

Full Council Written questions: 22 Nov 2021

Written questions		
Cllr	Question	Response
1. Cllr Dixon to Cllr Diakides	Given 250-266 St Ann's Road (bought by the council for £3.85 million in 2004) was valued at £3 million last year, and enjoys an annual rental income of £285,000 (market value actually circa £300,000 pa), do you regret giving this council-owned site away for a pound to the Bridge Renewal Trust just thirteen years after purchasing it, when it could have raised either much-needed funds for the council, or provided further options in the council's housebuilding and accommodation strategy?	<p>New Deal for Communities (NDC) was a Central Government-led regeneration programme for the regeneration of some of the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods. The Bridge NDC was a £50 million 10 year regeneration programme based in the South Tottenham and Seven Sisters area that ran from 2001-2011.</p> <p>During the period of its existence, the New Deal For Communities fully funded a range of community-based schemes, including the purchase by the Council of a 125-year leasehold interest for the ground and first floors of 250 – 266 St Ann's Road London N15 for the purpose of setting up the Laurels Healthy Living Centre ("the Laurels") that would provide integrated health care services to the community. The Bridge Renewal Trust ("the Trust") was set up in July 2009 as the successor body of the Bridge New Deal for Communities (NDC) to ensure continued benefits for local residents. The intention was always that the leasehold interest in the property would also offer benefits to the community as the rental income would contribute to the Trust's sustainability in the longer term.</p> <p>On 22 June 2011, the Council agreed a 10-year funding arrangement with the Trust ("Funding Agreement"), effective from March 2011, that implemented this intention with the rental income paid by the NHS to the Council passed on to the Trust as a grant, supporting the development of a sustainable asset-based successor body. The transfer of the leasehold interest from the Council to the Trust during the ten-year Funding Agreement period delivered on</p>

		<p>the original intentions of the New Deal for Communities recognising the funding for the lease came directly from central government grant funding through the NDC and therefore the role of the Council was to facilitate the wider vision of the legacy.</p>
<p>2. Cllr Barnes to Cllr Bevan</p>	<p>In October, London Councils announced plans to retrofit all of the capital's council homes to an average Energy Performance Certificate rating of B by 2030. Could you please outline how this will be achieved?</p>	<p>Haringey has a £101m programme to retrofit council homes in the borough.</p> <p>The London Council's Action Plan on Retrofitting has set out a number of recommended actions and targets for social housing in terms of energy. The London Councils team and the boroughs involved are currently developing the implementation strategy for London alongside costings. The implementation plan will also make recommendations for the boroughs.</p> <p>However, in advance of this implementation plan the Council has already undertaken its own high-level analysis into its social housing stock. We are now developing a unit-by-unit analysis of the measures and the cost for the delivery of this ambition. This analysis will be folded into the Homes for Haringey maintenance strategy to complement planned works and where there are no planned works, standalone projects will be designed for implementation.</p> <p>It should be noted that to deliver on this ambition the Council has already allocated capital funding of £101m, which alongside national funding, not only will enable this to be delivered, but also shows that Haringey is committed to the borough's Net Zero Carbon goal.</p>
<p>3. Cllr Hinchcliffe to Cllr Hakata</p>	<p>Will Haringey Council commit to conduct a comprehensive environmental audit of the events being held in its parks, especially Finsbury Park?</p>	<p>The Council has no plans to undertake a standalone environmental audit at this time. The Council's emerging Parks and Greenspaces Strategy has Climate Change and Sustainability as one of its three key</p>

		<p>aims. Therefore, in any future review of the Outdoor Events Policy, consideration can be given to the environmental impact.</p>
<p>4. Cllr Emery to Cllr Hakata</p>	<p>Why is Haringey advertising the Trees for Streets programme as new when the same scheme has been operating in the borough under a different name for many administrations - is this not misleading residents?</p>	<p>Haringey entered into partnership with Trees for Streets in July. We are one of the first boroughs to pilot their National Street Tree Sponsorship Scheme, which has enabled us to present a simpler and more accessible route to tree sponsorship, a more active sponsorship model, and ensure that this offer is better communicated.</p> <p>This partnership has significantly updated and improved our offer to residents. For many years, the Council operated a manual handwritten form on the Council's website. Sponsors then had to be sent a Council invoice for their contribution. This resulted in limited uptake of the opportunity to sponsor a tree (less than 20 trees pa).</p> <p>The Council's new partnership and membership of the National Street Tree Sponsorship Scheme modernises the system to a slick, online customer journey with online payment options. The new scheme also offers the resident the opportunity to take on the watering of the sponsored tree, thereby reducing the total amount of sponsorship required.</p> <p>The partnership includes increased marketing of the scheme to residents and businesses alongside Trees for Streets fundraising for street tree-planting in low canopy areas of the borough.</p> <p>To date we have achieved 150 new trees under this scheme. This makes Haringey the most successful borough in this pilot scheme, with more than double the number of trees achieved compared to the next most successful borough. This number also represents an increase of 750% over the previous scheme.</p>

		<p>The platform allows us to develop new opportunities such as crowdfunding for groups of residents to come together to sponsor one or more trees.</p>
5. Cllr Ross to Cllr Hakata	<p>Given the potential environmental and financial cost, why are lights continuing to be left on all night, every night, in council buildings such as River Park House after staff have vacated for the day?</p>	<p>The responsibility for turning off lights in Council buildings once officers have left is either with the Council's security team or with the service manager in the case of smaller buildings. It is of course our policy to reduce energy consumption wherever possible.</p> <p>In the light of the concern raised in this question, the instructions to ensure this task is completed each night is being reissued to the officers concerned.</p>
6. Cllr Chenot to Cllr Hakata	<p>When will Haringey allow an e-bike operator to operate in the borough?</p>	<p>The Haringey Transport Strategy (adopted March 2018) sets out the council's support for bike hire and electric vehicle schemes. Consistent with this, the Council was one of the first in London to agree in principle to the making of a pan-London bylaw to regulate dockless vehicles (which would include e-bikes) on the highway and/or public places.</p> <p>The Council's Draft Walking and Cycling Action Plan, recently published for consultation, contains a commitment to a shared bike trial (which would include e-bikes).</p> <p>It is important, however, that any scheme that does come forward in the borough is properly managed, safe for all road and pavement users including pedestrians and supports the Council's wider aims of fairness, affordability and prioritising an 'active' element to travel.</p> <p>Haringey participates in an all-borough working group, along with TfL, observing the operations of bike hire schemes across the capital. This is providing important learning about how a successful scheme could work in Haringey in the future.</p>

<p>7. Cllr Cawley-Harrison to Cllr Diakides</p>	<p>Since May 2018, Haringey Council has awarded contracts totalling almost £20 million under circumstances where contract standing orders have been waived. Given this lack of due process, how can residents have faith that their money is being spent wisely?</p>	<p>Waivers are only considered in exceptional circumstances and are not intended to be a routine process for procuring goods works and services.</p> <p>In most cases, waivers will consider value for money.</p> <p>This may not always be simply lowest price, but there are other associated cost implications i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a new IT system being implemented is delayed, we may need to award a new contract (where it is not possible to extend the current one) to retain the current system until the new one is in place. It would not be feasible or possible to migrate to an alternate system whilst waiting for the new one to be completed. • Works being carried out on a property may reveal some hidden issues. Enabling the main contractor to resolve these issues would be more cost effective than halting the project, which may incur additional delays and costs whilst undertaking a procurement. <p>Additional considerations need to be given around urgency, especially in light of Covid, where the Council needed to act swiftly to ensure public health and the safety of our workforce and residents was protected.</p> <p>There are also occasions whereby competition is absent from the market and only one provider can provide those services. This generally arises in the health and care sectors where there may only be one provider locally or in London that can meet the needs.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of Directors, Strategic Procurement, Finance and Legal colleagues (where applicable), to ensure a compliant process is followed that is in the best interest of the Council and its residents. This includes overall value for money.</p>
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<p>8. Cllr da Costa to Cllr Ahmet</p>	<p>Could you confirm that the administration is currently on track to fail to achieve three of the five key pledges they were elected on, and subsequently referenced in council documentation, namely:</p> <p>1000 new homes at council rents</p> <p>Extend council tax relief to 100% of our least well-off residents</p> <p>Provide a free school meal for every primary school child</p>	<p>This administration set out to take on inequality in Haringey – and that is what we’ve done. Building council homes, extending council tax relief and expanding Free School Meals. We are becoming a fairer borough.</p> <p>We’ve done it after 10 years of austerity and enormous cuts to local government budgets.</p> <p><u>New council homes</u></p> <p>There are now 409 new council homes that have started on site. We are on course for 1,000 starts and 200 completions by the end of March 2022. For a council that wasn’t building homes in 2018 we now have one of the boldest council housebuilding programmes anywhere in the country.</p> <p><u>Council Tax Reduction Scheme</u></p> <p>The Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) is a means-tested discount on Council Tax bills. The CTRS scheme is funded by the Council. It is assessed individually based on each claimant’s circumstances and can be awarded up to a maximum of 100% of Council Tax. This ensures that Council Tax relief goes to 100% of our least well-off residents.</p> <p>Groups with a maximum entitlement of 100% include pensioners, those receiving disability benefits and families with children. Couples and single people of working age without children can claim up to 80.2% of their bill.</p> <p>Cabinet has proposed four changes to the scheme to take effect next year and the consultation on these has just closed. A report on the proposed changes will be submitted to full Council in March.</p>
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		<p>also enabled us to provide free school meals for all eligible children and this is set to continue.</p> <p>In order to extend access to free school meals further, in January 2021, Cabinet approved a report to initiate an expansion of eligibility for free school meals to defined groups of primary school pupils who are not currently eligible for free school meals from Summer Term 2021.</p> <p>We have committed additional funding for this purpose and several hundred additional children are now receiving free school meals across our primary schools as a result of this investment. Our guiding ambition is to create a fairer and more equal borough.</p> <p>This additional support for families has been rolled out in our schools and is a firm step to extend eligibility. The provision of FSM in our schools is constantly under review as we aim to extend eligibility as far as we can.</p> <p>To support this, we have committed funding from the new Household Support Fund to ensure all children receiving a free school meal during term time will receive equivalent funding to ensure they are supported during the holidays. This includes the children who are receiving FSM via council funding, and also pre-school children who are outside the FSM eligibility framework.</p>
9. Cllr Palmer to Cllr Diakides	Given that the council allowed a musician to become tenant-landlord at 141 Station Road in a decision which was "undertaken on an informal basis", with no paper trail, an internal audit will surely fail to provide any insight. Therefore, will you commit to holding an external, independent	<p>An internal audit review has been commissioned to review the letting of 141 Station Road.</p> <p>It is internal audit's role to independently examine how decisions are made, what process is followed and whether there are appropriate checks and balances in the management of council operations.</p>

	investigation into how this was allowed to happen?	Internal audit has access to all information and involved parties.
10. Cllr Connor to Cllr Diakides	Last month, the Ham & High revealed that the investigation into the purchase of Alexandra House had not yet begun. Has it begun now, and if not, why not?	The Council's internal audit plan for 2021/22 includes an audit of the Council's arrangements for the acquisition and disposal of assets. This audit has already commenced and will examine a sample of property transactions including the purchase of Alexandra House.
11. Cllr Morris to Cllr Hakata	Many London Boroughs, including neighbouring Camden, have been praised for their swift rollout of cycling infrastructure. Meanwhile, Haringey has been called out by the likes of the Healthy Streets Scorecard for talking the talk, but failing to walk the walk, and our cycling infrastructure is amongst the worst in London. Why has the rapid rollout of cycling infrastructure still not happened since you became Cabinet lead for this area?	<p>We want active travel to be the default choice for short journeys in our borough and we have ambitious plans to achieve this.</p> <p>These plans are laid out in detail in our recently published draft Walking & Cycling Action Plan (WCAP) which is now open for public consultation. We look forward to residents shaping our plans.</p> <p>The WCAP includes plans for over 30 new cycle lanes to cover the whole borough.</p> <p>We are already in the process of making several temporary cycle lanes permanent and will be constructing many more over the coming year.</p> <p>We have undertaken a trailblazing engagement and co-design exercise for three large Low-Traffic Neighbourhoods. These will begin to be phased in from the beginning of next year, subject to cabinet approval.</p> <p>Low Traffic Neighbourhoods serve to create a safer environment for cyclists in their local area, allowing them to connect easily with North-South and East-West strategic cycle routes on main roads.</p>

<p>12. Cllr Dennison to Cllr Diakides</p>	<p>Since 2018, how much apprenticeships funding has had to be returned to the government because it wasn't used?</p>	<p>Government funding for apprenticeships can only be used to cover the cost of training (20% of apprentices' working hours are dedicated to working towards their qualifications).</p> <p>The wages for apprentices, like all other council staff wages, have to be funded from the council's General Fund. All apprentices at Haringey are paid London Living Wage.</p> <p>We have expanded the number of apprentice posts in Haringey significantly in recent years. As of August, the total number of apprentices employed by Haringey had nearly quadrupled - rising from 25 to 94 over the last two financial years.</p> <p>The funding that we are not able to use is: 2019/20 (from June) - £658k 2020/21 - £713k 2021/22 (to September) - £230k</p>
<p>13. Cllr Ogiehor to Cllr Hakata</p>	<p>Haringey previously received £1million of funding from TfL to improve uptake of walking and cycling in the borough. What projects has this been spent on, how much remains in place, and which projects have had to receive further financial support from Haringey because the original implementation was inadequate?</p>	<p>In the past two years the Council has secured over £2m towards active and safe travel in the borough.</p> <p>To date, this funding has delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pavement widening to enable social distancing in town centres, on approaches to stations and outside schools • Improvements to the borough's cycle network including temporary cycleways and the extension of/improvement of Cycle Superhighway 1 (CS1) • The delivery of 11 School Streets as part of the Council's wider School Streets programme to enable social distancing, tackle air pollution and provide safer walking and cycling routes to schools.

		<p>The funding is also being used to progress three Low Traffic Neighbourhood proposals (Bounds Green, Bruce Grove/West Green and St Ann's) which are intended to help protect neighbourhoods from rat-running, traffic, air pollution and road danger.</p>
<p>14. Cllr Rossetti to Cllr Brabazon</p>	<p>Over the past three years, councillors have been asking for, and the administration have been promising, a new Library Strategy. Despite capital projects and money being spent in refurbishing, there is still no Strategy that will set the direction of the service over the next few years. When, if ever, can we expect the Library Strategy to be released?</p>	<p>We are committed to coproducing a Library Strategy with our local residents and stakeholders.</p> <p>This will build on our major programme of capital investment - across all 9 libraries in Haringey - and on our innovative pilots, which test out new ways of working and recognise the contribution of libraries to civic and community life.</p> <p>We wanted to learn from these pilots before moving to co-produce a strategy, particularly mindful of the impact of library closures during the pandemic.</p> <p>We are already organically developing new local partnerships through our pilots, for example at Wood Green Library where we have established a Community Newsroom, and at Stroud Green and Haringay where we have refurbished the upper floor as Reading Rooms for community use.</p> <p>We are very aware of the primacy of reading and of books to our wider aims to develop prevention and early intervention and are nurturing our strategic development from these roots.</p> <p>Our approach will build on a set of core principles which include participation and inclusivity; collaboration and co-production; prevention and early intervention; reading and literacy; strengths and community-based assets.</p> <p>We are meeting regularly with the Friends Groups and our strategy will be developed in partnership with them. At the heart of our evolving</p>

		<p>strategy is the redevelopment of the libraries to encourage diverse uses and wider membership underpinned by active Friends Groups and a proactive publicity campaign.</p>
<p>15. Cllr Hare to Cllr Bevan</p>	<p>I understand that Homes for Haringey is carrying out a new programme of works on Victorian / Edwardian / pre-war street properties which have been converted into flats. These works include installing sprinkler or fire notification devices to communal areas as small as 2-4 m/sq, which does not appear to be a mandatory building regulation requirement, and replacing existing traditional timber doors with modern ones. Why are Homes for Haringey enforcing this work on leaseholders, and will they be able to opt out?</p>	<p>Homes for Haringey (HfH) are not installing sprinklers into any existing properties.</p> <p>HfH are installing interlinked smoke and heat detection into street properties where this is recommended by Fire Assessors.</p> <p>All properties require a 30-minute fire door and if the fire risk assessor cannot satisfy themselves that a property flat entrance door meets this requirement, then a replacement door will need to be installed.</p> <p>When replaced the appropriate costs are passed on leaseholders in accordance with the lease requirements.</p>
<p>16. Cllr Chiriyankandath to Cllr Diakides</p>	<p>Last month Research for Action published a national database of the LOBO (Lender Option Borrower Option) debt of councils. It showed Haringey ranking 21st of the 210 councils with the most LOBO debt, currently paying nearly £6 million a year in interest (i.e. c.5% of what the borough collects in Council Tax). As things stand Haringey therefore stands to pay out £230 million in interest over the next four decades. What is being done to address this drain on the Council's account,</p>	<p>The Council currently holds 6 individual Lender Option, Buyer Option (LOBOs) loans, totalling £125m. This makes up roughly 20% of the council's current external borrowing.</p> <p>LOBOs are loans where the lender has the option to propose an increase in the interest rates at set dates, following which the Council has the option to either accept the new rate or to repay the loan at no additional cost.</p> <p>The Council has a policy in place which allows the Director of Finance (S151 officer) to take the option to repay the LOBO loans at no cost, should the opportunity to do so arise. However, due to the current low</p>

	<p>including consideration being given to following other councils in exiting LOBO loans early with a reduced penalty fee?</p>	<p>interest rate environment, the likelihood of lenders exercising their options remains very low. This is unlikely to change unless interest rates rise significantly.</p> <p>Officers are aware that some councils have successfully restructured their LOBO loans. Restructuring a LOBO loan typically involves paying a premium to the lender, to compensate them for interest foregone at the contractual rate and whether it is beneficial or not depends on the particular factors associated with those loans.</p> <p>This Council's policy is to exit LOBO agreements if the costs of replacing the loans, including all premium, transaction and funding costs, generate a material net revenue saving for the Council, over the life of the loan in net present value terms. This is in line with the Council's approved Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p> <p>Officers periodically consult with the Council's treasury advisor, Arlingclose, to assess any potential opportunities to restructure any of the outstanding LOBO loans. Should any such opportunity arise in the future, officers will progress the option in consultation with Arlingclose.</p>
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