



**Questions from the Opposition and other Non-Cabinet Members.
Full Council – 19 September 2016**

<p>1. Question to the Cabinet Member for Environment from Councillor Ms Carol Shaw, Brondesbury Park</p> <p>Will the lead member inform residents living on Chamberlayne Road and All Souls Avenue , NW10- who have suffered serious frequent ongoing floods - who is responsible for sorting out the damage from these floods?</p> <p>Brent Council are responsible for the road gullies and Thames Water are responsible for the underground pipes, and they are passing responsibility for flood damage on to each other. Meanwhile residents suffer - so could Thames Water and Brent Council sort this matter out before the next serious flood damage?</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>Thank you for raising this concern. Whilst the Council has received very few complaints from residents of Chamberlayne Road and All Souls Road regarding flooding, I agree that clear processes and accountabilities are vital for protecting residents from the real damage that flooding can cause.</p> <p>When notified of flooding issues officers have acted in accordance of their duty under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and their role as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), to investigate and provide support and guidance. Our Flood Risk Strategy is available on our website and sets out our obligations.</p> <p>I have set out below the situation with regards the 2 specific roads you mention, which I hope provides assurance that we have taken appropriate action in both cases.</p> <p><u>Chamberlayne Road, London, NW10</u></p> <p>Officers first received a complaint of flooding from the resident of 238 Chamberlayne Road in September 2014. A site visit established the flooding was likely to be due to insufficient capacity in the sewer system during periods of heavy rainfall resulting in surcharge from the road gullies at the front of the property, and a manhole chamber located at the rear of the property. The public sewer is the responsibility of Thames Water and officers informed Thames Water in September 2014 of the ongoing issue.</p> <p>Thames Water commissioned a detailed sewer network survey of the property in February 2015. The survey identified few items of concern and also recommended</p>
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some mitigation measures to be carried out by Mr Ashar. Thames Water survey identified irregular connection between foul and surface water sewer. The diversion public sewer has been carried out without Thames Water permission. Thames Water concluded that they will not be carrying out any further investigations.

Officers received no further correspondence with the resident until September 2016 via a copy email to Thames Water reporting further flooding in June 2016. As a precautionary measure, we inspected and cleaned all gullies in Chamberlayne Road and no operational problems were identified. We also provided the resident with sand bags and offered advice of how to protect his property against flooding.

Thames Water carried out an investigation of their sewer network including CCTV survey and they indicated that there was a minor structural defect in 225mm diameter surface water sewer, which was re-lined. No major defects were encountered and Thames Water concluded that the flooding is likely to be due to inadequate capacity. We have provided sand bags to the resident and offered advice on flood defence measures.

Whilst it was established that this is not the Council's responsibility, we have been in regular communications with the resident and local Councillor and offered advice in our role as a Lead Local Flood Authority. This included information about the Government's £5K Repair and Renew grant for properties affected by flooding between 1st December 2013 to 31st March 2014 but unfortunately evidence of flooding was not provided by Mr Ashar for the period which was eligible for the grant.

All Souls Avenue, NW10'

Reports of flooding to the rear of 170 to 184 All Souls Avenue was first reported in April 2016. A site investigation established that the five gullies in this area were blocked and covered with leaves. Our contractor attended site on 7th May and cleaned the gullies. A further report of flooding was received on 13 May and our contractor attended the same day to pump out the water and clear the gullies. During this visit it was established that the gullies were not working efficiently with the probable cause being a defected pipe. Officers therefore arrange for a CCTV investigation of the pipes and also provided local residents with sand bags.

A CCTV survey was carried out on 14th July and the survey identified a collapsed pipe. An instruction was subsequently given to our contractor to repair the pipe and replace the existing small gullies with larger gully pots along with the installation of additional drainage to prevent surface water flowing towards the rear of the properties. The work commenced on 5th September and will be completed by 16th September. I sincerely hope this will improve the situation.

	<p>In summary, as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) we have a duty under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, to investigate all reported flooding incidents and also to prepare a Flood Risk Strategy. As part of the Flood Risk Strategy, it is our duty to investigate all flooding incidents and identify sources of flooding and liaise with appropriate Flood Risk Authorities. I hope this information gives you confidence that we have fulfilled our legislative duties that we have acted responsibly and investigated the two flooding incidents to the extent that we consider necessary and appropriate, in accordance with S19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.</p> <p>Regards Cllr Eleanor Southwood Cabinet Member, Environment</p>
<p>2. Question to the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills, Regeneration and Growth from Councillor Shafique Choudhary, Barnhill</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills, Regeneration and Growth explain what impact Brexit has had upon businesses in Brent?</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>Thank you Cllr Choudhary</p> <p>The impact of Brexit is still unclear for businesses in Brent and their representative bodies.</p> <p>This is largely due to the lack of clarity of the future deal Britain will achieve with Europe.</p> <p>There are signs of recruitment contracting significantly in the short term. For example, a snap poll following Brexit of the Institute of Directors suggested a quarter of firms were temporarily freezing recruitment. Also the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey suggested that employers in 6 out of 9 sectors surveyed are less optimistic about adding jobs in the wake of the Brexit vote, a survey has found. Financial services, construction and utilities reported the biggest falls in confidence.</p> <p>Most alarmingly, given the demographics of Brent, there is uncertainty regarding the status of EU nationals who form an integral part of the existing workforce and business lobby groups are seeking more clarity from government.</p> <p>I will be working closely with West London Business and the West London Economic Prosperity Board to drive a collaborative approach to ensuring as much confidence and support amongst local businesses as possible during this period as well as for EU nationals currently living and working in Brent.</p>

<p>3. Question to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People from Councillor Tom Miller, Willesden Green</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People outline what the Council is doing to support learning for children at GCSE and A-Level age?</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>Secondary school leaders have the responsibility for supporting the learning of children at GCSE and A Level not the council. The head teacher is held accountable for the quality of outcomes at GCSE and A Level by their governing boards. 13 of Brent's 15 secondary schools are academies (including one free school) and two are voluntary aided maintained faith schools. Academies are directly accountable to the Regional Schools Commissioner.</p> <p>Brent Council officers monitor the quality of outcomes for all schools and where there are concerns will raise them with the head teacher and where appropriate for academies with the academy trust or the Regional Schools Commissioner. For the two maintained schools this may involve intervention through a council led Rapid Improvement Group which monitors the impact of a school's improvement plan.</p> <p>To support secondary schools to improve the quality of provision for all children across Brent, there is a 14-19 Partnership which meets once a term to look at the overall outcomes for children in Brent and to share best practice for supporting their improvement.</p>
<p>4. Question to the Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities from Councillor Mary Daly, Sudbury</p> <p>Given that London's Labour Mayor has pledged to have two police officers in every London ward, could the Cabinet Member for Community Safety outline what steps he is taking to ensure that each Ward in Brent gets two dedicated police officers as quickly as possible?</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>There are a huge number of competing priorities for Police time - but nothing is more important than a visible Police presence, offering reassurance in the community.</p> <p>So Sadiq Khan's commitment to two dedicated Police Officers in each ward is extremely welcome.</p> <p>I met with the Deputy Mayor for Policing, Sophie Linden, last week and emphasised the need to roll out these new Officers as soon as possible. The Mayor has committed to ensure that all wards will have two Officers by the end of 2017 - with the most disadvantaged wards receiving a second officer by January 2017. Locally this means additional officers by January for Tokyngton, Barnhill, Mapesbury and Queensbury - with more to follow.</p> <p>When I met the Deputy Mayor I also emphasised the importance of retaining local Police Officers. Local policing should be built upon mutual trust and respect, so it is vital that Officers are based in the same ward long enough to establish strong ties with that community.</p>

	<p>Lest we forget, a year ago the previous Mayor of London was proposing to cut all Police Community Support Officers in London. It is refreshing to finally have a Mayor who understands the incredible importance of the bobby on the beat.</p>
<p>5. Question to the Cabinet Member for Housing from Councillor Janice Long, Dudden Hill</p> <p>Bob Blackman MP has proposed The Homelessness Reduction Bill which is second on the private members list and is supported by homeless charities and landlord associations.</p> <p>What are the implications for Brent Council if it becomes law?</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>Background Following the introduction of legislation by the Welsh Assembly imposing a homelessness prevention duty on local authorities, there has been speculation that an English equivalent would be included in the Housing and Planning Act. This did not happen and the government indicated that, while they looked favourably on the idea, the impact of the Welsh legislation would be assessed before taking it further. This approach has now been pre-empted by the introduction of the Private Members' Homelessness Reduction Bill by Bob Blackman MP. This followed publication of a report by the Communities and Local Government Committee, of which Mr Blackman is a member, which was critical of local authorities' work with homeless people.</p> <p>Main Features of the Bill To a large extent, the Bill picks up on elements of good practice in homelessness prevention at the local authority level. In summary, it proposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That anyone threatened with homelessness within 56 days (rather than 28) should receive assistance. • A duty to provide advice, with greater clarity about what that advice should comprise • A mandatory Code of Practice, with compliance monitored • A duty to assess and provide a "personal housing plan" • A duty to prevent homelessness • A duty to help to secure accommodation, running for up to 56 days and subject to other conditions but not to provide accommodation unless there is a priority need • A duty to provide accommodation for up to 56 days if a non-priority applicant has nowhere safe to stay. <p>Implications The Bill has attracted wide support from homelessness organisations. Local authorities and representative bodies have welcomed the underlying intentions of the Bill but have raised a number of concerns and these are relevant for Brent. Brent already has a strong focus on homelessness prevention and the Temporary Accommodation Reform Plan anticipates many aspects of the proposed prevention</p>

duty, including earlier intervention. Engagement around the review of the Housing Strategy has stressed the need to extend this approach to non-priority applicants. The Bill aims to ensure a consistent application of this kind of approach across all authorities and this is welcome in principle. However, the Bill as it stands has less welcome implications.

Responses from the LGA and individual authorities have described the Bill as unworkable in its present form. Unless there is a commitment to provide councils with the necessary resources, the vast majority will struggle to provide the level of advice and support services envisaged. In particular, concerns have been raised over the duty to provide accommodation to non-priority applicants for 56 days where they have no safe place to stay. Although it is not explicit in the Bill, this proposal is aimed primarily at rough sleepers, responding to the significant growth in rough sleeping that has been seen in many areas including Brent. As it stands, local authorities would struggle to meet the revenue costs of such provision and there is a lack of suitable specialised accommodation that would almost certainly mean excessive reliance on expensive and inappropriate options such as bed and breakfast.

Opponents of the Bill have also argued that it addresses the symptoms rather than the causes and that government should instead reconsider some elements of welfare reform, particularly Housing Benefit caps (the government has announced that these will not now apply to supported housing, which is a helpful concession in this context), and focus on addressing housing supply.

More generally, there are a number of areas in which the wording of the Bill is open to wide interpretation – for example, the meaning of no safe place to stay – leaving scope for legal challenge that could add to the complexity and cost of implementation.

It is not possible to provide an accurate estimate of potential costs but DCLG have said that they will publish an estimate shortly. So far, the government have given no indication that additional financial support would be made available. The Minister has expressed sympathy with the aims of the Bill and the CLG Committee are currently considering evidence as part of their scrutiny of the proposals. At this stage, it is not possible to predict the outcome with any certainty prior to the second reading in October but it seems likely that government will either consider amendments or revert to their original position that the Welsh experience would be assessed after a reasonable period before English legislation is introduced.

<p>6. Question to the Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities from Councillor Matt Kelcher, Kensal Green</p> <p>What can the Cabinet Member for Community Safety do to ensure that CCTV deployed in Brent meets community needs and the priorities of members in each ward?</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Cllr Kelcher and the other Members of his Committee for their excellent work on CCTV. This is a hugely important service which we very much hope to enhance in the near future.</p> <p>I meet regularly with Officers from the Community Safety Team to review priorities and to pass on concerns from Councillors and members of the public. However very strict rules govern the deployment of CCTV cameras.</p> <p>This is overwhelmingly positive because it rules out any kind of preferential treatment and ensures that the sole criteria for locating a camera is the amount of crime and antisocial behaviour which has been reported in that area. This evidence is reviewed by the Local Joint Action Group which brings together key stakeholders - further guaranteeing transparency in decision-making.</p> <p>However these rules can also be restrictive, particularly regarding brand new facilities where it is difficult to provide evidence of a track record of antisocial behaviour. I have therefore asked legal officers to review legislation to ensure that we can respond as flexibly as possible to newly emerging challenges.</p> <p>I will continue to work hard to ensure that CCTV cameras are deployed in the right places across the Borough. However all Members also have a vital role to play by working in their communities and encouraging residents to report all crime and all antisocial behaviour. More than anything else it is this evidence-base which will ensure that cameras are located where they are most needed.</p>
<p>7. Question to the Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities from Councillor Reg Colwill, Kenton</p> <p>The residents of the Preston Ward have done a fantastic job in keeping the library active and working to make sure that all the residents have access to books in a very professional manner.</p> <p>Will the Council now honour what they told the residents that is that they would give them the library to continue their good work?</p> <p>If yes, the Committee running the library would like to know when.</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>Preston Community Library have done an absolutely superb job in keeping a library running in extremely difficult circumstances. They have delivered a truly inclusive range of exceptional activities and have brought the whole community together.</p> <p>I would make the small point that although many of the Library volunteers are indeed Preston residents, many others live in Barnhill and surrounding wards - they all deserve immense credit.</p> <p>We plan to redevelop the Preston Library building to provide new housing, however these plans will also incorporate high quality new community space. Cabinet felt that</p>

	<p>the published report paving the way for this redevelopment did not sufficiently recognise the excellent work of the Preston Community Library, nor did it do enough to pledge ongoing support for that library.</p> <p>Consequently Cabinet committed to take three months to work with Preston Community Library, as well as the community libraries in Cricklewood, Kensal Rise and Barham Park, to develop a new Community Library Strategy over and above which the Council has a duty to provide. In addition to broader issues, this strategy will directly address access to the new Preston Library building.</p> <p>Cabinet has also stated a very clear preference that both the tender process and the rental level for the new community space at the redeveloped building should be clearly weighted towards social value, rather than financial value.</p> <p>All four Brent community libraries are extremely important partners of the Brent Library Service. We are grateful for their excellent work and look forward to working with them to develop an exciting new strategy to assist in securing the long term future of each library.</p>
<p>8. Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Joshua Mitchell Murray, Northwick Park</p> <p>Given the potentially punitive upcoming boundary changes, what representations will the Leader of the Council make to ensure Brent residents are properly represented on any future constituency map</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>Thank you Cllr Murray.</p> <p>On the face of it, this is a Tory hijack of Democracy. Brent's Constituencies, under these initial proposals, are being carved up.</p> <p>I agree with the Electoral Reform Society –areas like Brent are being worst hit.</p> <p>This review – based on registered voters – and not the population – is an insult to democracy, and the people of Brent.</p> <p>Young people, ethnic minorities, and those living in the private rented sector are less likely to register to vote than others.</p> <p>Despite the work carried out by the Council - inspired by the Scrutiny review into IER - Brent, by the sheer nature of its population, will be punished if these plans go ahead.</p> <p>I would encourage everyone, residents, and members to get involved in the consultation process.</p>

	<p>Come to the Brent Connects meetings, make your views known at the public hearings, and have input at our Member Briefing session so that all our voices are heard and we influence the final proposals.</p>
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