

WRITTEN Questions

1.Cllr Cawley-Harrison to Cllr Gordon

Crouch End was scheduled to receive significant investment for the Liveable Crouch End Project - predominantly TfL money, but also £1 million from the council - but after being delayed and then suspended due to Covid and TfL finances the project is no longer set to go ahead. Will the council still be investing this £1 million in Crouch End town centre, something the area desperately needs?

Response

TfL received less funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) than it requested which meant TfL had to make some difficult decisions. Constraints on funding meant that TfL was only able to consider a limited restart of the Liveable Neighbourhoods programme.

Funding for the remainder of schemes - including the Crouch End Liveable Neighbourhoods programme - remains paused rather than cancelled outright. TfL will continue to explore options to secure funding to develop the remaining 13 schemes on the programme. Therefore, any funding linked to this programme has been paused until such time as the scheme has been restarted and the necessary funding pots have been identified and allocated.

2.Cllr Emery to Cllr Chandwani

In the last few months there have been several serious traffic incidents in the same stretch of Archway Road, between the Boogaloo Pub and the Co-op, and in the same time there have been countless minor incidents and near-misses. Archway Road is managed by TfL and retains a 30mph speed limit, which residents want to see reduced. What is the council doing to lobby TfL to reduce the speed limit in this area as a matter of urgency?

Response

Implementing a 20-mph speed limit across the borough was a key manifesto commitment, so of course we are committed to ensuring its successful implementation.

The Council is in continuous dialogue with TfL including our monthly meetings regarding the Transport for London Road network (TLRN) in Haringey (A1, A10 and A503). We are lobbying TfL for a separate funding pot similar to those for Cycle Network Development (CND) and Bus Priority Network (PBN) to assist with the delivery of Vision Zero in Haringey. Included in our ask is a fully funded action plan to deal with collisions on the TLRN.

As part of our discussions, we have been made aware that TfL is currently working to review progress against all of its Vision Zero Action Plan actions which were

targeted for completion by the end of 2024. TfL will be working with Haringey Council to continue to set goals and targets to enable TfL to deliver future 2030 and 2041 targets for Haringey including for the TLRN.

3.Cllr Isilar-Gosling to Cllr Gordon

Remedial work is underway in Hornsey Library to remove dangerous RAAC, several months after it was raised by opposition councillors. Has the council got a complete picture of all the buildings it owns which contain RAAC, can you confirm which they are, and are plans in place to rectify this problem?

Response

The council is making good progress towards getting a full picture in relation to RAAC, and the work to date is finding that the vast majority of our buildings are RAAC free. In our operational buildings, we have surveyed all the buildings deemed as most likely to have RAAC and have found no other property with RAAC apart from Hornsey Library.

In our housing stock, the checks are 98% complete and only one has been found with RAAC.

As previously reported, RAAC is present in 3 schools – Parkview, Hornsey School for Girls and Welbourne Primary. Make-safe works have completed in each of these schools and preparatory work is now underway to determine the most appropriate way to fully remedy the problem, in consultation with the DFE and with support with the funding. In relation to Hornsey Library, again, we have completed initial make-safe works and are now working towards a Feasibility Study to consider the best long-term solution.

4.Cllr da Costa to Cllr Carlin

It has previously been revealed that Haringey has employed a number of agency staff for periods of many years. What is being done to recruit permanent staff in these problem areas, and how many current agency staff has the council employed for longer than two years?

Response

As an organisation with a large and diverse workforce delivering services in a wide range of disciplines, the Council needs to develop a range of workforce planning approaches that address the different challenges that exist in different service areas.

These need to sit under an overall strategy to attract people with the right skills, values and attributes to want to work for us on a permanent basis, demonstrating commitment to the borough and enabling the Council to invest in developing its staff and services for the long term.

The Council's workforce strategy has been developed to address this and was presented to Cabinet last week. Particularly relevant to agency spend reduction and permanent recruitment will be the development of directorate level workforce action plans, programmes to grow our own talent and designing jobs that are attractive to permanent candidates. We particularly aim to focus on growing our own future talent by the use of professional graduate programmes and apprenticeship programmes in Directorates. There are good examples of this already in areas like Finance and Planning, and we plan to leverage this best practice across other areas. Also important to permanent recruitment is a process that makes it easier for managers to convert agency workers to permanent employees, which will remain in place. However, there is no one size fits all solution, and the actions taken will depend on the specifics of what is needed in services, based on their workforce action plan.

In June 2024, 145 workers (22.7% of the total number of agency workers) have been with the Council for over 2 years.

5.Cllr Barnes to Cllr Gordon

How much revenue is River Park House currently raising through rent to third parties and what proportion of the building is occupied?

Response

River Park House is not generating any rental income currently, as the Parking Service is still operating from the first floor and are pending relocation. The council is working to identify the best use of this site once we exit from the site completely and take up occupation of the Civic Centre in 2026, recognising its prominence and importance for Wood Green Central.

6.Cllr Rossetti to Cllr Arkell

Friends of Finsbury Park recently published an open letter and launched a petition last month over Haringey's unpopular policies around events in parks. Despite ongoing disquiet, the administration announced in this year's budget that it would expand the number of events held in the borough's public parks to raise more income. What extra events are planned for the coming year and in which parks are they due to be held?

Response

We are delighted that Haringey is increasingly becoming a place people choose to visit and one of the biggest attractions are events.

Securing new commercial events in parks tend to have a long lead in time and build year on year. For 2024, there are two new events with the Funfair in O.R. Tambo Recreation Ground and the Christmas Tree market in Ducketts Common.

As plans develop in the lead up to the Borough of Culture in 2027, the interest in the borough is expected to grow. However, by far, event organisers request Finsbury Park and often look outside of the borough if we cannot accommodate them there.

In terms of community events, to date, there have been part funded and supported 19 free community events run by diverse community groups, across 13 parks and greenspaces, through our People Need Parks 2024/25 grant programme.

Events include the first Italian Community Hub event run by the House of Polish & European Community (HoPEC) at Lordship Rec. A further three events were funded through our 2023/24 grant programme including the first Goan Community Festival in Downhills Park run by the Goan Community Association.

7.Cllr Connor to Cllr Arkell

In this year's budget the administration announced a plan to begin charging for use of public tennis courts, an idea which was previously abandoned due to public opposition. Could you please provide an update on how these plans are progressing, if they are still going ahead?

Response

The Council secured a significant grant from the Lawn Tennis Association which has enabled the Council to invest c.£500,000 in our park tennis courts.

This has seen 5 locations benefit from a full refurbishment. 3 locations have been completed (Chapmans, Chestnuts, and Downhills) with Stationers completion imminent (with painting due to take place this week, weather dependent).

In Priory Park, works took place to refurbish the older courts. This required some additional works that were not originally identified. These are close to being completed and then the courts will be painted. This is expected to take place by mid-August. In the meantime, the two full courts and two mini courts on the opposite side remain open.

Once works have been completed, all courts will be gate access controlled. Residents will be able to make bookings via ClubSpark / Home (Ita.org.uk) and will be given a code to access the courts via a key padded gate. This is already in operation at some sites and has been for a number of years. Feedback from users is

that it works well, and allows us to identify users who are using the courts inappropriately (dog exercising, football, etc.)

Once all gates are operational and works to courts are completed, a charge to book the courts will be introduced. Users will be notified in advance of this coming in. This is to support the long-term sustainability of the courts, funding maintenance and replacement costs when courts are at “end of life”. This is expected to take place from September, dependent of all works being complete. Charges will only apply during peak times (evening and weekends) with free booking available outside of these times. In additional, Free Park Tennis will be delivery on all refurbished courts.

Charging for parks tennis is very common, with the majority of London boroughs now charging for court usage. All Haringey’s neighbouring boroughs do charge for courts, and we expect our charging to be very affordable in comparison. As a consequence of other charging elsewhere, we have found that a big percentage of bookers at Haringey park courts are coming from outside of Haringey, as our courts are currently free to book.

Other benefits of charging are to discourage “no shows”. Due to courts being free and popular, some users book courts but do not show up and are not incentivised to cancel bookings. As part of the bookings, full refunds will be available if bookers cancel the bookings with more than 24hrs notice.

8.Cllr Mason to Cllr Chandwani

With the benefits system changing and many local residents facing a reduction in their income, and increases in rents, many more people, especially the disabled and those dependent on benefits or with No Recourse to Public Funds will become increasingly vulnerable to cold weather, lack of food and increased debt.

What realistic measures will the Cabinet Member take to prepare for this winter and will they guarantee that they will work cooperatively with other agencies including public health, schools, the community and voluntary sector to make sure all residents have emergency access to food, warmth and advice?

Response

As a council, we want to ensure we deliver support in a way which benefits residents, not only immediately but long-term. This is why our approach is looking at the root causes of these issues.

We will continue to keep build housing so we can give people secure and affordable housing, continuing insulating our homes to lower energy bills and keep investing in Haringey Works to ensure people have good work which allow them to pay for all their needs.

For a more immediate response and to ensure that we deliver the right support at the right time in the right place, council services work with residents directly and the community more broadly to support residents. Our objective is to work across council services and with partners in Health as well as the VCS and community groups to ensure that residents receive a holistic and joined up approach in information and signposting to relevant support available.

This includes:

- Our Financial Support Team support residents to improve their financial situation and our Financial Inclusion Team work specifically with council tenants.
- Local welfare assistance and support such as the 'Haringey Support Fund' where residents can get financial help when they are facing unexpected costs or need help to meet their immediate needs and the 'Haringey Youth Fund' that supports the health, wellbeing, and future outcomes of some of Haringey's most vulnerable young people to help them fulfil their potential.
- Our Here to Help webpage: Haringey, Here to Help | Haringey Council – which provides all Haringey residents and their advisors with information on the help and support available to them and includes interactive maps to specific support such as Food Banks.

We also partner and fund VCS organisations like Citizens Advice Haringey, Public Voice and Vibrance. Each partner brings a unique area of expertise, to ensure residents are getting the right help and support they require to resolve their issues.

This winter we will continue to have of warm spaces “Haringey Warm Welcome” providing inclusive, warm and welcoming (free) spaces across Haringey in colder months. These cover the borough in a ward by ward approach and provide individual offerings from a comfortable warm room to free food and activities.

9.Cllr Collett to Cllr Williams

The Council is refusing to enter discussions with Tradespeople's representatives, Unite, unless they drop their demand that skilled operatives continue to be paid on the grading system that has been designed for their trades. Unite argues that this will lead to deskilling the workforce, increased demoralisation and an inevitable extension of strike action.

Given the need for highly skilled tradespeople and the shocking state of repairs in our council housing stock, why hasn't the Lead Member worked to resolve the dispute and in so doing, reduce the number of expensive contractors and improve the morale within the housing repairs team to ensure swift and decent repairs to our resident's homes.

Response

The Council is not refusing to enter discussions with Unite and has set out a proposal to Unite members which is fair and reasonable.

The dispute with Unite and associated strike action has been ongoing since last September. The dispute was initially based on a national dispute on failure to agree pay rates, London Weighting and annual leave. The pay increase for 'Red Book' (the terms under which our current repairs service of 120 are employed) employees for 2023/24 has since been agreed nationally.

All other council employees including 500 in Housing Services, are on the nationally negotiated 'Green Book' T&Cs.

Our offer to Unite members is an increase in pay, annual leave and London weighting and a move to Green Book, enhancing T&Cs. This will bring contracts up to date, and as part of the proposed move from Red Book to Green Book. The offer also includes development opportunities for operatives to gain additional trade skills with training provided by the Council to promote more repairs fixed first time.

The Council met with Unite in February and April, setting out the Green Book offer. It received Unite's counter proposal which the Council is willing to negotiate on but on the condition that the strike was called off. Unite declined to call the strike off and proceeded with strike action in April to May 2024.

Moving our repairs operatives onto Green Book T&Cs (like every other Council employee) will de-risk the Council whilst providing a structure which eases the way to improving the service our residents deserve. We want to resolve this dispute in a way that is fair to both operatives in the repairs service and the rest of the Council's workforce. We believe that our proposal does that.

We are fully prepared to negotiate and make further concessions, but we will not compromise that core principle of the green book offer.

I would urge Unite to come to the negotiating table rather than continue with prolonged strike action that aims to disrupt services our residents receive but ultimately leads to operatives losing pay.

The repairs service needs to change, it needs to provide a better service to our tenants. This offer is part of that transformation programme. Our proposal meets the demands of the workforce and is part of the process to enable the Council to implement an improved service for our residents.

The council will take measures to mitigate the impact on any future strike days which will include using external capacity where necessary to provide service continuity.

10. Cllr Blake to Cllr Ovat

Given local consternation about the threat to the YMCA in Tottenham Lane and concern about the forced closure of Home Grown in July 2022, due to housing development, will the cabinet member explain how the Haringey Local Deal will be implemented and detail which wards have no free and accessible community space open to all residents to enable them to contribute to local collaboration and development and confirm that councillors and officers will work alongside local communities to ensure community space is developed in areas where none exists.

Response

The Haringey Deal includes a series of commitments about how the council will work as part of building a new relationship with our residents and communities. This includes knowing our communities, getting the basics right, prioritising relationships, focusing on what's strong not what's wrong, learning from our mistakes and sharing power. We continue to embed these principles in all of our work including via significant staff engagement and leadership development.

As outlined elsewhere, there were specific issues with the tenancies of Home Grown and the YMCA in Tottenham Lane. I have been closely involved in these discussions and I am absolutely committed to defending the important work done by charitable and voluntary organisations in the borough.

I am confident that we will find a way to ensure that the valuable activities being delivered by the YMCA can continue.

There are wonderful VCS organisations right across our borough, providing a great range of opportunities and meeting a host of different needs. Cabinet has already approved a decision to develop a Community Assets Policy to determine how and when subsidies may be applied to leases held for council properties by VCS organisations, based on the social value they deliver.

The council are also not the only provider of accessible community space within our communities, organisations such as religious groups, the scouts and the wider schools network all play a key role. As part of our Community Assets Policy, we will be engaging with these organisations so that our communities are aware of the full offer available to them and we will work jointly across the voluntary and community sector.

In the first instance, our priority must be to regularise leases for VCS organisations currently occupying Council-owned buildings.

Once the policy is developed, we will be able to establish leases for new groups seeking to operate community centres more quickly and fairly and I am committed to ensuring the continued provision of community centres which serve every corner of the borough.