

Council – 28 June 2006

16.2 Councillors' Question Time

(Part 4 – Paragraph 9.2(a) of Constitution – Page 4 - 8)

Question 1 from Councillor Georgiou to Councillor Rye, Leader of the Council.

“David Burrowes MP wrote to residents in the Broomfield Park area in early May stating that Councillor Rye “ has made a commitment not to build on parkland and to consult with the community on any detailed plan for the House’s restoration”. Given this, will Councillor Rye:

- i. Confirm his commitment that the Council will not build on any parkland in Broomfield Park
- ii. Give a commitment that the Council will abandon its plans to build on the Park’s East Lawn
- iii. State when the consultation with residents will take place and if this will be before or after the Lands Tribunal application
- iv. State the geographical area and groups to be consulted and when the consultation will be conducted
- v. State what options the Council will put forward for consultation
- vi. Give a commitment that the Council will work with relevant residents groups to draw up an agreed consultation document that will include various options
- vii. Give a commitment to use all his endeavours to implement the result of the consultation.”

Response from Councillor Rye:

May I remind Councillor Georgiou that the only policy brought forward for the restoration of Broomfield House by the Labour Council, of which he was a leading member in 1994-2002, was unacceptable to residents.

Labour’s proposal was overtly commercial and would have involved what became known as “a pub in a park”. When there was resistance from local residents, and a threat of legal challenge from those affected by the covenants on Broomfield Park, the Labour Group withdrew in disarray.

The Labour Council then set up a Task Force chaired by Stephen Twigg, then MP for Enfield Southgate, who worked on a project to restore Broomfield House. On winning control of the Council in 2002, and being elected Leader of the Council, I asked Mr Twigg if he would continue his good work leading this Task Force. Mr Twigg on behalf of the Task Force, approached the Council and explained that the Task Force had come to the view that the covenants on Broomfield Park needed modest amendment to achieve the restoration of the house and an income to maintain it.

I would refer him to my reply to his next question for details on this matter.

Councillor Georgiou will be aware that the Task Force solution was granted planning permission on the 21 October 2003, listed building consent was granted on 17 May 2005 and this Council will build nothing beyond this. Since Mr Twigg was defeated as the Member of Parliament for Enfield Southgate, I have succeeded him as Chairman of the Task Force and the Conservative Council's position has always been to support the Task Force solution and nothing else. Unlike the previous Labour Council, we listened to Mr Twigg and agreed to ring-fence monies that may be raised from residential use of the derelict stable block and adjoining cottages site. A sensitive scheme that fits with the historic landscape and house is anticipated to raise a sum of £750,000-£1,000,000 towards the restoration of Broomfield House. This provides the match funding that is needed to provide for the restoration of Broomfield House.

An update report on progress with the Broomfield House restoration project will be brought to the July Cabinet meeting.

Question 2 from Councillor Georgiou to Councillor Rye, Leader of the Council

"On the matter of Broomfield House, what are the estimated costs to the Council, if the Council proceeds with the Lands Tribunal hearing for:

- i. external legal fees including 2 week hearing
- ii. consultants' fees (please specify the identity and nature of the consultancy)
- iii. expert witnesses
- iv. internal costs
- v. possible compensation for objectors
- vi. objectors' legal costs if the application fails
- vii. costs for an appeal?"

Response from Councillor Rye:

I can inform Councillor Georgiou that the best estimate of cost to the council for proceedings at the Lands Tribunal Hearing are up to £50k for both external and internal costs. It is impossible to predict the costs of an appeal and the question is not relevant until the Tribunal has heard this case. It is not for the council to comment on the objectors legal costs.

Question 3 from Georgiou to Councillor Hurer, Cabinet Member for Housing

"Would Councillor Hurer provide figures on:

- i. how many people are on the Housing Needs Register?
- ii. how many people are on the Register who are homeless?
- iii. how many families on the Register have 150 points and how long they can expect to wait before being offered Council accommodation?
- iv. how many families on the Register have 250 points and how long they can expect to wait before being offered Council accommodation?"

Response from Councillor Hurer:

i. How many people are on the Housing Needs Register?

All households who apply to join the Housing Register receive points according to their circumstances, the points system is used to prioritise those people on the register for access to social housing in the borough. The number of people on the register fluctuates so these figures are as at June 06 – currently there are 10,048 households in total on the register.

ii. How many people are on the Register who are homeless?

There are 3,331 homeless households on the register. These households are in temporary accommodation provided by the Council.

A resident does not have to be homeless to apply to the register, so the balance is made up by households who are not statutorily homeless, and existing tenants who are seeking a transfer.

iii. How many families on the Register have 150 points and how long they can expect to wait before being offered Council accommodation?

We have 356 families on the register who have exactly 150 points and 3087 families who have 150 points and below. Without a change in circumstances it is likely that no families with this level of points, excluding homeless households, will be housed. Homeless households are awarded 30 points each year they are in temporary accommodation and will reach the allocation level in time.

iv. How many families on the register have 250 points and how long can they expect to wait before being offered Council accommodation?

We have 29 families on the register who have exactly 250 points and 1057 families who have 250 points and above.

Currently, 240 points are required for rehousing into a 1 bedroom property; 240 points for 2 bedroom properties; 320 points for 3 bedroom properties and 350 points for 4 bedrooms or larger.

The length of time it takes a household to actually obtain a property depends on the type and size of accommodation that the household requires, once the trigger point, i.e. the allocation level, is reached and the time that this takes depends on the circumstances of the applicant household, in general terms it can take from 6 to 18 months for a suitable property to become available.

Question 4 from Councillor Georgiou to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene

“Will the Council consult residents in Bowes on rising bollards as a traffic calming measure, as requested by many residents in the affected area?”

Response from Councillor Neville:

In December 2004 we consulted residents in the Bowes Park area on two proposed traffic management options for controlling through traffic. In reaction to this consultation some members of the Bowes Park community put forward an alternative option. The alternative option comprised of road closures with selective entry for permit holders using rising bollards. This would have allowed residents unrestricted movement through the area whilst removing through traffic.

We are **not** pursuing this option for the following practical reasons:

1. There would be a need to create a complex and expensive administrative system for issuing and managing permits and swipe cards. This system would need to be funded by the revenue from residents purchasing permits. A reasonable permit charge would rely on a large number of residents within the area signing up to the scheme. It is likely that a number of residents may decide they do not want to pay for a permit and will tolerate a less direct route to their property.
2. The Council does not wish to restrict the use of a public highway to those living in a selected area who can afford to buy a permit. This is likely to be contentious with both those outside the area who cannot buy a permit, and those inside who do not wish to pay for the use of the public highway. Of course in some instances the Council has closed roads entirely. However these closures affect all road users and do not favour a select group.
3. There would be a high maintenance cost, especially if vandalism proves a problem. Quick response maintenance would be required to maintain reliability of service for residents. CCTV could be installed to deter vandalism, but this would add substantially to the cost of the scheme. The Council would be reliant on the system manufacturer for maintenance, as the Council does not have the necessary specialist skills in house.
4. There is a possibility that permit systems such as this could be abused; with some residents selling permits for profit to motorists that want to access the area.
5. It would not be possible to provide generous turning facilities at each rising bollard location. Subsequently when a vehicle without a permit stops at the bollard, the road could become obstructed and create

additional congestion and delay for other traffic until either it turns around or a permitted vehicle lets them through.

6. It is not surprising that the prospect of a system that allows full access for local residents but stops all other traffic has proved popular amongst residents. It is likely that such a scheme would be popular in any urban area that suffers from high levels of through traffic. However, while it may be possible for Enfield and Haringey Council's to fund the initial capital cost of a Bowes Park scheme from the Transport for London A406 Complementary Measures funding, it would not be possible to meet the cost of all the other schemes that would be demanded by many other similar residential areas. It should also be noted that residents are unlikely to find such schemes nearly as attractive when they have to pay an annual fee to get a permit.

Overall a rising bollard scheme would be expensive to implement, maintain and administer. Such a complex and unproven system would also have a great deal of scope for going wrong. We will therefore not be pursuing the rising bollard option any further.

Question 5 from Councillor Georgiou to Councillor Hurer, Cabinet Member for Housing

“Can the Cabinet Member for Housing please explain why the members of the ALMO Steering Group were sent an incomplete draft of the ALMO bid in advance of their meeting on 7 June, a different version still with gaps was tabled on 7 June, and a further different version was presented to Cabinet on 14 June but not published within the normal timescale?”

Response from Councillor Hurer:

The members of the ALMO Steering Group were sent the most up-to-date version of the ALMO bid at the time. Over the past few weeks the bid has been going through a process of refinement in order to ensure it emphasises the significant points that will be looked at when the bid is assessed by the Department for Communities and Local Government. These amendments have not involved changing the substance of the bid from the earlier version that was circulated to ALMO Steering Group members – they have been presentational amendments and those relating to changes in emphasis.

After the draft bid had been despatched to the ALMO Steering Group members there were some important planned events that necessitated further refinements to the bid, these were:

- Officers met with representatives of the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Government Office for London on 6th June 2006 to discuss the bid document in detail.
- An announcement was made by the Government on 7th June 2006 regarding the Round 6 ALMO bidding process.

- New supplementary guidance on ALMOs was issued by the Government on 8th June 2006.

Officers were aware that all three of the above events were scheduled to occur during week commencing 5th June 2006 and that amendments would be needed to the bid document as a result. Therefore, in order to present Cabinet with as complete a document as possible the circulation of the draft bid was delayed until 9th June 2006.

The deadline for submission of ALMO bids is 31st July 2006 and in order to meet this timescale it was essential for the bid to be considered by Cabinet on 14th June 2006.

Question 6 from Councillor Brett to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene

“Could Councillor Neville inform us whether any home zones have been agreed for the London Borough of Enfield and if so where?”

Response from Councillor Neville:

A home zone is a residential street or group of residential streets designed primarily to meet the interests of the local community, opening up the street for social use. The key to creating a home zone is to develop street design that makes drivers feel it is normal to drive slowly and carefully. Features often include traffic calming, shared surfaces, trees and planters, benches and play areas.

The only existing Home Zone in Enfield is at the end of Tysoe Avenue and was built as part of a housing development, still to be adopted by the Council. We have had an unfunded programme for Home Zones, which has been included in our Borough Spending Plan for a number of years but the Mayor of London has not until this year allocated any funding for them. However, I am pleased to say that we have now received funding from Transport for London for 2006/7 to develop a Home Zone for Lytchet Way. This is still at an early stage and we are setting up initial meetings to identify the partners that should be involved in developing the Home Zone.

Question 7 from Councillor Brett to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene

“Could Councillor Neville confirm whether a wheelie bin pilot is now operational in Cockfosters Ward and what criterion were used in selecting that particular ward for this service?”

Response from Councillor Neville:

We do not operate a wheeled bin service for household waste anywhere in the borough at the moment. However we are considering options for the

future to increase our recycling and composting rates whilst reducing residual waste.

In this connection we are looking to pilot a larger wheeled green bin and a smaller wheeled bin for recyclable waste in due course with the existing small black bin probably replacing black bags for residual waste, but no decision has been taken as to when and where the pilot will be undertaken. Clearly one criterion will be the suitability of the area in terms of the structure of the housing, so that all bins can be placed away from the front of houses.

Question 8 from Councillor Savva to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene

“Are you satisfied with the performance of the new contractors who are responsible for Grounds Maintenance?”

Response from Councillor Neville:

The Council does not have a new contractor providing highways grounds maintenance the current contract commenced in July 2004. The performance of the contractor has on the whole been acceptable with only two periods (such as the recent period) when due to a mix of adverse weather conditions, bank holidays and poor contractor performance the level of service has not been to the levels specified. We have taken action against the contractor for non-performance and the contractor has identified additional resources that are currently being used on the contract to address the poor performance.

I am reviewing the specification for the contract with officers to see if any service improvements can be made when the contract is re-tendered.