

## **Questions for February 2024 Council**

### **Question 1 from Councillor Nelly Gyosheva to Councillor Ergin Erbil, Deputy Leader of the Council**

How did Enfield Council mark the first anniversary of the devastating earthquakes in Turkey & Syria?

#### **Answer**

To mark the anniversary of the earthquakes, six cherry blossom trees were planted in Pymmes Park at a ceremony on 6 February.

We know that the devastating earthquakes have impacted many people in the borough who have friends and family from the affected regions.

I would like to encourage everyone to visit the park when they can and take a moment for some quiet reflection.

### **Question 2 from Councillor Joanne Laban to Councillor Chinelo Anyanwu, Cabinet Member for Public Spaces, Culture and Local Economy**

Could the Cabinet Member confirm when Edmonton Leisure Centre will be reopening?

#### **Answer**

Intrusive condition assessments of the building, air handling system, and pool plant are ongoing at Edmonton Leisure Centre. The surveys will be finished next week, and we await the findings from the surveys before committing to dates.

Whilst the centre has remained closed, officers have worked with the leisure operator to relocate all the clubs that used the centre to alternative venues, and the memberships of Edmonton Leisure Centre users have been upgraded to enable them to use any of the other leisure centres managed by Greenwich Leisure Ltd. (who trade as Better) in the borough.

### **Question 3 from Councillor Gunes Akbulut to Councillor Ergin Erbil, Deputy Leader of the Council**

Can the Deputy Leader recap the events that took place in Enfield to mark Holocaust Memorial Day this year?

#### **Answer**

The Council delivered a highly successful Holocaust Memorial Day event on Thursday 25 January 2024 at the Dugdale Arts Centre in Enfield Town hosted by our Acting Leader, Cllr Ergin Erbil. This year's theme was the 'Fragility of Freedom'.

We were grateful this year to have involvement from our local Rabbi's, the Roma Support Group, Wolfson-Hillel Jewish Primary School in Southgate, St Anne's Catholic High School, and Chace Community School in Enfield Town and our respective elected member leadership.

This 'live' event was well attended, and we have received positive feedback from those who were there as to how moving and thought provoking it was.

We once again took the opportunity to record the event and post it on the Council YouTube channel on 27 January 2024 for all residents to view. As of 15 February 2024, almost 700 people have taken this opportunity to watch the event online.

In addition to hosting our annual event, we took the opportunity to light the Civic Centre in the purple light of the Holocaust Memorial Day flame from dusk on Saturday 27 January 2024 to dawn on Sunday 28 January 2024.

**Question 4 from Councillor Michael Rye to Councillor Tim Leaver, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement**

Could he provide the figures for the amount of the revenue budget both General Fund and HRA spent supporting borrowing (debt) at the Budget Setting Council Meetings in 2010, 2014, 2018, 2022, 2024?

**Answer**

Revenue budgets for debt costs						
	GF	HRA	Total	Net Revenue Budget (NRB)	GF Debt % of NRB	
	£m	£m	£m	£m	%	
2010/11	20.393	3.642	24.035	242.576	8.4%	
2014/15	19.526	7.327	26.853	253.211	7.7%	
2018/19	4.443 *	8.159	12.602	227.861	1.9%	
2022/23	22.669	11.267	33.936	259.825	8.7%	
2023/24	29.500	11.800	41.300	286.842	10.3%	
2024/25	31.369	15.230	46.599	315.090	10.0%	

\*The Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy was reviewed by the Council's advisors for the 2018/19 financial year. This resulted in a one-off significant reduction in the MRP for that year.

**Question 5 from Councillor Josh Abey to Councillor Tim Leaver, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement**

Can the Cabinet Member set out how much of the recent additional funding for local government will be allocated to Enfield, and how does this compare to other London boroughs?

**Answer**

The Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25 was announced on the 5<sup>th</sup> February and included an additional £600m of funding being made available nationally, of which £500m was for Social Care.

The outcome being that Enfield has benefited from an additional £2.752m in the final settlement when compared to the provisional settlement that was published just before Christmas.

Yet, despite this welcomed additional funding, Enfield's increase of 6.5% in Core Spending Power for 2024/25 remains the second lowest in London (when excluding the City of London), with the average increase across London being 7.3%.

**Question 6 from Councillor Maria Alexandrou to Councillor Rick Jewell, Cabinet Member for Environment**

With the council reviewing the opening hours for Barrowell Green, can the Cabinet Member advise what is the process for this, will there be a Consultation and what opening hours are being considered? How will this impact fly tipping?

**Answer**

Given the years of austerity and on-going challenges within public sector finances, departments have been asked to explore where further budget savings may be made. Barrowell Green's operating hours are an area officers are looking at as there may be possible savings associated with reducing the operating hours of the site.

Any decision on operating hours would be considered alongside the opening of the additional new reuse and recycling centre at the EcoPark in Edmonton later this year.

**Question 7 from Councillor Nicki Adeleke to Councillor Tim Leaver, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement**

Can the Cabinet Member set out what measures in the budget will help some of our most vulnerable residents through the cost of living crisis?

**Answer**

The Council's Welfare Advice and Debt Support Team provide help to over 3,000 residents a year. This is a discretionary service and the team's role is to make sure residents are advised and helped to claim all the government benefits they are entitled to, and to help those with complex needs sort any council debt issues, making referrals to Citizens Advice for wider debt issues.

The government funding for welfare assistance ceased in 2014/15 and since this time the Council has continued to provide discretionary hardship payments from its reserves and more latterly via the Household Support Fund.

The final government settlement did not provide any future allocations for the Household Support Fund. I have written to the Minister to lobby for the continuation of this grant during this cost of living crisis.

**Question 8 from Councillor Maria Alexandrou to Councillor Rick Jewell, Cabinet Member for Environment**

Can the Cabinet Member advise what the Council believes will be the impact on traffic and pollution if it introduces more Quieter Neighbourhood Schemes like Bowes East and Edmonton Green in the future?

**Answer**

Quieter Neighbourhoods are one part of a wider long-term strategy to enable more

sustainable journeys. The Bowes East and Edmonton Green Quieter Neighbourhoods are in the design stage.

Early engagement to gather ideas and issues took place in the Autumn of 2023. More recently, phase 2 engagement on some specific design proposals has taken place. This engagement included a blend of digital and in-person events.

Designs are now undergoing further review. There will be several factors that will need to be considered before any decision on any implementation. Traffic impacts and considerations on air quality will form part of this assessment.

If projects are taken forward, public reports will be produced which will set out further detail.

**Question 9 from Councillor Nawshad Ali to Councillor Abdul Abdullahi, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services**

Can the Cabinet Member for Children’s Service explain how the recently passed motion recognising care experienced people as a protected characteristic has been implemented?

**Answer**

A motion was passed at November’s Full Council that children and young people who have spent 13 weeks or more in local authority care will be protected from discrimination by Enfield Council in the same way age, disability or religion are currently protected. Since then, care experience has been included in the Councils’ equality impact assessment template. This means that key decisions and policies made by the Council now include an assessment of impact on people who have had care experience.

All business managers within directorates have been briefed on changes to the current EQUIA to ensure they advise report authors to include care experience.

Children and Family Services already prioritise care leavers within recruitment, including social work apprenticeships.

Children and Family Services are in the process of working with HR to develop a process that enables guaranteed interviews for care leavers who meet the minimum requirements for advertised roles.

**Question 10 from Councillor Michael Rye to Councillor Ergin Erbil, Deputy Leader of the Council**

Will the Acting Leader give an undertaking to allow 12 weeks for the Regulation 19 Consultation on the draft Local Plan?

**Answer**

The Council is required to undertake a formal consultation on the publication of the Enfield Local Plan and its associated documents for a minimum six-week period pursuant to Regulation 19 of the Local Plan Regulation. The recommendation put forward by Officers proposes a minor extension of the duration to 7 weeks, commencing on Thursday, 28 March, and concluding on Monday 20 May 2024.

This extension, slightly exceeds the minimum 6-week period, considers religious festivals, public holidays and other relevant circumstances, where known in line with the requirements set out in the Statement of Community Involvement.

It is essential to note that the Council opted to pre-publish the draft Local Plan in its near and final form on 6 December 2023, a noteworthy 12 weeks prior to the scheduled Full Council meeting on 6 March 2024.

This proactive approach is designed to support all Councillors and residents in understanding Local Plan and preparing for Regulation 19. The decision reflects a commitment to transparency and openness in the Local Plan process.

**Question 11 from Councillor Sinan Boztas to Councillor Abdul Abdullahi, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services**

Enfield Council has committed to increasing SEND places in the borough. Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on current progress?

**Answer**

Over the past 5 years several hundred additional SEND places have been created to meet the growing demand for specialist placements for children with special needs. This has included the expansion of all our special schools, the rebuild and expansion of Fern House and the provision of a new school, Salmons Brook, to meet the needs of older children with social, emotional and mental health needs.

There are now 18 specialist resource bases for SEND pupils in mainstream schools allowing SEND pupils to access some of a mainstream curriculum. There are also 5 specialist units created over the past 2 years which are in effect special schools within a mainstream setting.

In terms of current progress, the DfE have agreed to the building of a new primary special school for autism and complex needs for up to 96 pupils which we hope can be built and start admitting pupils by 2026 (subject to planning and site considerations). In addition, a capital fund has been put in place to support further schools take on resource bases and units.

The Swan Centre in Ponders End has been reconditioned for West Lea School and will cater for up to 100 places and the Sixth Form Development at Winchmore School will provide an additional 20 places for SEND pupils.

**Question 12 from Councillor Chris Dey to Councillor Ergin Erbil, Deputy Leader of the Council**

Can the Deputy Leader please update Members on the progress with the 50 additional enforcement officers?

**Answer**

As part of developing the community law enforcement team, officers have visited other London Boroughs such as Hackney and Hammersmith & Fulham who have similar teams in place. This will help shape options on how the preferred service we would like to offer will look and operate. These visits have been very informative in the way the teams are structured, systems used and the various operating models that are in place. We are currently reviewing costs for the operating model that would

best suit our needs in Enfield.

In the meantime, we have recruited two additional ASB wardens on a two-year contracts, and Housing Services have restructured some roles in the service to create positions which will deal specifically with ASB across our estates, with three people in post. Additionally, we are revising our ASB policy, so residents know what to expect from the Council and we continue to strengthen our partnerships with the police to address concerns.

Finally, Officers will be confirming with the Borough Commander how the recent London Mayor's commitment to increasing the MPS neighbourhood policing plan will be developed and aligned with our commitment to make the borough's streets safer.

**Question 13 from Councillor Destiny Karakus to Councillor George Savva, Cabinet Member for Social Housing**

Can the Cabinet Member set out how the recently adopted domestic violence housing policy will enable the council to support victims and survivors and take a zero-tolerance approach to perpetrators?

**Answer**

The policy sets a clear standard – we will treat every victim with dignity, and have zero tolerance to perpetrators, and further confirms our commitment to early help and tailored support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

The Council is committed to working with the police and its partner agencies in supporting victims and survivors. We will discuss all measures against perpetrators with the victims and we will work with the police at every stage, who will always treat these cases with urgency.

In terms of support, we were the first council in London to receive the title of 'White Ribbon Authority' – committing us to end male violence against women and girls. In practice, this means every housing team will have a domestic abuse white ribbon accredited champion or ambassador.

We deliver a 'locks and bolts' service to provide additional security for victims, and will take robust legal action against perpetrators including, but not limited to, taking out non-molestation orders, injunctions with a power of arrest, domestic violence prevention notices which prohibit the perpetrator from contacting the victim, and eviction in cases where a council tenancy is held.

Housing Officers have specialist training and follow a trauma-informed approach and will try and encourage perpetrators to access services and take responsibility for their actions.

We will ensure that victims of domestic abuse know that we are on their side, and that help is available.

**Question 14 from Councillor Lee Chamberlain to Councillor George Savva, Cabinet Member for Social Housing**

As of the latest figures you have, how many residents are still living in the unsafe Shires Estate Tower Blocks?

## **Answer**

As reported in January Council, the blocks have the recommended safety mitigation measures in place to allow for the prioritised decanting which is progressing well. I therefore refute the premise of the question.

We now have 43 secure council tenants residing at Shropshire and Cheshire House out of the 204 properties in both buildings, with 9 of these households due to view an offer.

A range of work is progressing to maximise the acceptance of offers and moves.

## **Question 15 from Councillor Doris Jiagge to Councillor George Savva, Cabinet Member for Social Housing**

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the progress of the Reardon Court development?

## **Answer**

The delivery of Reardon Court, which is part of the Council's 3,500 home direct delivery housing development programme is progressing well, with the facility due for completion in Spring 2024.

The scheme will deliver accessible one and two-bedroom homes for affordable rent. Residents will be able to live independently, with 24-hour access to onsite support and care services. They will also have access to landscaped courtyards, a communal lounge, a multi-use hobby room, laundry facilities and a hairdresser/wellbeing room

We are targeting access to the homes by residents that need them most through our Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners as well as in our social care, health and housing teams.

## **Question 16 from Councillor Lee Chamberlain to Councillor George Savva, Cabinet Member for Social Housing**

As it has been reported that Enfield Council stopped all housing repairs, except emergency ones, in November 2023, I ask that the Cabinet Member set out the full details of the situation, making clear the reason for the shutdown, when the service shutdown began, who was informed, who agreed to it; and when this shameful service shutdown will end?

## **Answer**

We continue to provide the best possible Repairs Service for our residents – in December we completed 99% of emergency repairs within target. This includes work on heating failures and responding to reports of damp and mould. I can also reassure Council that our landlord Health and Safety works continue to meet and exceed our targets, including sustained 100% gas safety certification.

From November 2023, as allowed by our Repairs Policy, we started programming non-emergency repairs for delivery in a planned, rather than responsive way. This

slight change of approach was communicated to residents individually when they contracted us and was freely available on our website.

Work to deliver the 600 repairs grouped by type and location so we can deliver the works in a planned, efficient manner has progressed, and we started to deliver these works on 5th February and we will continue to deliver works in this more cost-effective and planned way, getting the best value for residents of our Council homes.

The average performance for London Boroughs completing non-emergency repairs within target is 75%, compared to Enfield Council's figure of 94%.

**Question 17 from Councillor Ahmet Hasan to Councillor Chinelo Anyanwu, Cabinet Member for Public Spaces, Culture and Local Economy**

What events has the Council facilitated for residents in the borough to celebrate LGBT History Month?

**Answer**

February is LGBT+ History Month, when we celebrate the history of the LGBT+ community. This year's theme is Medicine, highlighting the important role LGBT+ people have contributed to healthcare and medicine both historically and today.

To celebrate this, we've arranged a special talk from the LGBT Network Enfield at Palmers Green Library on Monday 26th February from 12:30 to 2:30pm. This talk is targeted for adults and young adults.

The LGBT+ Network and the culture team will look to see how we can engage with residents going forward

**Question 18 from Councillor Lee Chamberlain to Councillor George Savva, Cabinet Member for Social Housing**

I ask the Cabinet Member to set out on a monthly basis by category the number of repairs with the total spend and monthly actual available funds for all housing repairs which have been conducted each month from 1st January 2023 up to 31st January 2024.

**Answer**

The information on repairs and financial performance is freely available and can be found in the reports to Cabinet via the Corporate Performance dashboard and the budget updates on the Housing Revenue Account.

Naturally, responsive repair forms only part of the Council's maintenance and improvement of its Council housing stock. Indeed, so far in this financial year we have invested in improvements to resident's homes, to some 2500 homes including new kitchens, bathrooms, upgraded heating systems and of course works to improve resident safety. This shows our continued delivery of the Good Growth Strategy agreed in 2020 which prioritised investment in existing homes and set aside over £200m for this purpose addressing what was a two-decade backlog of decent homes investment requirements.

The HRA report in this meeting sets out a further £50m investment planned in our existing stock in 2024/25.

**Question 19 from Councillor Chris James to Councillor Chinelo Anyanwu, Cabinet Member for Public Spaces, Culture and Local Economy**

How will the recent lottery funding awarded to the Council help develop Broomfield Park into an asset for the community and protect this important heritage site?

**Answer**

Enfield Council was recently awarded £532,490 of grant funding from the National Lottery for the development phase of Unlocking Broomfield Park project. A conservation architect-led design team will be procured to develop plans for the memorialisation of Broomfield House and the improvement of the historic park. The project will both enhance the park's role as an asset for the community and protect the site's heritage.

With regard to the park, the central workstream of memorialising Broomfield House will be undertaken in collaboration with the community and local groups. During the Development Phase, there will be three pilot projects to involve young people, families, older and socially isolated people whose voices are not always heard: a community archaeology project; a mural hoardings projects and the piloting of heath and mindfulness walks.

The project will bolster volunteering and encourage participation and community ownership of the park. In terms of specific outputs during the Delivery Phase, two of the lakes will be desilted, the habitat of the swans will be restored, and more open lawn space will be returned to the public by removal of the hoarding.

With respect to the heritage, the central objective of the project is to improve the legibility of the historic landscape and restore the relationship between the memorialised house and the park.

The project has been developed in collaboration with Historic England and other heritage organisations. Once delivered, the Council hopes to have both the House and the Park removed from Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register.

**Question 20 from Councillor Lee Chamberlain to Councillor Ergin Erbil, Deputy Leader of the Council**

In your reply to question 20 (January 2024 Council) you stated only 80 of the promised hundreds of overdue Meridian Water homes would be delivered by 1 April 2024. I ask that you now confirm how many Meridian Water homes which were said in 2022 would be delivered in 2023, were not delivered in 2023?

**Answer**

According to the developer's programmes issued in 2022, 300 homes were due to be completed by the end of March 2023. There are several reasons for the extended period for completion, including the construction methodology evolving across the site due to the architectural design standards required for this project, which

substantially impacted on anticipated build duration. The build sequence has also been amended to allow for an improved resident occupation strategy.

Resequencing was pivotal to ensuring the first set of residents are provided with safe and appealing access and that disruption that arises from construction works is minimised whilst other blocks are being built. Officers are working in close collaboration with our partners Countryside who are developing the site to mitigate against any further delays which are controllable. Officers continue to task Countryside to seek betterment in their programme.

Against the backdrop of Government indecisiveness and unclear changes to building regulations and legislation, the project is expected to deliver 280 new homes in 2024/25. These will be built alongside the infrastructure to support the project, thanks to government infrastructure grants – a clear vote of confidence from the government in our regeneration project – which will see two new parks, four new bridges, flood alleviation and sustainable drainage, new utility network, and a central spine road and branch roads

**Question 21 from Councillor Hivran Dalkaya to Councillor Alev Cazimoglu, Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care**

How has the Council marked HIV testing week, encouraged residents to get tested, and know their status?

**Answer**

As part of National HIV Testing Week this February, the LGBTQ+ Network and Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) ran a pop-up HIV testing clinic in the Electoral Services meeting room (opposite the Civic Centre coffee cart) on the 6 February from 11am to 2pm. These was a free and confidential walk-in session.

The Enfield Sexual Service also promoted HIV testing Week at the clinics through North Middlesex Hospital's Facebook page, resulting in greater access to their walk-in sessions for HIV testing, and increased the number of PrEP clinics. The clinics worked collaboratively with THT, with THT having an increased presence within the Town Clinic, as well as in the community and APC North Middx Hospital also offering HIV testing and support.

**Question 22 from Councillor Chris Dey to Councillor Rick Jewell, Cabinet Member for Environment**

Residents have reported concerns when works to trees are carried out without prior warning. When works are being completed on tree lined roads please can all residents receive a letter explaining what works are being completed and when the works will take place?

**Answer**

Council contractors attach signs to each tree providing 1 weeks' prior notice to residents of planned tree works. In cases where contractors are unable to carry out work due to vehicles blocking access, they undertake several repeat visits to the road to try to complete the works and amend dates on the notification signs. After

several repeat attempts, letters are posted through every property on the road two weeks before the agreed date of works.

**Question 23 from Councillor Mahmut Aksanoglu to Councillor Alev Cazimoglu, Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care**

What reform, if any, have the government implemented in the social care sector following the Dilnot Commission, and how has this benefited the Council or our residents?

**Answer**

One of the key recommendations from Sir Andrew Dilnot's Commission report was the cap on care costs over a person's lifetime and some fundamental changes to how social care support is funded and paid for by residents accessing services. This was brought forward in 2022 but subsequently deferred to 2025.

Funding made available by government to Councils to pay for this was still allocated to councils to fund cost increases in adult social care both as a result of higher inflation and significant increases in the national living wage.

This was and still is not enough, and delegating local tax raising powers to local authorities through the adult social care precept has served only to shift the burden of funding critical council services experiencing huge increases in demand on to councils which have seen massive real terms cuts in government funding since 2010.

However, other recommendations linked to eligibility criteria and integration between health and social care as well as a stronger focus on early intervention and prevention have been progressed since the recommendations were made back in 2011. The introduction of the Care Act 2014 and the Health and Care Act 2022 most notably have brought these recommendations together and are part of the NHS and Council's statutory duties.

Nevertheless, pressures across the health and social care system because of the pandemic and subsequent financial crisis have made this extremely challenging. In Enfield, our health and social care system does work well together to the benefit of local residents, but it would be fair to say that there is still too much of a focus on crisis response across our system.

**Question 24 from Councillor Michael Rye to Councillor Tim Leaver, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement**

How many fees and charges are being increased at the current level of inflation, above the current level of inflation and below the current level of inflation?

**Answer**

The majority of the fees and charges have increased at or marginally above inflation of 9% based on July CPI.

Where the fees and charges have increased by less than inflation this is due to market factors, benchmarking or restrictions based on cost recovery only.

Statutory fees and charges are set and updated by central government, therefore the Council has no control over these charges.

**Question 25 from Councillor Ayten Guzel to Councillor Susan Erbil, Cabinet Member for Licensing, Planning & Regulatory Services**

How will Enfield Council ensure that the recent ban on disposable vapes is enforced in the borough?

**Answer**

We acknowledge the role that vaping products can play in aiding adults to stop smoking, as smoking is the leading cause of early deaths and preventable illness. However, we also recognise the importance of the new Government proposals, given the impact of certain vaping products, specifically on young people.

The Council's approach towards vaping is focused on reducing the public health impact on young people with Trading Standards activity focusing on engaging with retailers across the borough.

We will be seeking further detailed information from government on the proposed measures, along with an outline of the potential timescales with regard to their implementation. We fully support the introduction of new measures to curb the accessibility and appeal of vaping products to children and young people, restricting flavours and their descriptions, removal of enticing branding and packaging and reduce their affordability.

The Council support restrictions on disposable vapes to mitigate environmental risks. The Council also support new measures to tackle illegal products and proposed enhancement to the legislative framework.

**Question 26 from Councillor Michael Rye to Councillor Rick Jewell, Cabinet Member for Environment**

How can you justify increasing the green bin charge from £80 per annum to £100 per annum a whopping 25% increase, especially when fly-tipping remains a significant problem across the borough?

**Answer**

It is never an easy decision to increase charges for residents. However, like many other industries, inflation has also affected the Council, meaning that a change to the subscription charge is required to continue being able to provide this service.

Many of our costs have also increased above inflation, including transport-related operating costs and fuel. This is against a backdrop of our core government funding being cut by 42.4% since 2010.

We recognise that some will be concerned with the new price, which is why we have put in place other options to dispose of garden waste. This includes:

- providing the option to bin share with your neighbours, sharing the cost for one bin across multiple households.
- compost bins are available free of charge.

- Barrowell Recycling Centre continues to accept garden waste, with pedestrian access to the site.

To deliver a balanced budget, we have had to make difficult decisions, and this change will allow us to continue green waste collections for residents.

Enfield Council recently carried out a benchmarking exercise with other London Councils regarding their garden waste collection charges, which helped inform our decision. Some London Councils have increased their subscription fee on an annual basis; however, Enfield held the charges at the same level for the first three years and only increased the charge for the first time in 2022.

All income collected through the charge is re-invested in the Waste Service to deliver our green waste collections and other waste services effectively and efficiently.

**Question 27 from Councillor Nia Stevens to Councillor Susan Erbil, Cabinet Member for Licensing, Planning & Regulatory Services**

What steps has the Council taken to improve Development Management performance in planning, and how will the Council ensure this continues?

**Answer**

Over the past 16 months, Development Management has been on transformational journey. The service has implemented new ways of working to improve performance, officer wellbeing, and ultimately deliver a better service to our customers and quality outcomes for our communities.

At the start of this process, the Development Management team had over 2200 applications on hand, most of which were over target/backlog cases. This has reduced now to 619 cases, with the majority of new applications being determined within statutory timeframes.

This has been achieved through the hard work of officers, supported by initiatives to streamline the planning application process, such as the use of rationalised report templates, standardising reasons for refusal, setting out clear expectations to agents, and utilising tech support officers to determine straightforward applications. More widely the process of consulting with internal consultees has also been streamlined to help avoid delays in decision making.

We will continue to robustly monitor performance every week and review how we work to ensure workloads remain manageable. We have commenced a review of how we manage appeals, pre-applications and Planning Performance Agreements to ensure that we are working efficiently and delivering high-quality outcomes for our customers.

We have also been implementing and exploring ways to commercialise our service to provide financial resilience and ensure we are appropriately resourced to manage workloads effectively going forward.

**Question 28 from Councillor Michael Rye to Councillor Tim Leaver, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement**

How much has been taken from reserves to balance the budget in 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 and does he agree that this is an unsustainable policy?

**Answer**

The Council aims to balance the budget without the use of reserves. However, since 2020/21 a total of £5.477m use of reserves has been planned in setting the annual budget. The table below summarises the balances used each year since 2020/21, demonstrating that the planned use had been less than £2m per year and nothing required in 2023/24. This has also been the case in setting the budget for 2024/25.

Despite planning to use reserves to balance the budget in both 2020/21 and 2021/22 this was not necessary when we reached the final outturn figures. However for 22/23 and 23/24, we will be required to drawdown from reserves to address our in-year homeless budget pressures, totalling £51.178m. This pressure is being felt by councils across the country as the impact of rising interest rates continues to be felt in the private rented sector. The Council continues to lobby the government to provide financial support for temporary accommodation pressures.

Further, in 2022/23, there was also a planned use of Covid19 reserves totalling £9.9m, this was Covid19 specific rather than part of the core budget.

**Question 29 from Councillor Mahym Bedekova to Councillor Rick Jewell, Cabinet Member for Environment**

How will the recent TfL funding allocation to Enfield Council contribute towards the delivery of the Mayor of London's Vision Zero?

**Answer**

TfL have recently confirmed funding allocations for 2024/25 to help deliver the Mayor's Transport Strategy. Enfield received an allocation of just over £3.8m, the second-highest London borough allocation.

The funding will help make our roads safer and contribute to the Mayor's Vision Zero in several ways, either directly or indirectly.

Firstly, we have an allocation of just under £0.5m for a range of projects targeted at known collision hot-spots, such as in Church Street N9, Fore Street N18 and Hertford Road EN8. Some of this allocation will also be used to develop and deliver a programme of more localised interventions to improve road safety.

Secondly, an allocation of just under £2m will be used to continue our plans to introduce safe walking and cycling facilities across the borough, promote active travel, as well further Quieter Neighbourhoods to reduce road danger in residential areas and more school streets.

Finally, TfL have allocated just over £1m to help implement the first phase of the Enfield Town Liveable Neighbourhoods scheme, which will introduce safer facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as enhance the public realm for everyone.

**Question 30 from Councillor Chris Dey to Councillor Chinelo Anyanwu,  
Cabinet Member for Public Spaces, Culture and Local Economy**

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on how the tendering process for leasing out the park café's is progressing and also can a date be given as to when the cafes will be operational again?

**Answer**

The successful bidders for Trent Park, Whitewebbs and Oakwood Park cafes have received heads of terms for their leases and officers continue dialog with the operators. The notice served against the former operator of the cafes expires on the 13th of March 2024, and at that stage, the leases with the new operators will start and they will be able to commence their necessary refurbishments of the cafes.

Unfortunately, the successful bidder for Town Park café, has declined to continue in the process for tenancy, and officers are discussing the opportunity with the other providers who scored well in the tender process but were initially unsuccessful. At this time, this does not represent an additional delay in reopening processes.

We are working closely with the proposed operators to facilitate reopening as quickly as possible, but their timelines are dependent on their contractors, and when the refurbishments will be completed. The feedback from the operators has been similar by reiterating their commitment to a long and successful tenancy at each café, and they are protecting their brand image and reputation by launching a full service after renovations have been completed.

The reopening dates are specific for each cafe, and its refurbishment needs. Through ongoing correspondence with proposed tenants, Whitewebbs Park Cafe late March is realistic, and Oakwood Park Cafe proposed the first week of April as a provisional reopening date.

To mitigate the demand for café services, mobile concessions are continuing to provide support where possible to bridge the gap in service provision.