



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 29 September 2021

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 1

Priority 1

Question asked by: Councillor Hall

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Paul Bell

Question

How many tenants have been moved using the under occupancy scheme in the last three years? How much has been spent promoting the scheme?

Reply

The below table shows the total number of tenants, who were registered on the Council's housing register with a Primary Rehousing Reason of Under-Occupation High Demand (Band 1), who have moved during the previous three financial years and this financial year to date. The figures include all under-occupation moves, including those moves supported by Trading Places, the council's scheme to assist social housing tenants living in properties which are too big for their needs, to move into a smaller, more manageable home.

YEAR TOTAL UNDER-OCCUPATION MOVES

2018/19	62
2019/20	66
2020/21	36
2021/22 to date	17

We promote the Trading Places scheme through the Council's website and Find Your Home newsletter and therefore there is no specific cost associated with promoting the scheme.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 2

Priority 1

Question asked by: Councillor Latouche

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Brenda Dacres

Question

Given the extraordinary historical contributions that have been made by people from African and Caribbean heritage and are part of British history. How is the Council celebrating this year's Black History Month?

Reply

I am proud that Lewisham is once again marking Black History Month with an exciting and diverse programme of events. A comprehensive timetable outlining all of the exciting events and activities for Black History Month 2021 will be available on the Council's website later this week.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 3

Priority 1

Question asked by: Councillor Royston

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Kim Powell

Question

I was delighted to see that the Council, in partnership with the NHS, has committed to investing more than £2.3m for the voluntary and community sector through the Main Grants programme between 2022-25. As sources of funding for the charity sector narrow each year, can the Cabinet Member outline how the Council will support the voluntary and community sector to be more sustainable?

Reply

The new grants programme has a strategic approach aimed at building the capacity of the sector as a whole through strong infrastructure, coordination and fundraising services. The aim is that the new Main Grants funding round should deliver voluntary and community sector (VCS) sustainability by building strength and capacity to attract funds from wider sources rather than the Council trying to fund everything directly through short term project-based grants.

Apart from funding projects under the three broad criteria, the proposals for the new programme include:

- Significant grants to partners delivering advice and social prescribing services, with an expectation that these two significant services play an infrastructure role in terms of borough wide need and demand, creating pathways for support, and working with partner organisations
- Three Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Community Fundraisers hosted by the VCS, with specific focus areas covering equalities, culture and sports, and 'cold spots' - areas of high need and low services coverage in the borough
- Small partnership grants of £10,000 for organisations willing to work with the Council in the coming years
- A commitment to funding BAME infrastructure support
- Funding a community directory to enable access to information about the range of VCS organisations in the borough
- Volunteer brokerage that enables residents to easily access volunteering roles

Additionally, as part of the consultation on the grants programme, we asked the VCS what other support apart from funding we could offer. The community development team are working to ensure all areas of support that have been identified are provided, either via the grant funded infrastructure organisations or directly by Council Officers.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 4

Priority 1

Question asked by: Councillor Walsh

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Paul Bell

Question

LBL recently announced that £70m will be available to support social house building and crucially the families on the housing waiting list in Lewisham - can you give us further information?

Reply

Following the hard work of officers who put together a proposal , the borough has been allocated £69,954,000 in grants from the GLA in relation to the GLA Affordable Housing Programme 2021-26. The grant will fund socially rented units and shared ownership units. The social rented units are over 70% of the programme and will help us to deliver the social homes that are much needed by the circa 10,000 people on our housing waiting list. All new schemes will be Net Zero carbon.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 5

Priority 1

Question asked by: Councillor Lavery

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Kevin Bonavia

Question

As a borough of sanctuary, how is the Council supporting Afghan refugees fleeing violence and persecution.

Reply

We have offered to participate in Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) with an initial offer of up to 10 homes for the former scheme and opening up our existing refugee resettlement programme for the latter (this programme has a target of 100 refugee families for resettlement).

We are working with Council services to understand the needs of Afghan refugees in Lewisham, and of residents with friends and family in the country. We have created a page on our website with relevant resources and information and our customer service centre are signposting people who contact us to the appropriate organisations: <https://lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/community-support/refugees/our-response-situation-in-afghanistan>

We have met with Lewisham's MPs to understand the issues they encounter through their casework with constituents, have assisted with individual cases where required and have good channels of communication to deal with issues as they arise. We have met with local voluntary and community sector organisations in Lewisham to understand the demands placed upon them and the additional coordination and support required from the Council to assist them. We are very grateful for the amazing work carried out by volunteers at the Lewisham Donation Hub and organisations across the Lewisham Local voluntary network in providing support to Afghan refugees across London.

Through our position on the Steering Group for the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network we agreed a position statement on the situation in Afghanistan and again calling for the implementation, and appropriate funding, of a suitable resettlement scheme. With the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network, we are helping to organise a thematic meeting for Local Authorities to discuss the challenges experienced by Local Authorities resulting from the Afghan Crisis and how working together with local partners can help alleviate pressures and improve experiences for all people feeling violence and persecution.

In the meantime, we remain very concerned about the implications of many provisions in the Nationality and Borders Bill, in particular the lack of certainty of long-term refugee resettlement programme and the real risk that Afghan refugees who are unable to secure a safe legal route to sanctuary are criminalised for arriving in the UK through unauthorised routes. We are therefore lobbying the Government alongside other local authorities and refugee support organisations to amend the Bill.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 6

Priority 1

Question asked by: Councillor Onikosi

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Patrick Codd

Question

There has been much discussion and uncertainty about the felling of trees in Lewisham over the recent months, particularly in my ward, Bellingham. Could the Cabinet Member please provide reassurance that Officers have sought clear political direction and scrutiny regarding the final decisions made and that he'd continue to keep ward Councillors in the loop as he has done over the past few months.

Reply

Officers are mindful of the Council's declaration of the Climate Emergency, along with Mayor and Cabinet approving the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2020-2025. Officers understand the clear and unambiguous political direction in relation to the protection and enhancement of our environment and that they are empowered to continue with their work to plant more trees across the borough that will mitigate against the loss of those trees that we unfortunately have to remove.

The difficult decisions relating to the removal of trees that present a health and safety risk to the public or are proved to be implicated in insurance claims against the Council are made by the relevant officers and are based on professional advice that is informed by empirical evidence. Officers ensure that all relevant members are kept informed as situations develop as the decision to remove a tree is usually based on many years monitoring and mitigation work.

As a Council, we have a legal duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent damage occurring to a third party's property. Failing to remove the trees would be in contradiction of the professional advice given by our insurers and could lead to the Council incurring considerable costs as a result. At a time when we are facing significant financial pressure due to funding cuts from central government and the COVID-19 pandemic, we have a responsibility to minimise financial risks and additional costs, so that we can continue to fund vital local services.

As a result, while of course we would all have wanted to avoid this outcome, we have no option but to remove the trees.

I can assure you that I take a keen interest in the protection of trees in the borough which I outline in this blog about the Council's work to nurture biodiversity (<https://lewisham.gov.uk/articles/news/statement-on-trees-in-moremead-road-and-senlac-road>). I have worked closely with officers on the issue in Bellingham ward to

which you refer, have welcomed the meetings offered to ward councillors in recent months, and will continue to ensure that the ward councillors are kept informed on tree related matters as required.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 7

Priority 1

Question asked by: Councillor Gibbons

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Patrick Codd

Question

Since May 2018, how many PCNs have been issued in the London Borough of Lewisham owing to vehicles illegally parking on the pavement in the borough?

Reply

The data is only available from June 2019. Since June 2019 the Council has issued 9,222 Penalty Charge Notices to vehicles parked on the footway where prohibited.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 8

Priority 2

Question asked by: Councillor Hall

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Paul Bell

Question

Can the Cabinet Member define Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)? What specific site changes are proposed in the emerging Lewisham Local Plan in relation to MOL from the previously adopted statutory plan?

Reply

Metropolitan Open Land is defined in the London Plan as “Extensive areas of land bounded by urban development around London that fulfils a similar function to Green Belt and is protected from inappropriate development by land-use planning policies”. Following a review of Lewisham’s Metropolitan Open Land by specialist consultants ARUP in March 2020, the recommendations of the study were incorporated into the Regulation 18 stage “Main Issues and Preferred Approaches” Local Plan document, January 2021 for public consultation.

New sites proposed to be designated as MOL are:

Blyth Hill

Mountsfield Park

Sites to be de-designated as MOL are:

A small proportion of MOL at Catford to enable the re-routing of the South Circular.

A small proportion of MOL at Lewisham Gateway which seems to be an error in mapping from the previous adopted Local Plan.

Following public consultation on the Reg 18 Local Plan document, the Council is undertaking a comprehensive review of the borough’s green space to respond to the representations received by Lewisham residents and community groups. This will include a further review of MOL and assessment of sites suggested through the consultation process.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 9

Priority 2

Question asked by: Councillor Royston

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Patrick Codd

Question

Reducing air pollution and addressing the climate emergency are rightly priorities for this Council. One measure that will help in this regard is encouraging and enabling more people to choose active forms of transport such as cycling and walking. Can the Cabinet Member outline what is being done in Catford South to promote active transport?

Reply

The measures to encourage people to choose sustainable and active forms of transport, such as walking, cycling and public transport, across the borough are set out in the Lewisham Transport Strategy and Local Implementation Plan (2019 - 2041).

However, the funding that the Council usually receives to deliver these measures has been affected by the COVID19 pandemic. Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding, via TfL, was suspended at the start of the pandemic and has only been available to deliver the London Streetspace Programme (LSP). In addition funding is only available until 11 December and funding beyond this date is subject to a further agreement being reached between Government and TfL.

In addition to the borough-wide initiatives, such as cycle training for adults and children and the Lewisham Cycle Loan scheme (which has recently been improved), in Catford South LSP funding has been used to deliver school streets schemes for Rushey Green and Holy Cross Primary schools. Temporary barriers have also been used near Sandhurst Primary School to create more space for pedestrians. A feasibility study is currently being undertaken for a full school street scheme for Sandhurst Primary School.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 10

Priority 2

Question asked by: Councillor Gibbons

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Patrick Codd

Question

Are we currently reviewing our processes regarding the management and enforcement of pavement parking in the borough? If we are, can you provide an update on this review and any changes we have already made?

Reply

The Council is seeking to address this issue, and have recently commissioned a borough-wide review of footway parking. Presently, around 200 locations have been visited and surveyed and the exercise is expected to be complete in January 2022. Officers will be considering appropriate solutions, where possible and appropriate.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 11

Priority 3

Question asked by: Councillor Hall

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councilor Chris Best

Question

How many defibrillators are there in Lewisham schools? How many defibrillators are there in Lewisham Council leisure facilities?

Reply

The Council recognises the importance of heart health and is committed to ease of access to defibrillators.

All of the Council's leisure centres have defibrillators onsite:

Glass Mill Leisure Centre – 1

Ladywell Arena – 1

Forest Hill Pools – 1

Wavelengths Leisure Centre – 1

Bellingham Leisure Centre – 1

Lewisham Indoor Bowls Centre – awaiting delivery ahead of reopening in October

Downham Health and Leisure Centre – 1 in the leisure centre;

Downham Family Medical Practice and Moorside Clinic, also housed in the centre, each have their own defibrillators.

The Council currently does not hold information on the number of defibrillators in Lewisham schools but I have instructed officers to gather this information and update the Council website with this.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 12

Priority 3

Question asked by: Councillor Royston

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councillor Andre Bourne

Question

The exceptional performance of Lewisham local Alex Yee in this year's Tokyo Olympics, winning a gold and silver medal in the relay and individual triathlon events, is something of which we at Lewisham Council are all immensely proud. Can the Cabinet Member explain what is being done in the Borough to support the next generation of Olympians, as well as local community sports facilities and clubs such as Alex Yee's, Kent AC, which are hugely beneficial for health, fitness and community cohesion locally?

Reply

Both Alex Yee and Daryll Neita's (the former Pendergast Hilly Fields student who achieved a 4x100m bronze medal) performances' at the Olympics are something for Lewisham to be proud of. Both Alex and Daryll were former London Youth Games (LYG) competitors for Lewisham. The borough will continue to support young athletes by providing opportunities for all young people in the borough to access this competition. Lewisham hold open trials (promoted through the schools) for each sport to help form our LYG teams, this is done in the spirit of the competition which was formed to encourage all London youth to engage in a sport.

Talented athletes from Lewisham are entitled to free access to the boroughs sport and leisure facilities through the Free Access for National Sportspeople Scheme (FANS). Athletes aged 10 and over who live, study or their club is based in Lewisham, and they perform or compete at a national or regional level can benefit from free access to council sports facilities.

Talented athletes are also able to apply for our Talent Bursary Programme. This bursary offers funding of up to £500 which may be claimed towards costs associated with being on the pathway to becoming an elite performer (not available to those that are currently receiving lottery support through their National Governing Body of Sport).

Kent AC along with the rest of our sports club network, are afforded the opportunity to apply for internal and external funding to support their development and extend their reach in the borough. Kent AC have the opportunity to apply for the Council's Main Grants programme and were encouraged to apply for Sport England's Tackling Inequalities Fund, which is aimed at getting under-represented groups active after the Covid-19 lockdowns. Ladywell Arena is an important local sports venue. We

want to see it opened up more widely and improve its facilities, to give more local people the opportunity to use it and help the next generation of budding athletes develop and train close to home.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 13

Priority 4

Question asked by: Councillor Hall

Relevant Directorate: Community Services

Member to reply: Councilor Chris Best

Question

The Council has a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, can the Cabinet Member explain how this is monitored, reviewed and kept up to date?

Reply

The Public Health Team who are responsible for the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) process have been leading the Council's response to COVID-19 and haven't been able to progress this work since the onset of the pandemic. However, work on the JSNA is now restarting. At the last Health and Wellbeing Board on the 8th September we received two JSNAs for substance misuse in Lewisham – one for Adults and the other for Young Person's.

The most recent version of the JSNA can be found within the Lewisham Observatory where it sits alongside wider demographic information for Lewisham. The Picture of Lewisham, first published in March 2018, describes the population in terms of the key health and socio-demographic characteristics, including mortality, morbidity, ethnicity and inequalities. The latest update is imminent.

The main mechanism for monitoring the JSNA is the JSNA Steering Group. This group was established in its latest form in 2017, with Terms of Reference agreed in that year. The group has unfortunately not been able to meet since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 but we are looking to resume this.

The Lewisham Health and Wellbeing Board is periodically updated on the local population and its health needs, through updates on both individual JSNA topics which provide in-depth analysis and recommendations for that specific service/ population group and the Picture of Lewisham. The priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-2023 were informed by the JSNA.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 14

Priority 4

Question asked by: Councillor Royston

Relevant Directorate: Housing, Regeneration & Public Realm

Member to reply: Councillor Kevin Bonavia

Question

Lewisham Council should be proud of the stance we have taken to welcome and support Afghan refugees following the recent events in Afghanistan, and of our Borough of Sanctuary status. Can the Cabinet Member outline what support we have had and what more support we need from central government in order to settle more families, as well as how we are collaborating with other boroughs?

Reply

As a Borough of Sanctuary, Lewisham is keen to resettle as many Afghan families as it can, but we require leadership and clarity from the Government to make their integration successful.

The UK Government is currently offering financial support to resettle Afghan citizens and refugees under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

Per individual, these two programmes provide:

- £20,520 of integration funding across three years
- £4,500 of education funding, for children up to 18 years old, for one year
- £2,600 of health funding for one year
- £850 of English as a second language (ESOL) funding per adult, for one year.

As part of "Operation Warm Welcome" the Government has also promised:

- £18m funding to help secure accommodation
- £12m to provide additional school places
- £3m to support access to the NHS.

The Government should provide further funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Learning English is essential to successful integration and to ensuring that refugees can flourish in a new country. From our experience of the UK Resettlement Scheme, where the cohort is mostly from Syria, arrivals can sometimes be illiterate in their native language. Improving language skills will take time and significant investment.

Furthermore, the Government should provide regular contact with Local Authorities in order to better coordinate the resettlement of Afghan citizens. There continues to be a lack of clarity on the situation of families arriving in the UK, or information on the ACRS cohort.

We also lack information on how the promised “Operation Warm Welcome” funding, which promises to provide additional funding to secure accommodation, additional school places and NHS support, will actually work.

Through our role on the steering group for the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network, we have worked closely with other Local Authorities to agree a position statement and organise a thematic meeting for Local Authorities to discuss the challenges experienced by Local Authorities resulting from the Afghan Crisis and how working together with local partners can help alleviate pressures and improve experiences for all people feeling violence and persecution.

We have also worked with London Councils to create a working group with the Home Office to look at the issues that are arising for Local Authorities, feedback our concerns to the Home Office and ensure effective communication from them regarding their policies and procedures.

Finally, we remain very concerned about the implications of many provisions in the Nationality and Borders Bill, in particular the lack of certainty of long-term refugee resettlement programme and the real risk that Afghan refugees who are unable to secure a safe legal route to sanctuary are criminalised for arriving in the UK through unauthorised routes. We are therefore lobbying the Government alongside other local authorities and refugee support organisations to amend the Bill.

MEMBER QUESTION NO. 15

Priority 5

Question asked by: Councillor Hall

Relevant Directorate: Corporate Resources

Member to reply: Councillor Amanda De Ryk

Question

How does the Council procure insurance?

Reply

The Council has a robust process for procuring its insurances and claims, handling support through a competitive tender process. The most recent procurement was approved under delegated authority in 2018 and, as a key decision, referred to Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel on 16 October 2018.