

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS 21 November 2022/ 13 February 2023

1. Cllr Isilar-Gosling to Cllr Williams

How are rising interest rates projected to affect the council's borrowing costs?

Response

Over the past 12 months, interest rates have increased significantly due to several economic factors mainly associated with the sustained higher levels of inflation. This has had a direct impact on the interest rates local authorities have to pay on any new borrowing raised from the Public Work Loans Board (PWLB). For example, the interest rate on a 30-year loan undertaken from the PWLB increased from 2.63% in April 2022 to 4.68% by September 2022.

The impact of these increases has been taken into account as part of the Council's in year financial monitoring and cost of borrowing assumptions are being reviewed as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) planning work. Business cases for the Council's capital schemes are also being developed and reviewed based on the revised set of assumptions.

Despite the current economic uncertainties, it is worth noting that the impact of rising interest rates will only affect any new borrowing that the Council undertakes in the future, as the Council does not hold any variable interest rate loans with the PWLB.

2. Cllr Emery to Cllr Chandwani

No work has taken place on the drainage issues in Coldfall Wood despite assurances that pathways would be in place by the Summer, and residents are contacting me about the walkways already starting to look in a poor state. What are you doing to tackle this problem?

Response

Whilst no physical work has yet taken place on the construction of a new path, significant work has been going on in the background to understand why this area is flooding and consequentially being churned up by walkers visiting Muswell Hill Playing Fields and Coldfall Woods.

It is apparent from the investigations that the Coldfall Woods elements require more investigation before a solution can be designed. Therefore, having reached this conclusion, work will now commence on commissioning the path elements within Muswell Hill Playing fields and, as previously advised, works will be completed by March 31st, 2023. A more definitive timeframe will be provided to Ward Councillors once this is known.

3. Cllr Connor to Cllr Williams

In your last budget round, the council was either unable or unwilling to find any new savings, despite knowing that cuts would be necessary given the lack of funding from central government. With the financial situation only worsening, are you concerned about the decision taken last year?

Response

The Council set a balanced Budget for 2022/23 and the draft and final Budget reports prepared last financial year were explicit in that a markedly different approach had been taken to the financial planning process.

There were substantial already agreed savings, meaning that the budget did not contain any new savings. We are operating in an uncertain landscape and the financial situation is changing rapidly with a government which has crashed the economy and sent interest rates soaring.

Anything better than a flat settlement from the government will be used to deal with our inflationary pressures.

This new approach allows the Council to better focus on the delivery of the already agreed sizeable 2022/23 savings programme of £12m and any existing savings targets which have not been achievable from 2021/22, which have resulted in a total savings target of c£21m in 2022/23.

It is recognised that during ~~this year~~ 2022 the financial situation has worsened for most local authorities, this Council included, and this is being addressed via the financial planning work underway.

4. Cllr da Costa to Cllr Chandwani

Does the council have existing plans to set up toy libraries or toy donation hubs within our warm banks and libraries? If not, will you consider it as we enter a very difficult winter for families.

Response

The council is taking part in this year's Winter Toy Appeal. People can buy toys through Soup Dragon in Crouch End or via a dedicated Haringey wish list on Amazon.

Thank you for the suggestion about using warm welcome spaces. We will explore this with suitable Haringey Warm Welcome venues in the network and can utilise our comms infrastructure to request support and donations from businesses and the local community.

We are aware that one of our venues is providing a Toy Library because they already deliver this as part of their service offer to families.

5. Cllr Cawley-Harrison to Cllr Hakata

~~Just a couple of weeks ago~~, In November 2022, once again, a vehicle crashed on Shepherds Hill/Wolseley Road, crossing the pavement and demolished a garden wall. When will the council finally take action and introduce safety improvements on Shepherds Hill and

Wolseley Road, and when will the consultation start for the pedestrian crossing at the bottom of Wolseley Road?

Response

Measures to improve safety along Shepherds Hill and Wolseley Road corridor as well as a provision of a zebra crossing at the Wolseley Road/Park Road junction form part of the Road Danger Reduction Investment Plan works for 2022/23.

These are currently being finalised and will be consulted upon very soon. The aim is to commence construction towards the end of this financial year, subject to the outcome of the consultation.

6. Cllr Rossetti to Cllr Davies

I was very pleased to get confirmation that the council will be undertaking long overdue drainage works at O.R. Tambo Rec. When will consultation begin on refurbishing the play area there?

Response

The drainage works have commenced on site and will be completed by the end of November.

Community engagement will commence on the play area in January 2023.