlord placing vulnerable tenants in micro-flats in converted family homes in order to generate the maximum amount of housing benefit. The project is run by the Association of London Environmental Health Managers.

The Council is keen to work with all interested community groups or representatives who support the Council's commitment to identify and licence HMOs as one tool to improve standards across the private rented sector. If there is evidence, data or research that will help to deliver this commitment the manager of the Private Sector Housing Agency can be contacted:

Madeleine Jeffery
Private Sector Housing Agency Manager
Madeleine.jeffery@lewisham.gov.uk
0208 314 9484
07834 145 016



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 20.

Priority 3

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Rosalind Huish

Member to reply: Councillor Egan

Question

The GLA recently unanimously voted for balloting tenants ahead of any estate regeneration projects. Please can you confirm tenants of Achilles Street and Clifton Rise will be given a ballot for the proposed regeneration to their estate in accordance with this and when this ballot will be held. In addition, given this welcomed new policy, will you extend it to tenants of Reginald Road who have not been balloted for their views on the impending demolition of Reginald House and Tidemill Gardens.

Reply

On Thursday 21st December the London Assembly approved the following motion:

“This Assembly notes that the Mayor’s Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration is due to be published soon which will set out key principles to be followed in estate regeneration projects.

This Assembly also notes the Mayor’s manifesto commitment that estate regeneration only takes place where there is resident support, based on full and transparent consultation.

This Assembly believes that a final say for residents is an important way to ensure that resident involvement in plans for their homes is done in a meaningful way throughout the process.

This Assembly therefore urges the Mayor to recommend in his final Good Practice Guide that ballots are used on all schemes where demolition is an option or to include clear guidance that ballots will be guaranteed where a proportion of residents ask for it. Ballots should extend to private renters from non-resident leaseholders and freeholders on estates.”

Clearly once the Guide is published Lewisham will ensure that its approach to estate regeneration matches the best practice recommended by the Mayor of London. Lewisham is strongly committed to ensuring that estate regeneration proceeds with resident support, and to carrying out intensive, meaningful consultation with all those affected.

The two specific developments cited are at quite different stages and it is important to set out in detail what is happening with each of them. In the area around Achilles Street, Lewisham has been investigating the potential to build new homes, exploring options for a comprehensive rebuilding of the wider area.

Officers have engaged the local community extensively in the development of these options. This has included a number of public consultation sessions, door knocking and face-to-face sessions with local stakeholder groups and residents. To respond to residents’ understandable concerns about the impact of redevelopment on them, officers have communicated a set of commitments to residents that have guided the development process to date. Those commitments are that:

- All current council tenants who wish to stay in the new development must be able to do so with the same rent levels and tenancy conditions that they have today;
- Any resident leaseholder who wishes to must be able to remain in home ownership on the new development
- We must build as many new council homes as possible, to be let at social rent levels
- In addition to new council homes, more affordable homes of other types, such as shared ownership, must also be provided when any additional homes are built.
- All affected businesses will have the opportunity to take some of the new commercial space created if the redevelopment goes ahead.

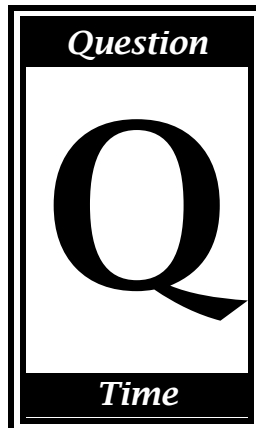
The most recent consultation exercise in which officers attempted to reach every estate resident, found that 81% of the residents who responded were generally positive about the proposals.

These plans are still at an early stage, however, and more work needs to be done before any decisions can be taken about how to proceed. When this does happen, we will be guided by any advice published by the GLA.

The Deptford Southern Housing sites project, including Reginald Road, is at a much more advanced stage, having originally been brought forward more than five years ago and with final planning consent having been granted in the autumn of 2017. Throughout all of this process, since 2011 when options for redevelopment were first consulted on, and in more detail after the announcement in June 2014 of Family Mosaic as the Council's delivery partner, the residents of Reginald House have been consulted extensively. This included two statutory consultations, under Section 105 of the Housing Act of 1985 which requires Councils to formally consult secure tenants. It has also included a series of one to one meetings, workshops, and drop-in sessions at the Deptford Lounge.

Throughout this process a range of views has been expressed. Three of the original 16 residents have chosen to move away. At present, of the remaining 13 residents, officers understand that seven are generally in favour, two are opposed, and four have not made sufficient contact to establish a reliable view. This feedback was reported to Mayor and Cabinet to inform their decision making about this development.

In considering the use of ballots it is important to be mindful of the wider context. In Lewisham there are currently 9,746 families in priority need on the housing register waiting to be securely housed in a suitable property, and 1,970 families currently in temporary accommodation. A similar situation is repeated across London. It is essential that local authorities take every opportunity to increase the supply of new homes, especially those for social rent. The Government also needs to give local councils a lot more freedom and a lot more support to do so.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 21.

Priority 3

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Carol Hope

Member to reply: Councillor Onikosi

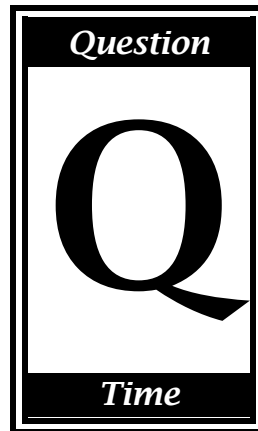
Question

On the website and in a printed leaflet available at the mansion house cafe in Beckenham Place Park it is stated that the woodland edge has been expanded and “This woodland edge is particularly valuable habitat - providing an important transition zone between the forest and the grassland where many species forage or lay eggs.” How, then, does the mountain bike track created for the races on 30th December 2017 and another one later this month, which cuts between whips planted to expand the woodland edge, contribute to the ability of many species to forage or lay eggs?

Reply

The woodland edge is a permeable transition zone between the woods and the wider parkland with many routes passing through it which are used by pedestrians and

cyclists. There is approximately 10km of woodland edge in the park. The mountain bike race which lasted for a few hours on the 30th of December is unlikely to have impacted on the ability of species to forage or lay eggs.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 22.

Priority 4

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Carol Hope

Member to reply: Councillor Onikosi

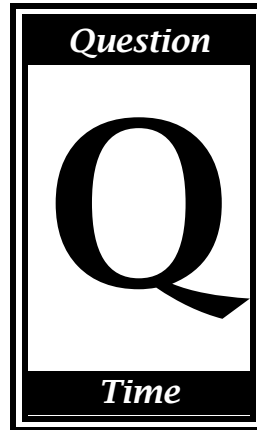
Question

On the website and in a printed leaflet available at the mansion house cafe in Beckenham Place Park it is stated that the new lake will allow access to the water and and wild swimming will be allowed. How does the council reconcile this strategy with the fact that there is an existing large pond in the park which has been fenced off for decades? Why is the pond fenced off and if it needs to be fenced off how can a lake allowing access to the water be justified?

Reply

Wild swimming is a pastime which has grown in popularity and could be permitted in the new lake. Guidelines for provision of access for wild swimming have been published by The Outdoor Swimming Society and any permissive swimming would follow such guidelines.

The pond at Beckenham Place Park appears to have been fenced off a long time ago, we assume this was because it is deep, steep sided and surrounded by scrub. The margins of the new lake at the park will have shallow edges and a beach so that it is easy to get out of, it will not be surrounded by scrub.



PUBLIC QUESTION NO 23.

Priority 5

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

COUNCIL MEETING

17 JANUARY 2018

Question asked by: Carol Hope

Member to reply: Councillor Onikosi

Question

In the Management and Maintenance plan for Beckenham Place Park submitted to Heritage Lottery Fund, it is stated that new dog poo bins will be provided, which will be regularly cleaned and disinfected. Given that the HLF grant was confirmed over a year ago, please advise when the new bins will be installed.

Reply

The installation of bins is part of the overall landscape contract which will commence in April 2018 and complete by May 2019. A full complement of bins will be installed by the end of the contract.

