

# OSBP – 26 May 2020 – Advance Questions

## Strategic suggestions made before report prepared

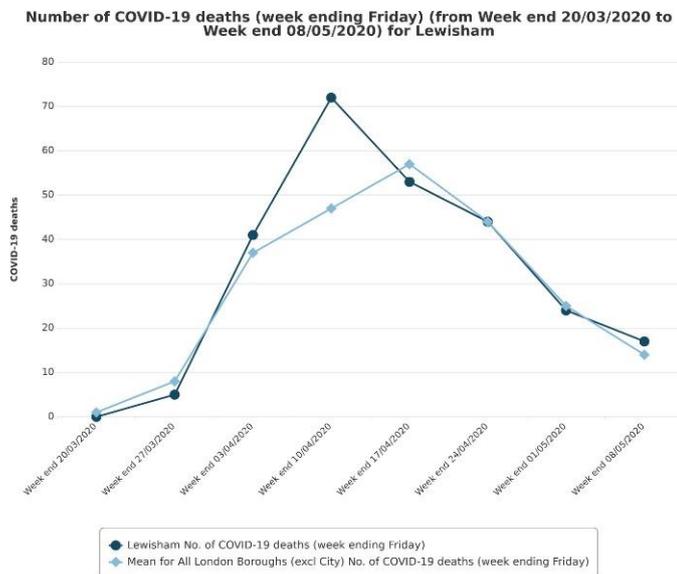
1. Accessing hard to reach vulnerable children. Paragraph **6.16**
2. Bridging the education gap that is widening as a result of remote learning replacing in-schooling. Paragraph **6.19**
3. The known and anticipated financial impact on the Council. Paragraphs **6.46 – 6.48**
4. The support being provided to rough sleepers and private renters at risk of eviction; and current levels of homelessness. Paragraphs **6.29 - 6.32**
5. The situation in Lewisham Care Homes (including PPE and infections/deaths). Paragraphs **6.8 – 6.11**
6. The monitoring of care services being provided privately to Lewisham residents with regards to safety. As above.
7. Managing the busiest parts of the borough as lockdown restrictions ease. Paragraphs **5.7 - 5.8 (there has been progress in this area since the dispatch of the report)**
8. How information on the two Covid 'Hot-Hubs' set up in Lewisham is being communicated to residents and how referrals are made. Paragraph **5.21**

## Covid 19 Update

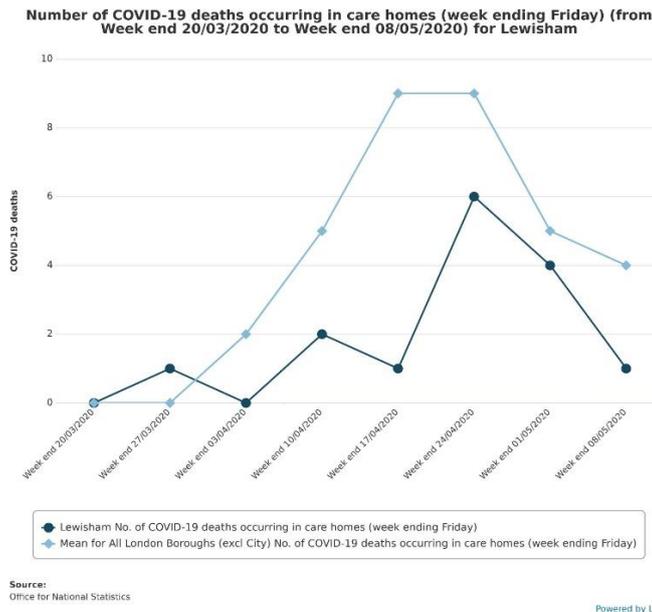
### ***Cllr Muldoon:***

- ***What are the mortality rates and numbers of deaths from COVID-19 in Lewisham and how do they compare with the rest of London?***
  - This data is now being reported by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
  - This is currently the only official, verified source of COVID-19 deaths registered in the UK that is available down to a local authority level.
  - There is however a time lag with publication of this data. These figures are released every Tuesday at 9:30am and relate to the week ended 11 days prior, that is, on the Friday two weeks before.
  - The ONS weekly deaths figures include all deaths where the registration mentions COVID-19, regardless of location of death or whether the person who died was tested for COVID-19 in a laboratory test.
  - From this ONS data, up to 8th May Lewisham had recorded **256** COVID-19 deaths.
  - We are able to provide a short follow up report for comparison to London (see chart below shows how Lewisham numbers of COVID-19 deaths compare to those in London between 20/03/20 and 08/05/20).
  - This graph indicates that the peak in deaths in Lewisham seems to have come earlier than some other London boroughs.

- On a week by week basis, the number of deaths in Lewisham had been above the London average until the week ending 17<sup>th</sup> April. It has risen above the London average again in the last monitoring period.



- ***As above, but for mortality rates & deaths for those in care homes, again with the same comparison.***
  - This data is now being reported by the Office for National Statistics.
  - This is currently the only official, verified source of COVID-19 deaths registered in the UK that is available down to a local authority level.
  - There is however a time lag with publication of this data. These figures are released every Tuesday at 9:30am and relate to the week ended 11 days prior, that is, on the Friday two weeks before.
  - The ONS weekly deaths figures include all deaths where the registration mentions COVID-19, regardless of location of death or whether the person who died was tested for COVID-19 in a laboratory test.
  - From this ONS data, up to 8th May Lewisham had recorded **15** COVID-19 deaths occurring in care homes.
  - We are able to provide a short follow up report for comparison to London (see chart below shows how Lewisham numbers of COVID-19 deaths occurring in care homes compare to those in London between 20/03/20 and 08/05/20).
  - On a week by week basis, the number of deaths in care homes in Lewisham has been below the London average.
  - In previous weeks the number of care home deaths in Lewisham appeared to be getting closer to the London average but last week the gap widened again.



- What data can be derived from the above statistics concerning the ethnicity of these fatalities, adjusted for population and compared across London?***

- At present ethnicity is not an official data field on death certificates. Country of birth is however recorded and can be used as a proxy indicator for ethnicity.
- In Lewisham we have started to analyse mortality data for inequalities between different age groups, genders and country of birth (insider or outside the UK).
- Lewisham registrars have also been recording ethnicity data for death registrations from 30<sup>th</sup> April, which will enable us to undertake analysis of inequalities between the 5 main ethnic groups in the future.

- What is the situation regarding opticians and dentists? What is being done to support their businesses in anticipation of the ending of lockdown?***

For retail opticians these may well be covered by the Business support/packages and grants that have been publicised and for which applications can be made via our business support webpage [webpage](#), or refer them on to [economyandpartnerships@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:economyandpartnerships@lewisham.gov.uk).

Dentists are one group that have lobbied for additional support because many do not appear to qualify under current assistance packages. Dentists may be one of the categories of business that will qualify for some support under the Discretionary Business Support funding – but only where they have not received support from the other packages. Details of the Discretionary fund are being finalised and will be released shortly. The aim will be to have these payments out in June.

Contacts – Should Members be contacted by local businesses about support available, you can refer them to our business [webpage](#), or refer them directly

on to [economyandpartnerships@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:economyandpartnerships@lewisham.gov.uk) . We are keen to help and support any local businesses and signpost the best available advice.

**Cllr Curran:**

### **Management of parks during the crisis**

- ***Do the parks team have enough staff to ensure that the parks are protected sufficiently and that where play equipment is cordoned off this is being “policed” properly?***

The Parks team have been working really hard to keep our parks clean, safe and secure throughout the crisis. The level of demand for parks has never been higher during lockdown. The daily use is more equivalent to Bank Holiday weekends.

The Parks Patrol service responsible for locking/unlocking, patrolling and cleansing visit sites and inspect facilities multiple times and as a minimum on a daily basis ensuring that parks are being used responsibly and repairing cordoned off areas when these have been abused.

The relaxed measures of unlimited exercise have allowed staff to focus more on cordoned off facilities and tackle litter/fly tip issues, rather than engaging with people not exercising in parks. Compliments are being received from park users about the work staff are undertaking, in particular litter and bins being emptied due to the heavy footfall of public enjoying the weather and freedom of unlimited exercise.

The level of inspecting and re-securing closed off facilities has taken on average 2 additional hours of each team’s day and there has been a need to pay overtime for staff to ensure all sites are being patrolled. This cost is being born by the contractor and Green Scene Officers are confident that these areas are being adequately resourced and policed properly. With the additional park usage and extra responsibilities two additional seasonal staff are being recruited and a seasonal park keeper to supplement the contractors existing staff.

- ***Do we have any clear plan as to when the equipment will be fully available to the public?***

Tennis courts and ball courts have now reopened. We do not have an exacting plan about when other equipment will be made available but some, such as playgrounds, can only reasonably be opened as social distancing rules and Government guidance gets updated. Other facilities such as cafes and toilets could be opened earlier but are still dependent on the right messages being given to the public about infection control as this can’t be guaranteed. The only guarantee would be to keep the facilities closed. The message must be that infection control is about personal hygiene, it starts and finishes with the individual. Individuals should be given all available information to make their own choices about how to protect themselves and others and whether to use the facilities or not.

## **Socially Distanced Travel**

- ***How is the Council keeping tabs on emergency measures to encourage sustainable socially distanced travel?***

The Council is working with TfL to develop a monitoring programme that will help to evaluate what impact the measures have. This will be undertaken through a combination of traffic surveys and regular evaluation of the Commonplace feedback that is received.

- ***Do we know if messaging is positive and well received to ensure balance is right between the value of the measures put in place and consultation of the public?***

We are monitoring comments in the press, on social media and on commonplace via emails and calls received to understand how the measures are being received.

Ward Members can also provide valuable feedback in relation to both of these issues and can share this with officers through their established communication channels.

## **Healthier Neighborhoods**

- ***Will healthier neighbourhoods go ahead if TFL are no longer funding this?***

At present, TfL and the Council's focus is on the 6 months to the end of September 2020, which reflects the duration of the current TfL funding deal with DfT.

Although TfL is starting to give thought to what the following 6 months might look like, this is very difficult to do when we don't yet know where the country will be in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore how long the temporary measures that respond to this might be needed for.

TfL will be issuing further funding guidance once they have reached a settlement with government for the second half of the financial year. As noted in the report, there may be an appetite amongst communities to retain some of the temporary measures that are implemented. TfL is very mindful of this, and will give this consideration when developing the next iteration of the funding guidance.

Our future transport programme will be heavily influenced by this, including any decisions on the Healthy Neighbourhood programme.

- ***What criteria are we using and how will we measure impact on the periphery? (There is a fear that such measures will benefit some but will simply displace traffic, this may be wrong but we need to assuage such fears).***

Officers have identified an initial tranche of locations where rat running traffic has historically been identified as an issue, and where there is concern that higher volumes of traffic are likely to re-emerge. This is based on traffic data, resident complaints, and/or officer observations. The footways in these locations are also below 3 metres in width.

Any additional requests will be prioritised against a set of criteria including (but not limited to) the volume of traffic that they have historically taken, footway widths, if they are on the strategic cycle network/desire lines, if they are near key educational/leisure or retail facilities and the level of resident support for the closure.

Officers are looking to commission traffic surveys on some of the borough's distributor routes to help understand how traffic volumes are changing, and the extent to which they are being influenced by changes in the easing of restrictions and also by the interventions that the Council is implementing. However, it must be recognised that if the timings of these two factors are similar, it may be difficult to disaggregate this.

It should be recognised that most people have a 'tolerance' threshold for congestion, before they decide it is easier to change their travel patterns – whether that's not travelling (e.g. working from home, doing shopping online instead), switching mode to walking/cycling, or changing the time of their journey to avoid peak periods). So it is not simply a matter of transferring 100% of traffic from one route to another – there will be a degree of what is commonly referred to as 'traffic evaporation'.

#### *Comments:*

- Any proposals to introduce a watered down version of it must be clearly communicated to ensure supporters of such measures know TfL's funds have been cut back - if they have - and for those who were against the proposals or neutral we need to still be clear about how the trials of modal filters will be assessed for success.
- We need to be upfront with people that the situation has changed, that we are genuinely unable to implement plans as originally envisaged but it is vital to try and change the way we get about to get the benefits of less particle pollution, noise pollution, a healthier lifestyle etc.

Comments noted and will be taken into consideration as this work progresses.

### **Small business grant funding allocation and management**

- ***Is there a problem with not enough businesses claiming the grants? What are we doing and will the following suggestions be followed?***

We initially produced lists of all businesses that met the qualifying criteria and wrote to them, we followed this up with e-mails and text messages where the appropriate information was available. We then used search engines like

Google, Spotlight and Companies House to try and get any more information on whether or not the businesses were still trading and if so, any new contact details that we then used to try and call or e-mail them. We are now visiting all those who have yet to apply for a grant but may be eligible. Our initial exercise of visiting businesses highlighted around 25% who were no longer trading but also allowed us to contact a number of businesses directly to explain the scheme and encourage applications.

- ***Could we use some of the grant fund to pay for extra publicity to get details of the grants, how easy they are to apply for etc. to businesses? (If they are not working from their premises they may not be receiving our letters - we need to do more.)***

Some businesses will not have received our letters as we only hold business addresses for most of them and they've not provided further correspondence addresses for us although those that have will have received letters at both addresses. We have also used other channels as above. We are unable to use the funding to enhance the communications we undertake. If we are also unsuccessful in engaging with the owners when we try and visit the businesses, then there will be cases who will not contact us until they re-open their businesses and find the letters we have sent them.

- ***How many businesses and social enterprises, trading charities, have applied for grants and been rejected? Can these be looked at again in conversations with the business owners to see if there is a way we can change our decision? Is there scope to do so?***

Due to existing constraints of the system being used we are unable to identify those who have received negative decisions although we could identify charities who did not receive a grant. However, they were excluded from the qualifying criteria and would be unable to qualify anyway. They do receive rate relief and may be able to apply for and receive a grant under the discretionary scheme. Details of the discretionary scheme and the qualifying criteria will be available in the next week or so.

- ***Is the team sufficiently large enough? Given the huge reduction in the virus in Lewisham at the moment could this team be increased if necessary to carry out this task? This could be one of the first actions of the recovery team.***

We have already been able to shift a number of staff from council tax to support the team in business rates. We have also deployed a number of volunteers from elsewhere within the Council who have supported us with undertaking the searches referred to above and will also be undertaking the visits.

- ***Are we doing anything London-wide to challenge exclusion of businesses with RV over £51k? Is there anything else we can do regarding this?***

The point is being made that London does have the higher business rate values so this limit narrows the level of support available to London

businesses. The Mayor of London has written to the government making this point. In a Teams with the Minister in relation to grants distribution the Chief Executive also made the point that a number of business are falling outside the scope of the grant criteria and the guidance for discretionary grants (now received) was needed to enable the additional 5% of grant to be distributed. The local criteria for doing so in Lewisham are being finalised.

## **Timelines for major re-developments of town centres**

- ***What is still going ahead?***

Lewisham Gateway – officers continue to meet with Muse on a regular basis to seek to secure progress on this key development. Work has been taking place to identify a construction programme which can enable the scheme to proceed within Covid-19 Construction regulations

Catford – The Masterplan Framework report is now scheduled to be submitted to Mayor and Cabinet in September, enabling the next phase of public consultation/engagement. Ahead of this, we want to report the successful Good Growth fund bid for the Catford Constitutional Club, to agree Match funding and to agree/progress some works to the station approach. This paper should come forward to Mayor and Cabinet in July – which should send a clear message of early investment in Catford town centre.

- ***How are they being affected?***

On Lewisham Gateway, there has been some loss of time - whilst the construction process is evaluated and de-risked against Government/sector guidance. That work is important to give the funder confidence to proceed.

On Catford, about three months has been lost against the original timeline for considering and consulting on the Masterplan framework - so this is now scheduled for September, rather than June.

- ***Financial situation?***

It is currently too early to assess the broader impact in terms of development and investment interest/cycles and the financial situation. This will take time to settle, although the fundamentals of housing need/demand will remain and Lewisham is an attractive location. We will continue to track market conditions and encourage positive development/investment

## **Parks and Open Spaces Strategy**

- ***On 10 June at Business Panel the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy report will be agreed. Has the SDSC report on Parks been incorporated into the strategy? It should be given equal weight.***

All of the recommendations made at the Sustainable Development Select Committee meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020 have been incorporated into the Parks and Open Space Strategy. It has not been possible to include all of the detailed recommendations from the published Parks Management and Maintenance Review as both reports were completed simultaneously. Officers believe that the strategy does address all the themes touched upon and recommendations made in the review. The review is a very thorough, objective and thoughtful report and it should be given great weight. It cannot be given equal weight however as it commits the Council to produce additional time bound published strategies that are currently un-resourced. It would therefore be wrong to give it equal weight until such a time as resources were made available to deliver on all its detailed recommendations\*.

## **Cllr Millbank:**

### Section Community Response 5.12 – 5.21

- ***Working with partner organisations / sectors has delivered a speedy and coordinated community response within the borough. How will the cross-sector partnership approach be consolidated and carried forward into the Recovery phase?***

There has been an unprecedented level of partnership working across statutory, voluntary and the independent sector throughout this crisis. The impact of communities on the response to the pandemic has been profound. Work is now under way to establish what we want and need to be retained and where resourcing might be released to support these initiatives. It is too early to provide specific details on how this will work in practice as the Hub is still working at full capacity to meet presenting need but it is acknowledged that the partnership approach has been particularly strong in Lewisham and we are committed to building on this during the recovery phase.

- ***How can the experience of and community intelligence gathered by others involved in local community response be included in a partnership approach e.g. the Mutual Aid groups which have sprung up across Lewisham.***

One of the initial aims of the Community Sector partnership was to reach out to Mutual Aid groups to ensure that their services were being delivered in a safe and effective way. We continue to work closely with groups who have accessed this support as well as proactively approaching those that have not made contact. As highlighted above we hope to build on our partnership approach and this very much includes mutual aid groups and other community activists. As such we will be redoubling our efforts in the coming weeks to ensure that links are made with all groups so that the experience and learning can inform our approach to recovery. Paragraph 5.8 of the report also refers to this area of work.

## Section Adult Social Care: 6.3-6.11

- ***In section 6.4 report refers to ‘the Council has not needed to operate under the Care Act easements’ while also saying the Council is ‘currently applying flexibility to processes’. Could clarification be given i.e. what is meant by flexibility in processes?***

We have streamlined the assessment process and reduced the number of face to face visits and also stopped non-urgent reviews of care provision. This is recognising that we wish to limit risk of infection to vulnerable adults. This is all permissible within the Care Act.

- ***What factors or what circumstances might lead the Council to operate under the Care Act easements? And if so, what safeguards might need to be put in place to protect client’s rights and ensure the Council’s responsibilities?***

The circumstances that were envisaged when this might be applied was if there was not enough staff to provide the care that was needed. This has not occurred and it seems unlikely that this will happen. Should it have been needed any reductions would have been based upon individual circumstances and not placed people at risk of harm, though some needs may have been left unmet.

At the start of the crisis Officers liaised directly with the members of the Disabled People’s Commission to agree a set of principles such easement be needed. In the event these were not needed but this engagement served to ensure that the views of Disabled People were taken into account when considering this issue.

*(I am happy for the officers to address these points in their presentation or to ask questions directly.)*

### ***Cllr Codd:***

- ***One of our objectives is to provide support to businesses - I note the report talks briefly about our distribution of government grants. What else has the council been doing, or is considering doing to support local businesses who are not eligible for grants to ensure that valuable local businesses providing services, goods and employment are retained in the borough?***

The first and initial thrust of our support to local business has been to ensure that as many local businesses as possible were aware of and took up the available Government Grant. A key part of this response was clear advice, information and signposting – which we did through the Council’s business support site – [webpage](#) .

We brought forward an early package of additional measures – this targeted £2.4m of Lewisham resource specifically at local business – protecting jobs and

economic vitality – see [Mayor and Cabinet meeting](#) . That paper agree several specific measures including delaying and waiving a range of fees, charges and rent for businesses.

Following the announcement of further support for local authorities to put in place support to businesses that may not have been supported so far – a further £2.3m Discretionary Grants Funding has been allocated to Lewisham and officers are working to bring forward a scheme to allocate this swiftly and fairly.

The Mayor and Cabinet agreed to establish a Lewisham Backs Business Task Group, which is scheduled to meet in early June. This will consider and shape the Discretionary Grants Fund and hear directly from representatives of the local Chamber of Commerce, the Small Business Federation, the Job Centre, Lewisham College, Goldsmiths and other key partners. This input will be invaluable in shaping a programme of further activity. We are also reaching out to local business directly – through a direct survey and on-line discussions with small businesses.

- ***Do we need to increase the size of the team of people doing work to support locally based businesses?***

The Economy and Partnerships team continues to offer direct contact with and support to local businesses about support available. Please refer any contacts or requests for support either to our [webpage](#), or refer them on to [economyandpartnerships@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:economyandpartnerships@lewisham.gov.uk) . Resourcing and capacity within the team is tight – this is a busy time and one where the Council needs to be able to step forward. Capacity will be kept under close review as the programme and business impact becomes clearer.