



# **LIST OF MEMBER QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

Member questions and answers for the  
Council Meeting of the London Borough of  
Lewisham to be held on Wednesday 21  
July 2021

**MEMBER QUESTION NO. 1**

**Priority 1**

Question asked by: Councillor Holland

Relevant Directorate: Children & Young People

Member to reply: Councillor Chris Barnham

**Question**

What proportion of our primary schools will have vacancies for Reception Year based on places offered for 2021? Are any of our schools experiencing falling rolls? Have any trends in relation to this been noticed in terms of size, denomination, location etc?

**Reply**

68 Lewisham primary schools have allocations made on national offer day. This year, 33 of them had vacancies on that day, which is 48 per cent. Since national offer day the number of vacancies has reduced from 460 to 310 to date as a result of late applications and strategic capping of reception places.

Schools across London, and indeed the rest of England, are experiencing falling rolls. Lewisham's experience is in line with this trend, with a fall in Reception numbers this year that is at the average for London. Recent data shows that the drop off in numbers is equally spread across the borough, although inevitably some schools feel a more acute impact on applications than others, according to popularity.

The Council continues to work with schools to manage this over-supply of places, for example by utilising local allocations capping, and agreed reductions to some published admissions numbers.

## **MEMBER QUESTION NO. 2**

### **Priority 1**

Question asked by: Councillor Jacq Paschoud

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Paul Bell

### **Question**

Residents for the new autism specific housing in Stanstead Road are now moving in.

What is the "Use Class" of this development and what qualifies residents to live in this particular class of specialist housing?

How many residents are there in this development and how many who qualify are waiting for such housing?

### **Reply**

The scheme at 30-32 Stanstead Road has been developed in conjunction with a local campaign group, Campaign in Lewisham for Autism Spectrum Housing (CLASH), who have been campaigning for many years for greater provision of affordable housing in Lewisham that allows adults with autism to live independently. The Council has worked together with CLASH and Birnbeck Housing Association to bring forward the project.

The scheme is now complete and contains 4 new self-contained residential units and a communal lounge. Residents receive approximately two hours of floating support per week to help them maintain their tenancy. The 'use class' is C3 'dwelling house'.

The Council has a nominations agreement with Birnbeck who had been advertising for interest in the scheme for more than a year before the homes became available for letting. Birnbeck received interest from 40 individuals. Due to the needs of the client group, a robust assessment is required to ensure that the right nominations are made, taking into account their individual circumstances, the location of building, their support network and readiness to make a move from a parental home. These assessments are specialist and are carried out independently of Birnbeck, the Council and CLASH, by Avenues Group - a charity who are experienced in this type of work.

We are very proud of this excellent scheme and I was pleased to visit with the Mayor last month to meet some of the new residents. It is a great example of partnership working between the Council, CLASH, Birnbeck and Avenues Group and is already making a transformative difference to the lives of the new residents.

**MEMBER QUESTION NO. 3**

**Priority 1**

Question asked by: Councillor Hall

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie McGeevor

**Question**

Can the Cabinet Member update the Council on any plans for improved traffic calming measures for the area around Lower Sydenham station including the need for a pedestrian crossing on Worsley Bridge Road?

**Reply**

Currently the funding that boroughs usually receive from TfL to deliver such measures is significantly constrained and we are awaiting the outcome of a funding bid. However, we are not expecting the funding available to be significant. The section of Worsley Bridge Road near Lower Sydenham Station is a boundary road with the London Borough of Bromley, who are responsible for this section of highway. Any concerns and possible measures relating to traffic calming and improved pedestrian crossing facilities will be discussed with Bromley.

**MEMBER QUESTION NO. 4**

**Priority 1**

Question asked by: Councillor Curran

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Andre Bourne

**Question**

What assistance has the Council been able to seek from the Government in the form of the National Leisure Centre Recovery Fund and/or any other forms of funding to help reopen The Bridge Leisure Centre?

**Reply**

Lewisham Council has received £728,229 from the National Leisure Centre Recovery Fund and this has been used to support the reopening of the leisure centres in the borough.

However, even with the current closure of the Bridge Leisure Centre the costs incurred by the providers during COVID have massively exceeded this figure. The Council's expenditure on leisure was £1,975,416 for the period April 20 – March 21 and this does not take account of the fact that around £200,000 in income was lost to the Council and that the leisure providers suffered further losses on top of this. In recognition of this huge deficit, and the fact that the Council has had to earmark at least £1.2m of emergency funds to the leisure budget for 21-22 even without reopening the Bridge, I have recently written to the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport highlighting the need for extra funding to fully support the needs of the leisure sector.

**MEMBER QUESTION NO. 5**

**Priority 1**

Question asked by: Councillor Kalu

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Paul Bell

**Question**

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the Canal Approach right of way on the old Surrey Canal Road towpath which runs underneath Blackhorse Bridge is to be included in the Lewisham Local Plan?

**Reply**

Canal Approach is currently identified in the draft Local Plan as a key green link within the North Area place principles and indicated in Figure 15.2 of the plan. Policy LNA5 North Lewisham Links outlines our expectations in delivering these key routes.

## **MEMBER QUESTION NO. 6**

### **Priority 1**

Question asked by: Councillor Walsh

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie McGeevor

### **Question**

Investment in our public realm and improving our neighbourhoods are all too often undone by utilities companies scarring our footpaths and highways driving down the aesthetic of our area.

How can we force those (usually substantial private profit makers) who need to carry out subterranean works on public realm to not only restore it, but do it in a timely fashion? What work have done as a Council to follow and chase up on these companies that aren't living up to standards?

### **Reply**

Highway Authorities (HA's) have limited powers under the New Roads & Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA) Section 58 to prevent statutory undertakers from excavating in new public realm schemes. Unfortunately this prevention can only be exercised for 20 days from the scheme completion if the utility works are for new connections, disconnections or to repair a loss of service.

NRSWA provides statutory undertakers with up to six months to carry out permanent reinstatements to their excavations using the correct materials. Lewisham officers actively encourage utility providers to carry out these "first time reinstatements" to avoid both unsightly temporary patching and further works at a later date, and in most cases this is achieved. This is more challenging where non-standard materials have been used in our public realm schemes, as there can be a lengthy delay in the utility sourcing the correct material.

Should utility providers leave reinstatements unresolved beyond six months HA's have powers under the NRSWA to fine them for the delay. Lewisham do use these powers as and when we deem it applicable. In such cases the utility providers are still obligated to provide a permanent reinstatement.

## **MEMBER QUESTION NO. 7**

### **Priority 1**

Question asked by: Councillor Latouche

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie McGeevor

### **Question**

Encouraging more people to walk and cycle is vital in fighting the Climate Emergency and reducing air pollution. My ward New Cross has some of the lowest car ownership among residents and people in New Cross and Deptford need safer walking and cycling routes. Can the Cabinet Member explain what is being done in Deptford to promote walking and cycling?

### **Reply**

The vision is for the Deptford and New Cross area to have improved connected street networks, particularly walking and cycling links. As part of this the Deptford Parks Liveable Neighbourhood (DPLN) scheme will deliver a series of healthy street interventions so that the area is one where more people choose to walk and cycle. A pedestrian / cycle zone is currently being implemented at Rolt Street to reduce through traffic adjacent to the park and create more space for walking and cycling. Woodpecker Walk will also be re-surfaced with an upgrade to the path quality at key focal points to make it more attractive to walking and cycling. The closures that were implemented on an experimental basis at Scawen Road and Prince Street will also be made permanent.

Working with TfL, the construction of CS4 along Evelyn Street is due to commence in mid-August and will provide a segregated cycleway as part of a strategic route from London Bridge to Greenwich.

## **MEMBER QUESTION NO. 8**

### **Priority 1**

Question asked by: Councillor Lavery

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Paul Bell

### **Question**

Many private sector tenants are worried about losing their home after the ban on evictions in England ended on 31st May. As a result of the pandemic, many renters now have significant rent arrears. In addition, forecasters are expecting a rise in unemployment after furlough ends on September 30th. How is the Council supporting families in the private rented sector with rent arrears and how is it preparing for a possible surge in evictions?

### **Reply**

The Housing Solutions Service's main purpose is to support our residents so that they do not become homeless. We work with people at the earliest opportunity and for most, this is as soon as they receive a notice from a landlord or friend or family member. We aim to establish the reasons any kind of notice has been served and work with landlord, excluder and client to help resolve the issues and prevent homelessness.

Where there are issues with rent arrears, we will complete affordability assessments, review income and expenditure and try to put together a repayment plan which the tenant can afford and the landlord is happy with. We also try to maximise benefit entitlements and apply for backdated housing benefit or universal credit payments. We will refer to partners such as Advice Lewisham to help residents experiencing debt and financial hardship. We will make payments towards the rent arrears as long as the landlord will commit to keeping the resident in the home. We do this through either a grant or a credit union loan, depending on the resident's financial circumstances.

We work closely with the Housing Benefit support team and help residents to make discretionary housing payment applications to cover any rent shortfalls up to local housing allowance rates. Benefit capped residents can also receive support from the in-house employment team, which seeks to assist tenants to find employment, as well upskill in training and development.

We also refer to the Rogue Landlord team who make sure that any notices ending assured shorthold tenancies have been served correctly.

Landlords may want to sell or keep the property for their own purposes, so where it is not possible to keep tenants in their homes, we support tenants to find their own

properties. This is done by providing advice on how to look for accommodation and on the affordability issues that need to be considered. This includes provision of advice around the benefit cap, universal credit and local housing allowance rates. We also provide advice for residents who may want to consider moving out of Lewisham to find more affordable housing.

We offer a rent deposit scheme which provides funds for the rent in advance and deposit, this is paid via a grant, or if the household has sufficient disposable income, a Credit Union loan. This amount is capped at £1,000 for single clients. We have signed up to Capital Letters, a procurement scheme which helps to maximise the supply of private rented properties available to help prevent or relieve homelessness.

We also help clients to move via the Homefinder UK scheme, which is a social housing mobility scheme, enabling residents to move to housing association accommodation. There has been much success with this scheme, Lewisham have secured the most moves when compared to any other borough.

We are monitoring data which comes through the Courts to stay abreast of the increases in possession orders and bailiff warrants. This is to ensure that our service is ready for any influx in demand. We are also establishing pre-eviction protocols with the registered housing providers within our borough to provide earlier, more effective assistance to those at risk of losing their tenancies.

We are a member of the Best Practice exchange with Crisis and 20 other local authorities. Recent meetings have specifically focused on how to deal with any upcoming surge in evictions. We use these meetings to share and adopt best practice.

## **MEMBER QUESTION NO. 9**

### **Priority 1**

Question asked by: Rachel Onikoski

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Andre Bourne

### **Question**

Like many, I'm very excited about our prospects of celebrating as a Borough of Culture in 2022 and I'm grateful to Officers for their comprehensive answers to my questions at the Stronger and Safer Committee on 16 June.

This question is about the huge impacts suffered by micro organisations due to the pandemic and how the Council will ensure that these organisations are empowered and encouraged to participate in delivering activities as we celebrate the Borough of Culture next year. I suspect there are a plethora of steps the Council are taking.

Could you please agree that the Council will do at least the following:

- that Micro organisations receive information about the event directly from the Council
- The application process is straight forward, user friendly and seamless
- Identifying where micro organisations can deliver jointly and linking them up
- Having a specific point of contact to promptly answer application and event queries.

### **Reply**

We are very mindful of the importance of the support needed by micro organisations to engage with Borough of Culture. It is important to us that we have a programme that everybody feels that they have stake in and we know that we need to have clear and effective ways of communicating with all stakeholders and provide clear routes for them to get involved.

Our communications strategy proactively uses all available channels to reach people, including social media, direct emails, Lewisham Life and our extensive partner communications network. The encouragement to everybody is that they sign up to Borough of Culture mailing list via the iamlewisham website. Our single point of contact is [cultural.development@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:cultural.development@lewisham.gov.uk) which is monitored daily with emails forwarded on to the most appropriate officer for response.

Keeping application processes simple is a priority for us and we provide workshop support to ensure that applicants are able to understand expectations and have their questions answered. For the Creative Change Fund we held two introductory events when we launched and then three grant workshops for applicants to ask us more detailed questions.

There is also a strong collaboration element built into the programme and applicants are invited to let us know if they need support in partnering with other organisations. Projects funded through the Creative Change Fund need to have a clear Arts and Culture focus but they also need to be rooted in local communities. The Culture Team work with individuals and organisations to make those connections.

The deadline for submitting an Expression of Interest for the Creative Change Fund Small Grants up to £5000 has now passed and the fund is heavily oversubscribed with 107 applications. The deadline for Creative Change Fund Seed Grants up to £1,000 is 26 July 2021. There will be another round of funding in early 2022 and we will take on board feedback and lessons learnt from the first round to inform that.

## **MEMBER QUESTION NO. 10**

### **Priority 1**

Question asked by: Stephen Penfold

Relevant Directorate: Chief Exec's

Member to reply: Councillor Kevin Bonavia

### **Question**

What steps are the Council taking to support those EU residents who have missed the deadline of 30 June to make an application for settled or pre-settled status?

### **Reply**

Since the Government launched the EUSS (European Union Settlement Scheme) Home Office statistics show that nearly 52,000 Lewisham residents have applied to the scheme so that they can remain living and working in the borough.

The Council has not only directly offered support to those wishing to apply to remain, but has also worked with partners, like Citizens' Advice and community groups to ensure that as many families and individuals who wish to remain could find the support they need.

Lewisham remains concerned that there will still be residents originally from EU countries who may have lived in the UK for many years, but who don't realise their right to stay and access to public services could be at risk, if they failed to apply for settled status within the deadline set by the Government of 30 June 2021.

Unfortunately the Government refused to set up a self-declaratory system so that EU residents can self-declare their status as EU resident in the UK at any time, leaving the worrying prospect of many individuals facing unfair discrimination similar to those affected by the Windrush scandal.

The Government have said that EU nationals from vulnerable backgrounds can continue to apply for EUSS if they have 'reasonable grounds' why they have not applied within the set deadline of 30 June 2021. The Council continues to put information on its website highlighting the reasonable grounds EU citizens who have not yet applied for settled status have, for making a late application. Examples of 'reasonable grounds' can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families>

The Council will continue to support vulnerable EU groups (the homeless, children and adults who have been in the care system, victims of violence, people, etc.) living in Lewisham who might be granted an extension to apply for settled status by the Government post 30 June.

The Council will also maintain channels of communication with those organisations, charities and media outlets representing the main EU communities living in Lewisham (Spanish, Romanian, Italian, etc.) and make them aware of the support available for those people who qualify for the extension of the EUSS scheme post 30 June.

**MEMBER QUESTION NO. 11**

**Priority 1**

Question asked by: Mark Ingleby

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie McGeevor

**Question**

Cycleway 4, linking Tower Bridge and Greenwich with segregated cycle lanes, includes sections running through Evelyn and Deptford and the north of the Borough. The construction of the Lewisham sections of Cycleway 4 seem to have been subject to many delays, not least on account of the pandemic. Can the Cabinet member please provide an update on when these works scheduled by TfL are now due to commence?

**Reply**

Unfortunately the construction of Cycleway 4 was delayed due to the pandemic and funding issues. However, funding for the scheme has now been confirmed and we are working in partnership with TfL to deliver this scheme.

I am delighted to announce that the main construction works for the Evelyn Street section will commence in late July and are scheduled for completion in Spring 2022. This will bring much needed cycling infrastructure to the borough and provide a safe route for cyclists travelling into central London.

**MEMBER QUESTION NO. 12**

**Priority 2**

Question asked by: Councillor Holland

Relevant Directorate: Children & Young People

Member to reply: Councillor Chris Barnham

**Question**

What total surplus capacity do we currently have in Lewisham primary and secondary schools? How has this changed over the last three years?

What is the current surplus capacity in each primary and secondary school in Lewisham? Please breakdown by school.

**Reply**

Over the past 3 years the number of spare places in reception has stayed largely the same over the past 3 years, with a slight increase of 3% over the period from 400 to 413. For Year 7 the number of spare places has reduced by 37% from 491 to 310. In both of these instances this is the number of spare places where we consider the spring census against the published admissions number (PAN) for that year. In some instances we have local authority caps in places that reduce these numbers down further.

Spare Places (PAN v Spring Census)

Year	Reception	Year 7
2018/19	400	491
2019/20	406	278
2020/21	413	310

A full breakdown by school of the Spring Census data for the last three years, including the relevant Published Admissions Number for each year has also been emailed to Cllr Holland under separate cover

**MEMBER QUESTION NO. 13**

**Priority 2**

Question asked by: Councillor Hall

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Paul Bell

**Question**

How does the Council ensure that commitments in Section 106 planning agreements are delivered? How can the public find information on the progress of specific commitments made?

**Reply**

The Council's Development Contributions Team (DCT) monitor the delivery of S106 agreements. Where these S106 commitments are to be delivered on site by the developer, the DCT, in collaboration with planning officers, monitor these to ensure they are delivered. Where a financial contribution is made, the DCT work with the respective Council departments to ensure that the S106 funding is appropriately allocated and projects delivered in line with the legal agreement. The procedures for allocating and spending S106 funding were approved by Mayor and Cabinet in October 2003.

The Council published its Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) for 2019-2020 early this year and can be downloaded from the Council's website. This provides a list of S106 funds which were spent during the financial year and a list of projects which had money allocated to them during 2019-2020. It is intended that the next IFS for 2020-2021 will also include a list of all of the borough's S106 agreements and a list of live projects funded by S106.

**MEMBER QUESTION NO. 14**

**Priority 2**

Question asked by: Councillor Curran

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Andre Bourne

**Question**

Will the Council announce the forming of a working party to look into a Cooperative solution for the ownership and reopening of The Bridge Leisure Centre?

**Reply**

The Council's currently delivery partner GLL is a Cooperative and they, along with Council Officers, have met with all parties who have expressed an interest in being involved in the management or running of the Bridge Leisure Centre.

This followed officers making direct contact with those using the centre including a range of clubs and other individuals who use the facilities. In addition officers engage via local facebook groups and make it clear that they are open to discussions with anyone who has proposals for the use of the site.

However, the huge capital costs involved in reopening the centre and an estimated operating deficit of £750,000 per annum means that the barriers are significant. In addition to this there are considerable health and safety and insurance responsibilities relating to the site due to the large amounts of chemicals needed for a public swimming pool and wider risks associated with large bodies of water. As such no viable options have been identified.

Officers are happy to meet with any interested parties to consider their proposals and I will ask them to contact you directly so they can proactively explore all potential options.

## **MEMBER QUESTION NO. 15**

### **Priority 2**

Question asked by: Stephen Penfold

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Kevin Bonavia

### **Question**

In January 2021 there was a case when an overstayer and her 2 children were evicted from accommodation sourced by Lewisham Council and faced street homelessness. After this person sought legal advice it was discovered that she had another route to accommodation as an asylum seeker. In light of this case, what steps do Lewisham Council take, if any, to ensure that such vulnerable people are signposted to independent legal advice?

### **Reply**

I am aware of the case to which you refer and had raised this with officers at the time. My concern with this case and whenever someone seeks Council support when facing problems arising from their immigration status is that the Council does all it can to act fairly and approach the principles of sanctuary in so far as we can under the current law however imperfect that may be.

Where the Council is prohibited by law in providing direct support to an individual because of their immigration status, in particular the No Recourse to Public Funds regime (NRPF) to provide the individual with independent sources of advice. We provide funding to independent legal advisers which we were able to increase from the saving made when the Council removed the Home Office official embedded in the Council's NRPF service. To date almost 100 households have benefitted from such an approach.

The challenge for Council staff of course is to be able to identify the particular issues an individual may have and to provide the appropriate signposting. Our new Sanctuary Strategy is currently being implemented across all council services and staff have been receiving training from people with lived experience such as through Lewisham Citizens' programme with NRPF staff.

In the meantime, as per our Sanctuary Strategy, where the law prevents the Council from providing the support we would wish to give, we are committed to lobby for change in the law. Our national immigration system is broken and needs radical reform which involves replacing the current No Recourse to Public Funds regime with a system that recognises the often dire circumstances that many individuals have to face. You have my personal commitment to ensure that Lewisham Council continues to lobby for change

**MEMBER QUESTION NO. 16**

**Priority 2**

Question asked by: Mark Ingleby

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie McGeevor

**Question**

A number of London Boroughs are piloting e-scooters, which are beginning to pop up on many of our Lewisham streets. What is the Council's policy towards trialling these and is there a clear line on safety and the communication of both safety issues and the Council's specific policy on e-scooters – both publicly managed and privately owned machines - to the public?

**Reply**

Having carefully considered this scheme Lewisham is not part of the first phase of the e-scooter trial, which is being led by London Councils and TfL. However, there is the opportunity to join in future phases. Whilst we acknowledge the potential benefits of e-scooters and accept that they are likely to be part of the future transport solutions at the time the trial was first proposed last summer we did not feel confident that risks and public concerns around e-scooters were fully captured. In addition to being concerned about the risk to users, we also had concerns raised about impact on vulnerable and visually impaired pedestrians. The issue of where and how rented e-scooters would be located and available for hire is also a concern. The trial will help inform a number of these issues and Lewisham are an 'interested party' in the trial and will keep the situation under review.

**MEMBER QUESTION NO. 17**

**Priority 3**

Question asked by: Councillor Hall

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Paul Bell

**Question**

In relation to planning Section 106 Agreements, how much money is owed to the Council, has been received by the Council and is committed and uncommitted to specific purposes?

**Reply**

The Council published its Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) for 2019-2020 early this year and can be downloaded from the Council's website. This provides the most up to date information available regarding Section 106 financial contributions.

The balance of Section 106 funds held by the Council at the end of the 2019-20 financial year was £43,661,891.37, of which £22,638,849.24 was unallocated and £21,023,042.13 has been allocated to various projects.

**MEMBER QUESTION NO. 18**

**Priority 3**

Question asked by: Octavia Holland

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Sophie McGeevor

**Question**

Following the successful roll out of 26 School Streets across the borough, what other schemes are being introduced to make our roads more child-friendly?

**Reply**

The first phase of the School Street programme is complete, with additional measures to improve the existing schemes being planned for some schools. An additional 18 School Streets are currently being developed and those that are possible and can be funded will begin to be implemented later this year.

As Covid restrictions are gradually easing, we are also looking to promote the opportunity for residents and communities to host Play Streets to allow children to play, socialise and relax, particularly after more than a year of living under restrictions which have seen playgrounds closed.

Play is a vital part of growing up and there are lots of benefits to having a Play Street, including allowing children to play and exercise close to home, giving children the space to play safely, increasing a sense of community by bringing neighbours together and encouraging more activities to take place in the local area.

I would like to encourage residents to get involved and make an application. More information is available on the Lewisham Council website: Closing a road for a play street or street party event.