

COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 30 JANUARY 2013

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

I. Question from Anthoula Nolan from Eltham, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.

Why does Greenwich council seem to constantly be kowtowing to big business in the face of unique opportunities to build a greener, cleaner, community on the North Greenwich Peninsula that could be used as an example for the rest of the world?

Reply

I thank Anthoula Nolan for her question.

The Council is working with the owners of land on the North Greenwich Peninsula to ensure that any development meets the high sustainability standards set out in both the Council's own planning policies and those of the London Plan. The outline planning permission includes provisions relating to biodiversity, energy efficiency renewable energy and sustainable transport.

The neighbouring Greenwich Millennium Village is already an exemplar and includes brown roofs, a 27% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions through renewable energy, landscaping and ecological management provisions and rainwater harvesting.

In addition to the achievement of these standards, the Peninsula will benefit from the low carbon heat and electricity generated and delivered through the peninsula wide Combined Heat and Power (CHP) driven district heating network. This includes plans for fully controllable and customer-monitored heat interface units in every flat. By working with partners to deliver such innovation the Council will ensure that the Peninsula achieves its potential and acts an exemplar for future urban development.

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2. Question from Paul Webbewood, Lee to Councillor Chris Roberts, Leader of the Council.

The Council's website page on the new council tax support scheme describes Greenwich as having a "stark choice" either to increase council tax or to reduce support from April 2013. However a number of other local authorities including Merton, Tower Hamlets and Westminster have decided to maintain current levels of support without increasing council tax.

Why didn't Greenwich mention this possibility in its consultation document?

Reply

I thank Mr Webbewood for his question.

The details of the consultation were made available to all Royal Greenwich Borough residents, a wide group of independent and advice agencies in the Borough, and also a number of presentations were given to local advice agencies, residents associations and Registered Social Landlords operating in the Borough. This is detailed in Appendix A to the report on tonight's Council agenda.

A total of 136 responses were received to the consultation. 69% agreed to passport the cut in government support.

The consultation document did provide the option to make additional comments. A small number of respondents took the opportunity to voice their preference for budget cuts, even referring to a combination of budget cuts and a council tax increase.

However, the major difference between authorities will be the number and therefore the cost of absorbing the cut for each Council. Richer areas such as Westminster have far fewer people affected and around £100m plus of parking fines to help absorb Coalition cuts. The overwhelming majority of councils in London are having to passport the Coalition's cut to their residents.

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3. Question from Matthew Clinch, Charlton to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.

I understand that the developer LXB, who have been granted planning permission to build a Travelodge, Sainsbury's and Marks & Spencer in Charlton, have given the council £35,000 for improvements to Woolwich Road. I wondered if the council could detail what this is being spent on and confirm that it will indeed be earmarked for improvements to Woolwich Road.

Reply

I thank Mr Clinch for his question.

I can confirm that the monies you refer to relate to the legal agreement arising from the planning application for the Hotel site on Woolwich Road which have not yet been received. This is because although a resolution to grant planning permission has been approved legal agreement has not yet been concluded. The monies will be spent in accordance with the specific conditions of the legal agreement which we have yet to finalise.

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4. Question from Ian Blore, Greenwich to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.

Greenwich and Woolwich Foot Tunnels;

I understand that options are being developed to complete the foot tunnels at Greenwich and Woolwich, and that an enquiry into the current fiasco is underway. May I ask when those options and any enquiry report will be made public?

Reply

I thank Mr Blore for his question.

The Council has commissioned an independent expert to undertake a high level review of the Council's management of large scale capital projects, and to undertake a more detailed investigation of the 'tunnels' project, in addition he is to advise on the way forward in relation to the foot tunnels refurbishment project after considering the specific advice provided by separate specialist legal experts in relation to that project.

The independent experts' initial report into the management of large scale projects was considered by Cabinet on 13th December 2012 and has been made public. A further report will be presented on his investigation of the tunnels project in due course.

The Council is currently considering the best way forward in the light of the legal advice received and the comments of the independent expert.

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- 5. Question from Anthony Austin, Deptford, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

How many times have the automatic lifts in the Greenwich Foot Tunnel failed since they were replaced?

Reply

I thank Mr Austin for his question.

I do not have a precise figure, but I can advise the problems at Greenwich Foot Tunnels are almost entirely confined to the north lift. Overall the north-side lift is working in excess of 90% of time with south-side lift now working virtually 100%.

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6. **Question from Anthony Austin, Deptford, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

How is CCTV used to detect and remedy faults in the lifts?

Reply

I thank Mr Austin for his question.

There are mechanisms within the lifts to detect and report faults. Additionally the Council employs an officer to identify and arrange rectification of problems (including issue with the lifts) within the foot tunnels.

The existing CCTV system is not used to detect and remedy faults.

However it is planned to further enhance the CCTV system as part of the works to finish the foot tunnels refurbishment project. Officers are examining the possibility of designing those enhancements with a view to improving monitoring of the operation of the lifts.

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- 7. Question from Neil Claspe of Charlton, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

How much budget, in cash and human resources, has the Borough allocated to spend on the 'Bridge the gap' campaign in 2013?

Reply

I thank Mr Claspe for his question.

The “bridge the gap” campaign has been undertaken primarily utilising existing in-house resources. The total cost of printing leaflets and creating the “post boxes” is £300. There is no intention to create a dedicated budget for the campaign.

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8. **Question from David Kutner of Blackheath, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

Why did the council not commission any studies into traffic or pollution before launching its campaign for a Silvertown Tunnel?

9. **Question from Simon Buckland of Greenwich, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

Why did the council not commission any studies into traffic or pollution before launching its campaign for a Silvertown Tunnel?

10. **Question James Garner of Eltham of Greenwich, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

Why did the council not commission any studies into traffic or pollution before launching its campaign for a Silvertown Tunnel?

11. **Question from Anthoula Nolan of Greenwich, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

Why did the council not commission any studies into traffic or pollution before launching its campaign for a Silvertown Tunnel?

12. **Question from David Kutner of Blackheath, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

If, as is expected, TfL throws out the proposal for the Gallions Reach Bridge, will Greenwich Council be happy to see just a Silvertown Tunnel built or will it at least belatedly launch a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis before making that decision?

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- 13. Question from Simon Buckland, Greenwich, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

How would it improve traffic flows in the area, given that both tunnels would feed southbound into an unchanged and un-widened A102?

The A102 would become even more congested and polluting during rush hours.

- 17. Question from Katy Ellsmore, Charlton to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

With regards to the proposed Silvertown Tunnel, would you agree that building an extra bore at the Blackwall Tunnel would make someone more likely to use it, thus increasing traffic on the A2/A102?

- 18. Question from Katy Ellsmore, Charlton to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

When will there be a full traffic impact assessment for the proposed Silvertown Tunnel undertaken by Greenwich Council?

- 19. Question from Matthew Clinch, Charlton to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

Why aren't Greenwich Council concentrating money and effort on supplying a traffic impact assessment for the proposed Silvertown Tunnel, and instead compiling a document highlighting the economic benefits it would bring?

- 20. Question from Suzanne Miller, Greenwich to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

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What studies has the council conducted into the effects of the proposed Silvertown tunnel on traffic and pollution on the A2 and the A102, and what were the findings?

- 22. Question from Alan Burkitt-Gray, Blackheath to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

What assessment has the Royal Borough of Greenwich commissioned or carried out (or is commissioning or carrying out) concerning the likely economic impact on the Royal Borough of Greenwich and its residents of (a) building and (b) not building the Silvertown Tunnel as proposed; and will the council of the Royal Borough make any report resulting from such assessment available on its website for review by the residents?

- 23. Question from Alan Burkitt-Gray, Blackheath to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

What is the Royal Borough's estimate of the likely cost of building the Silvertown Tunnel as proposed (including contributions from the Borough and from other sources); what assessment has the Borough carried out of alternative ways of spending a similar amount of money on different transport projects to the benefit of the Borough and its residents; and will the council make any report resulting from such assessment available on its website for review by the residents?

- 27. Question from Louise Blore, Greenwich to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

I understand that the Council is in favour of a new road tunnel from East Greenwich to Silvertown as proposed by TfL. Does the Council have any predictions of the likely extra number of deaths of Greenwich residents due to particulate air pollution that may result from such a tunnel?

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Reply

I thank you all for your questions.

The Council is responding to the Mayor of London's high level consultation on river crossings. Once a specific package of crossings is formulated, it will be for the Mayor to undertake the necessary economic, environmental and traffic management assessments. These will need to be undertaken holistically, taking into account all of the proposals, not individual transport solutions in isolation and should look at the implications of a one crossing solution, both fixed link crossings and the implications of doing nothing.

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14. Question from Paul Webbewood, Lee to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.

At a seminar at City Hall on 9th January on East London river crossings several speakers expressed support for imposing a toll charge to drive through the Blackwall Tunnel. This view was taken both by advocates and opponents of new crossings. I believe that forcing people to pay for using the Blackwall Tunnel, while keeping other crossings free of charge, would be bad news for many people in Greenwich as a likely outcome would be that people who presently use the tunnel would be tempted instead to drive through the Borough to reach free river crossings further west, thus adding to congestion and pollution in Middle Park & Sutcliffe, Blackheath & Westcombe and Greenwich West wards.

Will the Council oppose any attempt to single out the Blackwall Tunnel for a toll?

Reply

I thank Mr Webbewood for his question.

The Council recognises that the crossings could not in all likelihood be finalised without tolls.

The Council considers, however, that smart use of tolling could manage the demand for crossing the river more effectively.

Until a specific package of improvements has been developed, accompanied by an appropriate traffic demand management regime and supporting environmental and traffic assessments, it would be inappropriate to comment on variations to the current proposals.

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- 15. Question from Jennifer Nesbitt, Charlton to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

Why are Greenwich Council persistent with their "all-out" campaign to encourage people to back the proposed Silvertown Tunnel when there has been no full traffic impact assessment yet?

- 16. Question from Jennifer Nesbitt, Charlton to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

At a public meeting at the London Assembly, Greenwich Council's strategic transport planner said " a lot of this is conjecture" regarding plans for new river crossings. Why then would Greenwich Council launch an "all-out" campaign to encourage people to back the Silvertown Tunnel when its own transport expert regards the plans as mostly conjecture?

- 25. Question from Matt Fricker, Charlton, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

In respect to the Borough's current Bridge the Gap campaign. Do you agree that the council should use the full strength of their communications department to create and assume public support for a campaign that is without any form of detailed consultation?

Reply

The Mayor of London's consultation removed the Woolwich Ferry and establishes a new Ferry at Gallions Reach in Thamesmead. We believe this to be adequate and support the development of a fixed link crossing between Thamesmead and Beckton.

We believe the Mayor should be asked to assess the crossing as well as the Silvertown Link which he is proposing.

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21. **Question from Suzanne Miller, Greenwich to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

If TfL rejects the proposal for the Gallions Reach bridge, will Greenwich Council be happy to see just a Silvertown Tunnel built?

Reply

The Council believes that the need to address congestion, develop the economy and increase job prospects for residents requires a package of vehicular crossings to complement the non-vehicular crossings.

This is why we have launched the Bridge the Gap campaign, specifically to get a second fixed link crossing onto the agenda.

26. **Question from Ian Blore, Greenwich to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

Silvertown Tunnel Proposal;

I attended a TfL seminar on their river crossing proposals. Both a panel member (David Quarmby) and a TfL officer at that seminar admitted that there are likely to be no regeneration benefits to Greenwich from an East Greenwich to Silvertown Tunnel. Does the Royal Borough of Greenwich not accept these views?

Reply

My understanding is that David Quarmby supports the proposals for a package of river crossings and has formally responded to the consultation in his own capacity.

We have been able to clarify Mr Quarmby's comments with him. His response is that the Silvertown Tunnel is, in his view, principally to relieve congestion on the London Road. He also supports the Gallions Reach

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crossing to kick start or sustain regeneration, housing development and business growth on both sides of the river but especially in Thamesmead.

28. Question from Mrs Chitty, Eltham, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.

Many years ago Greenwich residents were promised a less polluted area and the lower road was for many years monitored for pollution levels and the outcome was a restricted zone, ie, HGV etc were not allowed to use these roads because of the dangerous pollution levels and the vast numbers of Asthma in the area; has the pollution disappeared?

Reply

It is the case that the Council successfully introduced a lorry ban on Romney Road a number of years ago so as to reduce the environmental impact of heavy goods vehicles in and around the Greenwich World Heritage Site.

It is also the case that the Council has successfully campaigned for improvements in public transport services and infrastructure (such as the DLR extensions and Crossrail) and encouraged, and invested in, walking and cycling so as to maintain or improve air quality and health.

Air quality still remains an issue in parts of the Royal Borough but the Council remains committed to improving it.

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- 29. Question from Darryl Chamberlain, Charlton, Greenwich to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

Could the leader reassure residents that, as his colleague Cllr Hyland has said, that Greenwich Council will oppose the Silvertown Tunnel if studies suggest it will result in any increase in traffic, congestion and pollution?

Reply

My comments have been misreported. The Council will study all of the data which will be provided by the Mayor of London's assessments before commenting.

- 30. Question from Darryl Chamberlain, Charlton, Greenwich to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills**

On 21 December 2012, Greenwich Council's press office issued a media release announcing that people could find out more about the Bridge the Gap campaign on both Greenwich and Newham councils' websites, specifically at www.newham.gov.uk/bridgethegap. But over a month later, this page has not appeared on Newham's website, and Newham has not undertaken any more press activity to promote the campaign. When and why did Newham decide to take a lesser role in the campaign?

Reply

Greenwich and Newham have run a joint campaign to support the inclusion of two fixed link crossings between our boroughs.

We have not discussed the nature of specific campaigns within each borough, but I can confirm officers from the two Councils are meeting tomorrow morning on the issue of river crossings.

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- 24. Question from Alison Fricker, Charlton, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

In respect to the proposed Silvertown Tunnel;
If TfL wanted to widen the A102 and A2 as part of a Silvertown Tunnel development, requiring demolition of homes, would Greenwich Council support it?

- 33. Question from Andy Othen, Greenwich, to Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills.**

If TfL wanted to widen the A102 and A2 as part of a Silvertown Tunnel development, requiring demolition of homes, would Greenwich Council support it?

Reply

The Mayor of London's proposals do not include any statements about road widening nor the potential for the demolition of homes.

Until a specific package of improvements has been developed it would be inappropriate to comment on variations to the current proposals.

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- 34. Question from James Garner, Eltham, to Councillor John Fahy, Cabinet Member for Adults and Older People.**

What studies has the cabinet member for health and older people carried out into the pollution impact of a Silvertown Tunnel on the A2 and A102 before deciding to support it?

- 35. Question from Matt Fricker, Charlton, to Councillor John Fahy, Cabinet Member for Adults and Older People.**

In respect to the Borough's current Bridge the Gap campaign.

What studies has the cabinet member for health and older people carried out into the pollution impact of a Silvertown Tunnel on the A2 and A102 before deciding to support it?

Reply

I thank Mr Garner and Mr Fricker for their questions.

Until a specific package of improvements, accompanied by an appropriate traffic demand management regime, has been developed it would be premature for the Royal Borough of Greenwich to commission any environmental studies.

After considering the results of the current consultation the Mayor will need to decide how to address the absence of adequate river crossings in this part of London. Any proposals arising from that decision will need to be accompanied, at the appropriate time, by TfL studies to predict traffic levels and any impact on the environment.

The Council will carefully scrutinise those studies and commission additional ones if necessary.

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36. Question from Alison Fricker, Charlton, to Councillor Harry Singh, Cabinet Member for Greener Greenwich.

In respect to the proposed Silvertown Tunnel;

Why is the cabinet member for Greener Greenwich supporting a Silvertown Tunnel scheme which is likely increase pollution?

Reply -

I thank Alison Fricker for her question.

At present there is an imbalance between highway capacity and demand around the Blackwall Tunnel. This results in significant congestion with traffic regularly backing up to the narrow section of the A2 and serious air pollution problems arising from idling vehicles.

The Cabinet Member for Greener Greenwich supports the proposal for the proposed Silvertown Tunnel as the new crossing would provide congestion relief in addition to the other benefits such as the effect on the local economy. I share residents' concerns about congestion and pollution but believe that the tunnel, if accompanied by smart traffic management measures and continued encouragement of modal shift from private cars to public transport, will act to improve local air quality.