

Written Members Questions to the Royal Borough of Greenwich Cabinet from the Opposition Conservative Group – December 2024

Questions from Councillor Matt Hartley

1 To the Leader of the Council

Can the Leader of the Council outline what changes he intends to make to his administration's policies and approach, in the light of recent events and feedback from residents in the south of the borough, and since the last time I asked him the question in July?

2 To the Leader of the Council

It has been reported and is widely known that Councillor Ann-marie Cousins is no longer the Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture and Communities.

- What are the reasons for this change to the Leader's Cabinet?
- Why was no public announcement of this change made?
- Who is the new Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture and Communities?

3 To the Leader of the Council

In October, the council's Cabinet approved delegated authority for the future sale of three council-owned car parks on Old Dover Road at Blackheath Standard, in Charlton Village, and Avery Street Car Park in Plumstead. The Leader of the Council (and the Cabinet Member for Planning, Estate Renewal & Development) will be consulted before any decision to dispose of each car park is made.

In advance of his being consulted in his role as Leader of the Council, will he request that officers conduct an Economic Impact Assessment on the sale of each car park, so he can fully assess the impact on local small businesses in each case before he gives his view?

4 To the Leader of the Council

In October, media outlets reported the Leader of the Council's acceptance of free concert tickets for the Brit Awards from AEG, which has substantial interests in the borough. The acceptance of the free tickets was properly declared in his register of interests as required. There has been no suggestion of wrongdoing by anyone involved.

The Leader's decision to accept the tickets has been criticised by Sir Alistair Graham, former Chair of the Committee for Standards in Public Life, who told the London Centric outlet: "Receiving so much free benefit as leader of the council, when there's a potential conflict of interest, is just not acceptable. Clearly, the people offering the hospitality had a vested interest in seeking his support for planning proposals and he should have protected his independence by saying 'that's very kind of you but I can't possibly accept such a benefit.'"

While there has clearly been no actual wrongdoing in this case, ensuring there is no perception of conflict of interest is also important.

Can I give the Leader of the Council the opportunity to comment on Sir Alistair Graham's remarks? And secondly, what approach will he take when offered similar gifts in the future?

5 To the Leader of the Council

What representations did the Leader of the Council personally make to the Mayor of London on the issue of Silvertown Tunnel charges and what response did he receive?

6 To the Leader of the Council

What framework is in place to assess the value to RBG of marketing/corporate partnerships such as the 'GreenWitch' promotion partnership with Universal Pictures? And in this specific example, what payment was made by Universal Pictures to RBG?

7 To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability and Transport

Why were the signs for the Greenwich and Blackheath LTN not fully installed by the first day of the scheme's operation? Will the Deputy Leader look into concerns that some of the signs are ambiguous and confusing, particularly in relation to the blue badge symbol?

8 To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability and Transport

As part of the implementation of the Greenwich and Blackheath LTN how many a) residents and b) paid-for parking spaces have been replaced with 'no waiting at any time' designations?

9 To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability and Transport

Can the Cabinet Member set out in detail how the Council plans to measure the impact of the Greenwich and Blackheath LTN on boundary roads and neighbouring areas? Will this monitoring cover all boundary roads, including roads on Chalton Slopes and in Blackheath? When will the results of this monitoring be published?

10 To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability and Transport

Now that the Council's emissions-based residential parking charges scheme is more than a year old, can the Cabinet Member please provide the following specific information. In the first year of the scheme:

- A) How many residential parking permits were purchased?
- B) Of these permits purchases, how many were renewals?
- C) What was the average price paid for a parking permit overall?
- D) Of permit purchases that were renewals, what was the average price paid for renewal?
- E) How many and what proportion of renewals resulted in the resident paying MORE than under the previous system?
- F) How many and what proportion of renewals resulted in the resident paying LESS than under the previous system?
- G) Of the renewals that resulted in the resident paying MORE, what was the average PRICE they paid?

- H) Of the renewals that resulted in the resident paying MORE, what was the average INCREASE they paid compared to the previous year?
- I) Of the renewals that resulted in the resident paying LESS, what was the average PRICE they paid?
- J) Of the renewals that resulted in the resident paying LESS, what was the average DECREASE they paid compared to the previous year?

11 To the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Social value

Members of Overview and Scrutiny were informed in the A1 2024/25 Savings Tracker that £9m of the £33.7m agreed savings in the Medium Term Financial Strategy are “forecasted not to be made in 2024/25”, with £6.3m due to timing issues, £2.4m due to delivery issues, and £0.3m deemed to be “not possible”.

What conclusions has the Cabinet Member reached from the Q1 Savings Tracker and subsequent MI? And what corrective action is in place to make up these savings?

12 To the Cabinet Member for Community Safety

As the Cabinet Member knows, more than 1,500 people have now signed our petition against the Metropolitan Police’s intention to dispose of the William Barefoot Drive police base on the Coldharbour Estate, which will leave communities in the very south of the borough less safe. This petition was handed in at City Hall in November.

In September the Cabinet Member, in consultation with the Leader, declined my earlier request for a meeting with ward councillors to discuss this, on the basis that “we do not think it is the right time to meet with you, as the closure decision is not one that sits with the Council.”

Can I ask the Cabinet Member:

- What is the Council’s position on the planned closure of Coldharbour Police Base?
- What if any representations she has made, as Cabinet Member to Community Safety, to the Metropolitan Police on the planned closure of Coldharbour Police Base?
- What if any representations she has made, as Cabinet Member to Community Safety, to the Mayor of London on the planned closure of Coldharbour Police Base?
- Has any communication been received from the Metropolitan Police to the Council regarding the lease of the Coldharbour Police Base?

13 To the Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture and Communities

What assessment has the Council made on the impact of the increase in Employer NI contributions on the community and voluntary sector in our borough?

14 To The Cabinet Member for Health, Adults Social Care and Borough of Sanctuary

What assessment has the Council made on the impact of the increase in Employer NI contributions on social care providers in the borough?

15 To the Cabinet Member for Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the work underway to turnaround the repairs service, and specifically:

1. What have been the key outcomes of the Repairs Service Transformation Plan to date?
2. What is the current size of the backlog of open jobs?
3. What is the current YTD performance against these indicators for completed jobs:
Average days to complete a non-urgent repair (target 15)
Percentage of Urgent Repairs completed within target (target 95%)
Percentage of appointments kept (target 92%)
Resident satisfaction with completed repairs (92%)

16 To the Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business, Skills and Greenwich Supports

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the Council's statutory consultation on the Council's proposed changes to the Council Tax Support scheme?

Questions from Councillor Charlie Davis

1 To the Leader of the Council

What representations as the Leader of the Council made to central Government on changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance?

2 To the Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business, Skills and Greenwich Supports

Can the Cabinet Member confirm how many additional pensioners in the borough are now receiving pension credit compared to this time last year?

3 To the Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business, Skills and Greenwich Supports

What advice is the Greenwich Supports service providing to pensioners who have had their entitlement to the Winter Fuel Allowance removed?

4 To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability and Transport

Can the Cabinet Member confirm what savings were estimated by the Council when 'Cleansweep' was disbanded in 2016 and Street Services was set up? Were these savings realised by the Council in the intervening years?

5 To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability and Transport

Can the Cabinet Member confirm the total value of any capital investment and revenue investment that was required as part of the 2016 disbandment of 'Cleansweep' and set up of Street Services?

6 To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability and Transport

Can the Cabinet Member confirm when she expects plans for the Eltham to Greenwich Cycle Network Development Scheme to be finalised and when she expects the scheme to go out for consultation?

7 To the Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business, Skills and Greenwich Supports

Can the Cabinet Member confirm whether the Council has met with the new owner of 20 Well Hall Road to discuss their plans for the future of the site?

Questions from Councillor Pat Greenwell

1. To the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

The Harris Boys 6th form college at the University site on Bexley Road was earmarked for development due to an anticipated rise in the need for Year 7 Boys school placements .We are now told that these places are no longer needed. What is the latest update from the Department for Education?

2. To the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Has there been an increase in the number of Private School pupils seeking to enter the Greenwich Education system?

3. To the Cabinet Member for Planning, Estate Renewal and Development

Is there any update on the SEND facility on the old Wide Horizons site on Bexley Road?

4. To the Cabinet Member for Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness

Is it correct that Greenwich Council will not cover household repairs for the first year after there has been a mutual exchange?

5. To the Cabinet Member for Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness

How many empty Council properties does the Council have at present?

6. To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Sustainability and Transport

What is the Summer watering programme for our streets ?

7. To the Cabinet Member for Planning, Estate Renewal and Development

Has there been any further interest in the development of The Tramshed site in Eltham?