

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR
SIMON MORRALL**

“Land Search Requests”

Question:

In the last 12 months what is the average time taken for the council to fully respond to Land Search requests for conveyancing and how many in that time have taken longer than 7 working days?

Answer:

During the 12 months 1st September 2019 to 31st August 2020, a total of 4,446 LLC1 and CON29 searches were processed. The average response time was 3.71 days with 2 taking more than 7 days.

The searches team has also received 950 letter requests in the 12 months 1st September 2019 to 31st August 2020 for additional information regarding highways. The average response time for dealing with these was 18.7 days. Of these 66 were completed in less than 7 days.

The closure of Council offices has resulted in officers receiving a surge in additional search requests under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR). In normal circumstances these would be undertaken by private search agents at Lancaster Circus utilising publicly available systems. Council officers have to date dealt with 2,363 EIR requests in addition to normal workload. In this context, and that of the Government's stimulation of the housing market, delays have been encountered in processing this significant uplift in requests.

In mitigation, an additional 7 members of staff have now been trained and their duties reprioritised to support the substantive searches team of 2 officers. In addition, a new online service using Microsoft teams has been put in place to allow private search agents to resume their work with officer assistance. Search agents are pleased with the new system and have responded positively to it. Since its introduction they are reporting to be back to normal timescales having dealt with their backlogs for EIR searches.

Further efficiencies including the introduction of e-payments and e-forms are being investigated.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR
DEBBIE CLANCY**

“Staff”

Question:

Are staff responsible for carrying out land searches able to fully carry out their jobs from home with at least the same level of promptness as in the office? If not, when did they return to the office?

Answer:

Staff responsible for carrying out land searches are able to fully carry out their roles from home and continue to do so in the context of arrangements put in place to mitigate and control the COVID-19 virus. The searches process involves accessing data intensive systems and mapping, with some slowness experienced by officers due to home internet bandwidth and reliability limitations. The Council has provided 4G dongles to improve performance in this respect.

The closure of Council offices has resulted in officers receiving an additional 2,363 search requests under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR), that in normal circumstances would be undertaken by private search agents at Lancaster Circus utilising publicly available systems. In this context and that of the Government’s stimulation of the housing market, delays have been encountered in processing this significant uplift in requests.

In mitigation, an additional 7 members of staff have now been trained and their duties reprioritised to support the substantive searches team of 2 officers. In addition, a new online service using Microsoft teams has been put in place to allow private search agents to resume their work with officer assistance.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR
ADAM HIGGS**

“Average Build Cost”

Question:

What is the average build cost of each property type in the Athletes Village as per current business plan?

Answer:

The gross construction costs before taking account of the grant funding for the PBRs and sale receipts included on the RFBC approved by Cabinet in March 2020 are as set out in the following table:

Plot	Property Type	Number of Units	Estimated cost (£'m)	Cost per unit (£)
1	Apartments	125	31.094	248,752
3/4/5	Family Housing	58	15.000	258,620
6	Extra Care	268	64.848	241,970
7	Apartments	270	65.326	241,948
8	Apartments	217	39.290	181,060
9	Apartments	213	38.774	182,038

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR
DAVID BARRIE**

“Projected Sale Cost”

Question:

What is the average projected sale cost of each property type in the Athletes Village as per the current disposal strategy?

Answer:

The disposal strategy for the accommodation to be provided at Perry Barr is currently being developed for the Council by Avison Young, taking into account the decision announced on 11 August 2020 that the scheme would no longer be used to accommodate athletes and officials for the 2022 Commonwealth Games. This will provide a robust assessment of the likely disposal proceeds for the overall scheme, that will help to fund construction and site assembly costs alongside the various grants secured to support the regeneration, including £148m from Government and £20m from the Combined Authority.

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WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR
DEIRDRE ALDEN

“German Market”

Question:

What costs will the Council incur should the German Market need to be cancelled this year due to Covid without any notice?

Answer:

The Frankfurt Christmas Market is one of Birmingham’s great festive events, attracting millions of people to the city centre – so it is disappointing we won’t be hosting the market this year, but I welcome the organiser’s decision to put the public’s health and safety first. It is not envisaged that there will be any cost to the city council as a result of the organisers decision.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR
MATT BENNETT**

“Maintenance on Council Asset”

Question:

Since 2012 can you provide a list of all maintenance carried out on each council asset (non-housing)?

Answer:

The information requested would take too much officer time to access and collate. If there are specific council assets of interest, please advise and officers will look at them on an individual basis.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR
DAVID PEARS**

“Local Monuments”

Question:

Will the Leader commit to publishing in full his review into the appropriateness of local monuments and statues on public land and council property for debate at a Council meeting before any statues are removed?"

Answer:

Other than for the standard reasons of development (such as Paradise Circus in the city centre) or dilapidation or if the statue is deemed unsafe, there is currently no intention to remove city council owned statues or monuments.

Officers will however be undertaking a review of the appropriateness of the current interpretation of controversial subjects in the public realm, several of which were identified as part of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Where relevant, these statues and monuments will have a refreshed and updated interpretation as part of a holistic portrait of the subjects concerned. This could include new plaques and the introduction of technology such as QR codes where people can access fuller details of the subject via their mobile device.

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WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR
ROBERT ALDEN

“Brummie Rule”

Question:

Will you commit to investigating the possibility of a ‘Brummie rule’ for jobs with the City Council to ensure better representation at all levels of the organisation of people who live in the city?

Answer:

The council are proud that our workforce is already predominantly ‘Brummies’, with 91% of staff having a Birmingham home postcode.

We have also already committed that new apprentices hired by the council will mainly be Birmingham residents.

On 8th September 2020, the Cabinet approved a report called ‘Everyone’s Battle, Everyone’s Business: Tackling Inequality in Birmingham’ that seeks to address improved representation across all equality characteristics.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR
JON HUNT**

‘Athletes Village Decision’

Question:

Could the Leader set out the process by which it was decided that the new village in Perry Barr would no longer be used as an Athletes Village for 2022, setting out his own role in the making of this decision?

Answer:

The Commonwealth Games Federation approved the final decision to switch to a campus village model as a result of the challenges to project delivery caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

This was via their Executive Board on July 31 of this year.

Prior to the pandemic, the delivery plans showed that the project was on track to be delivered in time for the Games, but the Birmingham 2022 Games Partners also had a range of contingency plans available in case any unforeseen events hit the project.

The Birmingham 2022 board, which I sit on, agreed its preference for a campus village solution, if an alternative was ultimately needed.

However as stated above, the authority to approve a final decision rested with the CGF who, based on all of the information available, made their decision on July 31.

The reason the CGF was required to approve this decision is because it was a material change to the Host City Contract

For clarity, I do not sit on the CGF Executive Board.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

WRITTEN QUESTION TO LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR MORRIAM JAN

‘Perry Barr Regeneration Governance’

Question:

Now that the Perry Barr Regeneration project is being reviewed and is no longer needed for the Commonwealth Games, could the Leader assure Council that meaningful governance structures will be created for the project that involve the Ward Councillors that are affected, ie those of us in Perry Barr, Aston and Birchfield wards, bearing in mind his previous commitments to take action on this in line with good practice developed for other regeneration projects?

Answer:

The delivery of much needed housing and associated transport infrastructure and public realm improvements, remain vital to the future sustainable growth in our City, and is one of the Council's priorities for delivery. This is why I led the discussions with central Government to ensure that all of the funding promised to the city council to deliver this scheme remains committed.

The decision not to use the Perry Barr Residential Scheme, which is just one part of a wider programme of regeneration works in Perry Barr, to accommodate athletes and officials at Games-time means that there is an opportunity to reconsider how that element of the overall programme is delivered, to ensure the best possible outcomes to meet the councils long term requirements. The delivery of the transport infrastructure projects will still be delivered prior to the 2022 Games and will facilitate improved access to and from key venues during the Games in this part of the city as well as providing a legacy.

Officers will continue to ensure there is effective Governance in place for this programme of works and will continue to engage with local councillors on this and future phases of the wider regeneration programme of works as they progress.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM
COUNCILLOR GARETH MOORE**

“Complaints”

Question:

What is the average time taken to resolve a complaint to the Council and what percentage take longer than 10 days?

Answer:

Based on the current financial year performance data (April-2020 to July-2020):

- On average, complaints take 5.51 working days to resolve.
- 18% of complaints take longer than 10 working days to resolve.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM
COUNCILLOR RON STORER**

“Unresolved Complaints”

Question:

What percentage of complaints to the council are escalated from the first stage due to the complainant feeling the matter is unresolved?

Answer:

Based on the current financial year performance data (April-2020 to July-2020):

8.2% of complaints received were escalated from the initial investigation stage to the next stage.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S WELLBEING
COUNCILLOR MAUREEN CORNISH**

“School Support Services”

Question:

Have all school support services (educational psychologists, communication Autism Team etc.) resumed school visits now all schools are fully reopen? If not, why not and how are these important services being delivered instead?

Answer:

For each of the school support service areas risk assessments have been undertaken and school visits are taking place, with many restricting access to one visit per day to minimise the risk of transmission. Although it is important to note that some settings are expressing a preference for ongoing virtual meetings whilst they are settling in the new intake of children. Allowing schools to ensure they are meeting all requirements in the current COVID environment before receiving external visitors so a blended model of support will be ongoing. Larger meetings will continue to be held virtually.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S WELLBEING
FROM COUNCILLOR JOHN LINES**

“Home to School Transport Arrangements”

Question:

By what date did all parents who use home to school transport receive all necessary details of the arrangements and route for the September term?

Answer:

Letters were sent in stages according to school start dates. Schools due to start for 1, 2, 3 September letters were sent by 28 August 2020 either via the postal system which arrived Saturday or via the contractors on 29 August 2020 which were handed out in person by the contractor meet and greet door to door.

Additional letters were sent out on 3 September 2020 with all being sent 5 September 2020.

WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR GARY SAMBROOK

"Home to School Transport Cancellations"

Question:

In the first week of school reopening, how many routes on the Home to School Transport were cancelled?

Answer:

In the first 5 days of the new school term (to 8 September) there were just over 120 routes cancelled out of 3000 routes. This equates to an average of 30 routes on any given school day. The cancellation rate is 4% which is not acceptable but we are working in unprecedented times and we have also seen a 25% increase in demand for home to school travel.

This academic term we have an additional 173 routes to cope with school bubbles and to remain in line with government guidelines.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S WELLBEING
FROM COUNCILLOR MEIRION JENKINS**

“Complaints”

Question:

In the first week of school reopening, how many complaints did the council receive about the home to school transport service?

Answer:

We have received 5 formal complaints and 5 formal councillor enquiries since 1st September 2020.

In addition we have received a significant number of emails on a variety of home to school transport related matters that are currently being dealt with by the service.

WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR CHARLOTTE HODIVALA

"Breakdown of Contracts"

Question:

At more than one Scrutiny meeting I have asked – and been promised – a breakdown of the contracts for home to school transport detailing what is actually contracted and paid for. Despite promises, this has still not been provided. Can you please provide that detail here along with an explanation of why the executive and officers were unable to respond to legitimate requests from scrutiny that they committed to providing?

Response:

The below outlines what is covered in the contract in terms of the specifics for this service and the clauses are underpinned by general contractual conditions to ensure all obligations and commitments are clear for both parties.

As an overview, the contracts confirm that the duties of BCC are to arrange transport for children who are in specific circumstances, provide context to the Home to School Service at BCC and they outline the Council's vision to ensure every eligible pupil is able to access safe and efficient services that are reliable and flexible, and are appropriate to their needs. The aim of ensuring pupils arrive at their destination safely, giving them the best possible opportunity to start the day ready to learn, is clear.

The below areas are then covered in detail within the contract service specification, stating exactly what the providers and the Council's obligations are for each area:

1. Legislation

Requirement to comply with specific legislation and guidance (e.g. Department for Education (DfE) Home to School Transport Statutory Guidance July 2016; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance> and the DfE Transport to education and training for people aged 16 and over <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-transport-to-education-and-training>) and the BCC Code of Conduct, along with the requirements relating to Enhanced DBS & Barred List Checks.

2. Communication

Confirmation of how bookings, work scheduling and co-ordinating effective transportation arrangements between the Council and provider will operate.

3. Health & Safety

Requirements detailed specifically including emergency arrangements, accident reporting, needs assessments, safety on board and compliance with school site arrangements.

4. Licensing

Requirements in terms of Private Hire, PCV, taxation and documentation.

5. Safeguarding

Detailed requirements covering expected standard, authorised provider employees, DBS, training, accident and incident reporting, emergency procedures and Councils right to audit.

6. Service Performance Standards & Penalty Points

Reliability, codes of conduct, contract performance monitoring eg route checks/school visits and the penalty point system is detailed. For example, the providers must supply evidence of employees, vehicle licenses, daily vehicle check reports, maintenance and MOT reports etc upon request.

7. Satisfaction Surveys, Comments, Compliments & Complaints

Feedback from schools and families is requested to monitor and assess standards. Escalations, policies and the ability to remove particular employee(s) are included.

8. Seating Capacity

Reinforcing vehicle licensing and physical requirements for users.

9. Pick Up & Drop Off Arrangements

Authorised points only must be used. Parent/carer to board child and Provider to ensure child is only handed over to responsible adult.

10. Pupil Guides

Outlines the process of picking up and dropping off the guides

11. Journey Times

This covers recommended journey times, timings for school drop offs/pick ups, delays, cancellations, school closures and breakdowns.

12. Route Work with additional clauses around SEND

Describes who may travel in the vehicles, continuity of staff and how changes are managed, route efficiencies, parent/carer responsibility to accompany child to/from vehicle and how equipment changes will be managed.

13. Vehicle standards, design requirements and equipment

Minimum standards eg MOT specified along with legislative requirements detailed.

14. Additional provisions for transporting children

Requirements on signage, safety specifics such as booster seats/restraints etc, absence reporting specified.

15. Vehicles carrying wheelchair passengers

DoT Guidance specified, driver responsibilities on loading, securing and unloading wheelchair users detailed and specifics on equipment and fittings.

16. Provision for complex needs children and associated risk assessments. Requirement for both parties to jointly risk assessment and create travel plans for complex needs children.

General Contractual Points for note:

- The Home to School Transport Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) was established on 1 November 2019 and set up for 4 year period from contract award date and has an annual value of approx. £10.5M.
- National Express Accessible Transport Ltd (NEAT) hold a separate contract with BCC owing to collapse of a previous incumbent supplier ATG. This has an annual value of approximately £6.2M
- In total there are 17 commissioned suppliers currently providing transport to BCC covering approximately 190 schools. The list of suppliers is on the next page.
- Over 4000 children are on contracted transport.
- The majority of children are transported in 9-16 seater minibuses. Approximately 800 children are transported in cars/MPVs.
- NEAT are the largest provider transporting approximately 1500 children on 215 minibuses daily (pre-COVID figures).
- All providers are paid on 30 day terms in consideration of the satisfactory performance of their obligations.

There has been a delay in finalising the information to this request.

In response to the challenges that have presented and a drive to improve data and contract management, alongside embedding more effective communication, a procurement activity has been undertaken to commission a new IT system. A preferred provider has now been selected and a contract awarded. There is a mobilisation plan in place to ensure the key milestones are achieved with a view to full implementation across the academic year 2020/21. The new IT system will include a central, secure location for storage of information enabling robust data, contract and communication management. A suite of reports will be available that will allow for responsive, up to date, validated, accurate and timely information to be provided.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S WELLBEING
FROM COUNCILLOR ALEX YIP**

“Breakdown of Contracts”

Question:

On how many occasions in the last 3 years has a child being taken to the wrong school\placement by the Home to School Transport Service?

Answer:

In September 2020, 7 children were taken to the wrong school by a home to school transport provider. A full investigation is underway to understand the reasons why and fully address the issues.

In the previous 3 academic years this has happened on one further occasion.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S WELLBEING
FROM COUNCILLOR BOB BEAUCHAMP**

“SEND Expenditure”

Question:

Please provide a breakdown of expenditure on SEND mediation services in the last academic year by provider and by type (refusal to assess/refusal to issue/content of EHCP).

Answer:

Payments made to SEND mediation services in the last year by provider:

Provider	Amount	Refusal to Assess	Refusal to Issue	Content of EHCP
Kids	£42,077.40	74	29	54
Prime resolution	£2,460.00	2	1	1
Resolution Dynamics Ltd	£75,260.00	61	24	0

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S WELLBEING
FROM COUNCILLOR ADAM HIGGS****“EHCP's”****Question:**

The Council has a statutory duty to have reviewed, amended and finalised EHCPs for young people transferring to Post-16 provision this September by 31st March this year. This duty was not affected by the Coronavirus Act. Please tell us how many of these plans should have been issued (in numerical and percentage terms) and how many actually were issued by the deadline?

Answer:

While it is correct to say that, for this particular cohort, the duty to amend and finalise EHCPs by the deadline of 31 March 2020 was not affected by the Coronavirus Act, there were nevertheless significant practical issues resulting from the Covid 19 crisis that affected our ability to comply with the deadline. A major emergency was declared by the Council on 24 March 2020 and all staff were by then complying with the instruction to work from home. This impacted on the ability to print amended EHCPs and issue letters remotely via a temporary mailing service. As a result, while notices of intended decisions were issued in February 2020 in accordance with our usual practice, final EHCPs were not issued until 27 April 2020.

Number of Pupils Transitioning to Post 16 in September 2020	664	
Notice of Intent issued in February 2020	645	97%
Finals issued to Date (All issued on 27 April 2020)	658	99.1%
Finals issued by deadline	0	0%

WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S WELLBEING FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID BARRIE

"Numbers"

Question:

For routes from September 2020, what is the average number of children on each bus in the home to school transport service, and what is the highest number on any one bus?

Answer:

The maximum number of children transport on a single vehicle is 11.

On average the estimated number of children on each bus is six. With the lowest number being one.

The largest vehicles used are 16-seater minibuses.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S WELLBEING
FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID PEARS**

“Length of Route”

Question:

For routes from September 2020 what is the average length of each route in the home to school transport service and what is the longest route (in time)?

Answer:

This information is not currently available. We have contacted operators to ask for this information be provided by the end of this week. This information will then be collated.

It is important to note that the average length of routes this academic year has changed due to new COVID ways of working introduced, which has led to additional routes being put on to maintain safety of school bubbles.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE
COUNCILLOR PETER FOWLER**

“Action Plan”

Question:

Can you publish the action plan for a second wave in the Covid pandemic you referenced at the last Council meeting?

Answer:

There was no mention of an action plan by the Cabinet Member. There is on the City Council’s website a copy of the Birmingham Covid-19 Local Outbreak Plan.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOMES AND
NEIGHBOURHOODS FROM COUNCILLOR KEN WOOD**

“Appeals”

Question:

What is the average time taken to review appeals against removal from the housing register and how many cases over the last 3 years have taken longer than 8 weeks?

Answer:

In the 3 years 1/9/17-1/9/20 the team completed 6322 reviews, so in the period in question just over 10% of reviews went over 8 weeks.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOMES AND
NEIGHBOURHOODS FROM COUNCILLOR DEBBIE CLANCY**

“Housing”

Question:

When was the last time council properties in the following roads in Longbridge and West Heath were painted? Edgehill Road, Chirbury Grove (off Edgehill), Fairfax Road, Merrishaw Road, Condoval Road, Broseley Avenue, Clunbury Road, Titterstone Road, Cropredy Road, Clee Road, Sibdon Grove

Answer:

The last painting programme on this estate was in 2005/06, as part of the “Decent Home” initiative. The City Council is experiencing significant pressure on the capital investment programme, the housing division is undertaking a complete review of the programme to identify opportunities for additional investment in the Council Stock over the forthcoming years.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOMES &
NEIGHBOURHOODS COUNCILLOR BABER BAZ**

‘Digital Autopsy Scanner Trial Up-Date’

Question:

Can you provide an update on the Digital Autopsy Scanner trial?

Answer:

Birmingham and Solihull Coroners service have sent 441 cases for CT scans in the period 1 July 19 to 31 July 2020, figures for August 20 are not yet available. 240 scans have identified cause of death and 201 cases have required an invasive post mortem following the CT scan.

Since July 2019 nine scans have been requested by families with three identifying cause of death, (there have been no family requests since the last update at the beginning of July), as well as five requests from the Police with three requiring an invasive post mortem.

The results have not achieved expected levels of diagnosis from CT scans, but this continues to improve, has been steadily improving during the trial period and the CT scan consistently achieves 52% diagnosis of cause of death. The City Council has met its obligations in terms of the numbers (250) for the pilot scheme. The pathologists remain concerned about the reporting, the inability to discuss cases and the ‘mechanical’ nature of the process. The Senior Coroner met with i-Gen and pathologists to work through these issues to ensure there were improvements in performance. Some operational issues have been addressed over transport of bodies and scheduling of scans by the Interim Assistant Director.

The formal review of the pilot has been delayed due to the pressure of work on the service due to Covid19, but is due to take place in the coming months, so in order to maintain the service an extension of the pilot has been agreed. In this extension a commitment has been given to send 500 bodies in the coming year. This will enable the future service provision to be considered and procured.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOMES AND
NEIGHBOURHOODS FROM COUNCILLOR EWAN MACKEY**

“Drainage Gullies Cemeteries”

Question:

Who is responsible for clearing and cleaning out the drainage gullies on roads within our cemeteries?

Answer:

The Cemetery Operatives are responsible for the clearing and cleaning of the drainage gullies within the city cemeteries. In addition, a roadsweeper is brought in to clean the roadways when required, which is usually more often throughout the Autumn/Winter period or following heavy winds due to the increased leaf fall.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOMES AND
NEIGHBOURHOODS FROM COUNCILLOR BRUCE LINES**

“Maintenance Programme”

Question:

What routine maintenance programme is in place for the clearing and cleaning out the drainage gullies on roads within our cemeteries?

Answer:

Cemetery Operatives regularly sweep the roads and pathways and a roadsweeper is brought in to clean the roadways when required, which is usually more often throughout the autumn/Winter period or following heavy winds due to the increased leaf fall.

Due to minimal leaf fall during the summer period the roadsweeper had not been required for several months.

Due to recent weather changes, the roadsweeper has been attending relevant sites once every two weeks.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOMES AND
NEIGHBOURHOODS FROM COUNCILLOR ADAM HIGGS**

“Handsworth Cemetery”

Question:

On what exact date were the gullies last cleaned/cleared at Handsworth Cemetery last cleaned prior to the recent flooding?

Answer:

The exact date is not recorded but the last time that the gullies were swept was in July 2020.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR STREET SCENE AND
PARKS FROM COUNCILLOR BOB BEAUCHAMP**

“Slab and Cab”

Question:

Are all relevant waste employees now fully trained and fully utilising the Slab in the Cab technology or is anyone still working of paper copies of forms?

Answer:

The original ‘Slab in the Cab’ technology was installed in 2015 and extensive training began in October 2015 until August 2016. All relevant staff were given a briefing, a practical demonstration, a fully comprehensive handbook and later a FAQ sheet.

The current technology is now due to be replaced. Some of the equipment is failing therefore teams are operating with manual documentation where necessary.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR STREET SCENE & PARKS
FROM COUNCILLOR NEIL EUSTACE**

‘Early Binmen’

Question:

Residents have reported some crews starting work as early as 5am or even earlier from the Perry Barr depot. Whilst the industry of the crews is to be applauded, it does inevitably lead to complaints about disturbance at that time of the morning. Could the Cabinet Member explain the benefits of such early starts?

Answer:

During the Covid 19 pandemic it has been necessary to stagger the start times of all the crews to minimise the potential contact within the depot and this has resulted in earlier start times. We decided to start earlier rather than later to ensure that our crews can safely drive around the City whilst causing the minimum amount of disruption.

I agree the teams have been incredibly industrious during the pandemic and maintained our important collection service. I will ask depot managers to reiterate to crews the need to operate as quietly as possible.

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WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR STREET SCENE & PARKS FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL TILSLEY

‘Flytipping’

Question:

Could the Cabinet Member provide a report on the number of complaints about flytipping and the number of incidents logged by month for the last two years?

Answer:

Table 1 and 2, below show: (1) the service enquiries recorded in the Council’s waste management and regulatory teams databases that reference involvement of or that were categorised at the initial reporting stage as relating to waste/rubbish; and (2) the incidents reportable as ‘fly-tipping’ under the statutory DEFRA’s Waste Data Flow arrangements.

The total number of service enquiries/reports does not equate to the number of reportable incidents, which is due to a number of reasons which includes, but that is not limited to: duplicate enquiries/incidents being reported more than once, by different reporters or on multiple dates or to different council teams; enquiries for which linked records are created in the electronic database for the purpose of assisting with job management; and enquiries where waste/rubbish may not subsequently be identified as the route cause or primary element of a multi-issue referral.

Table 1			
Financial Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Apr	2447	2579	2173
May	2769	2200	2380
Jun	2825	2006	3369
Jul	2754	2947	3799
Aug	2480	2209	
Sep	2119	2273	
Oct	2203	2223	
Nov	2027	1962	
Dec	1748	1925	
Jan	2310	2277	
Feb	1792	2091	
Mar	2114	1606	
TOTAL	27588	26298	7922

Table 2			
Financial Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Apr	1631	1843	2001
May	1351	1764	1667
Jun	1473	1441	2106
Jul	1801	2068	
Aug	1619	1756	
Sep	1494	1834	
Oct	1371	1958	
Nov	1234	1781	
Dec	1170	1855	
Jan	1520	2190	
Feb	1353	1637	
Mar	1558	1634 *	
TOTAL	17575	21761	5774

* - Includes fly-tipping captured by the service but not reported by residents and is therefore a higher figure than for March in Table 1

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR STREET SCENE & PARKS
FROM COUNCILLOR ROGER HARMER****‘Tip Visits’****Question:**

Can the Cabinet Member advise how many visits have been made by residents to each of the Council’s Household Recycling Centres, per week, since they re-opened following lockdown. How do these numbers compare with the same weeks last year?

Answer:

Please see the table below, The impact to the Household Waste Recycling Centres has been felt greatly, with the need to ensure that Social Distancing takes place on all sites has led to a significant reduction in the amount of vehicles that can be processed through the sites. This led in the immediate return to very heavy queuing at all sites, with waiting times ranging between 2.5 and 4 hours leading to disruption to local communities and businesses that neighbour the sites. A booking system was introduced to help to ensure that residents could gain access to the sites without severe disruption to their day. Since the introduction of the booking system we have worked closely with our provider to release as many slots as we are able whilst still ensuring the safety of our users. This has led to an increase of around 29% since the launch. We will continue to work with our provider to ensure that where it is possible we will look at all options to further extend the offer to our users as we move forward, The booking system will also allow the flexibility to react to any government changes around Covid requirements should this be necessary.

Week Number	Castle Bromwich *	Perry Barr	Kings Norton	Sutton Coldfield	Tyseley
Week 19 2019	3628	5229	7304	6969	7079
Week 19 2020	0	995	909	756	904
Week 20 2019	4832	7439	9164	9115	9228
Week 20 2020	0	3278	2021	1909	2172
Week 21 2019	4954	7521	9625	9200	9065
Week 21 2020	0	3150	1910	2048	2233

Week 22 2019	4948	7686	9301	9096	9366
Week 22 2020	0	2392	1925	2086	2260
Week 23 2019	3890	5772	7927	7163	7358
Week 23 2020	0	2214	2042	2093	2233
Week 24 2019	3069	4698	6321	6046	6184
Week 24 2020	0	2297	1983	2155	2114
Week 25 2019	4367	6518	8843	8508	8461
Week 25 2020	133	2330	1844	1880	1761
Week 26 2019	4600	7095	9121	8708	9221
Week 26 2020	1706	2394	1999	1817	1869
Week 27 2019	5355	7749	10265	9562	10548
Week 27 2020	1684	2333	1967	1835	1895
Week 28 2019	4936	7236	9665	8881	9986
Week 28 2020	1821	2596	2229	2059	2093
Week 29 2019	4994	1359	8777	9863	8564
Week 29 2020	1873	2596	2225	2057	2113
Week 30 2019	5069	1389	8987	10017	8583
Week 30 2020	1916	2551	2282	2090	2163
Week 31 2019	4345	6483	9020	8256	7831
Week 31 2020	1819	2548	2367	2091	2088
Week 32 2019	5130	7065	9511	9734	8991
Week 32 2020	2274	3011	2730	2504	2652
Week 33 2019	4116	5933	8528	8101	7221
Week 33 2020	2223	3045	2682	2437	2501
Week 34 2019	5122	7464	10017	9751	9806
Week 34 2020	2042	2887	2466	2353	2376
Week 35 2019	5031	7266	9800	9420	9313
Week 35 2020	1825	2877	2514	2341	2388

** Castle Bromwich HRC was closed until 18 June 2020 to accommodate urgent works to the highway*

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR STREET SCENE & PARKS
FROM COUNCILLOR ZAKER CHOUDHRY**

'Park Life'

Question:

Could the Cabinet Member set out the Council's estimates for use of city parks this year compared with last year?

Answer:

The latest Google GB Covid Mobility reports shows an increase in UK footfall across the UK parks at 67%. There is no individual data for Birmingham but the increase in footfall across the West Midlands is at 93%.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID PEARS

“Free Bike Schemes”

Question:

What has been the results of the Council’s Free Bikes schemes for residents, including how many were given out, how many were subsequently returned for not being used and participation rates in follow up surveys?

Answer:

Delivered as part of the Birmingham Cycle Revolution programme, Big Birmingham Bikes was designed to improve health and wellbeing, social mobility, and access to employment opportunities by encouraging people to cycle more often and reduce short trips being made by car.

Over 7,000 free bikes were given away through the Council’s Free Bikes scheme to people living in the most socially deprived parts of the city, alongside provision of cycle training and bike maintenance sessions.

- 81.2% of the bike owners are from the most deprived quintile, compared to 56.8% of Birmingham’s population
- 62.2% of bike owners are from BAME backgrounds
- 70% of bike owners are from mosaic groups with the highest inequality

This initiative continues to be delivered by The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS) as part of their Big Bike Project. They have produced a case study highlighting impact of this initiative to date, including the following results from participant surveys:

- 74% have improved health/fitness from using their free bike
- 73% have increased cycling confidence by using their free bike
- 43% have replaced car journeys of 1 mile or more with cycling
- 18% have met new people through using their new bike

With regards to bikes being returned to the project, TAWS have informed us that on average they get a couple of bikes per month. These bikes are repurposed and then distributed back out into one of their cycle hubs for general use.

Further details on the success of Big Birmingham Bikes and the Birmingham Cycle Revolution programme can be found at www.birmingham.gov.uk/bcrlegacy.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR DEBBIE CLANCY

“Consultation”

Question:

What consultation took place with Emergency Services prior to the installation of the temporary traffic measures such as pop up cycle lanes and pavement widening?

Answer:

The Emergency Active Travel Fund Tranche 1 comprises a range of schemes including pop-up cycle lanes and low traffic neighbourhoods. All scheme designs were shared with contacts at the emergency services (Fire, Police and Ambulance) prior to installation of the schemes. In addition, designs were shared with contacts at NHS Hospital Trusts on, or close to, schemes.

Pavement widening has also taken place in some local centres as part of emergency Covid-19 funding and Reopening High Streets Safely Fund. This additional space in areas of high footfall enables safer social distancing. Schemes were discussed with the Council's Community Safety Team and supported by local policing teams, such as in Erdington.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR DEIRDRE ALDEN

“Risk Assessment”

Question:

What risk assessment took place prior to the installation of the temporary traffic measures such as pop up cycle lanes and pavement widening to assess the suitability of access for emergency vehicles?

Answer:

A number of risk assessments were completed prior to the installation of the temporary traffic measures. These consisted of designer risk assessments, road safety audit reports and dilapidation surveys.

Independent road safety audits were carried out during the development stage, with a further Road Safety Audit to be carried out following implementation on site. Any comments raised will be reviewed and addressed as necessary.

Access for emergency vehicles was considered during the design, and plans were shared with the emergency services for information.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR JON HUNT

‘Dangerous No Parking Signs’

Question:

Councillors in the Perry Barr Constituency have been told that they can no longer have ‘no parking on the grass’ signs placed in verges under the Local Highway’s budgets for health and safety reasons. Could the Cabinet Member tell me how many times the Council has been successfully sued because of injury or damage caused by a “No Parking on the Grass Verge” sign, setting out the costs of any such action?

Answer:

There are a number of reasons why the signs in question are no longer being replaced, principally because the legislation that these historic “No Parking” signs refer to no longer exists. Therefore, it is not appropriate to reinstate signs that promote restrictions that can no longer be enforced.

There are other issues that need to be considered when replacing or creating signs on our roads including the visual impact on the streetscene and street clutter. The overall objective is to ensure that only signs that are absolutely necessary are placed on the highway as every post adds to clutter, cost and the potential for those items to be a hazard in certain circumstances (e.g. road traffic collisions, obstructions to partially sighted pedestrians, etc.).

So, whilst there have been no identified cases where the Council has been found to be at fault in those circumstances, the practice we have adopted for many years to assess the necessity for each new or replaced sign on the highway (which includes an assessment of any unnecessary risk being created to road users) is correct and aligns with best practice across the country.

With respect to grassed verge parking measures, through the provision of additional local ward funding in recent years, we have sought to look at more practical and effective measures to protect grass verges across the city, such as new Traffic Regulation Orders, double kerbing and the placing of ‘No parking on verges’ stickers on nearby lamp columns.

Therefore, if members wish to consider such measures within their ward, Local Engineering Officers would be pleased to work with the local ward councillors to identify suitable locations for such measures.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR MORRIAM JAN

‘High Speed Bus Times’

Question:

The roadworks, demolition of Perry Barr flyover and planned traffic lights at Perry Barr will slow down the express X51 service, Bus lanes are being put in at great expense to speed it up again. Can the Cabinet Member confirm whether he believes this is a huge waste of public expenditure so that a bus can run at the same speed as before, if not, setting out in what way the work will improve the X51 service, which provides a high speed service from Walsall, Great Barr and any proposed park and ride on junction 7 of the motorway?

Answer:

The A34 Perry Barr highway works are providing priority for public transport and active modes in line with the draft Birmingham Transport Plan and enabling the significant regeneration of Perry Barr including 1000's of new homes, public realm improvements, and a new rail station.

New bus priority on the A34 through Perry Barr will be delivered through the A34 Perry Barr highway works, as a key part of the wider TfWM A34 Sprint project, which will make all bus journeys more reliable on the A34. As part of the proposals express bus services such as the X51 will be able to use the new bus lanes, and the underpass at the Aston Lane/Birchfield Road, and it is therefore expected that overall journey times from Walsall, Great Barr, and potential park and ride sites along the route will be shorter and more reliable than before.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHAIR OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FROM
COUNCILLOR PAUL TILSLEY**

‘HMO’S’

Question:

Could the Chair set out how many applications have been made for conversion to HMO under the Article 4 direction that came into force in June, setting out how many have been approved and how many refused?

Answer:

The city-wide Article 4 Direction relating to the change of use from a C3 dwellinghouse to a C4 HMO (3-6 people sharing) came into force on the 8 June 2020.

Since the 8 June, a total of 9 planning applications have been received for a change of use from a C3 dwellinghouse to a C4 HMO. Of these, one has been approved, one was refused, and one was withdrawn by the applicant. The rest are in the process of being considered.

During the 1-year notice period, prior to the Article 4 Direction coming into force, the City Council encouraged landlords and developers of HMOs to self-declare their C4 HMOs.

In total, we received 2,600 declarations before 8 June 2020. Of these, we have accepted 1,547 and rejected 771. For the rest (282) we have requested further evidence about the HMO use and are continuing to receive further evidence documents. The accepted and rejected numbers will therefore change as the processing of the remaining 282 declarations conclude, but this is the snapshot of the figures as they are at today.

CITY COUNCIL – 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHAIR OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FROM COUNCILLOR MIKE WARD

'Directive'

Question:

Were you consulted about the directive issued on 7th August, shown below?

"Dear Councillors,

As part of an ongoing drive to improve the Councils planning enforcement function, along with the ongoing work to introduce the Councils first Local Enforcement Plan, we have recently been working on a complete re-design of the online complaints procedure which is now finished and went live yesterday.

In order for this to be successful we need your help as all planning enforcement enquires must now follow the process as set out below:

In the first instance, all constituents must now be directed to the online complaints page which can be found at

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20160/planning_applications/23/planning_enforcement . If you wish to make a complaint on behalf of your constituent please can you also refer to the online form in the first instance.

Significant improvements have been made to the online complaints form to capture more specific detail relating to each enquiry. Furthermore the form has been designed so that links to guidance regarding PD, Advertisements, Listed Buildings and other common issues are now encapsulated within the online form. The intention is for this guidance to evolve as we go along and it is hoped this will improve the efficiency of the enforcement service by reducing the number of non-planning or basic PD enquiries and in turn allow us to concentrate our efforts on more serious breaches of planning control.

To encourage this new approach, wherever possible please can you advise your constituents to make use of the guidance provided in the form before they submit the complaint, as this may save them time filling out the form and will also potentially answer some of the concerns they may have wanted us to investigate.

The most significant change to the process that I need to explain is we no longer accept anonymous complaints. We have taken this decision as a large proportion of anonymous complaints are found to be neighbour disputes and In cases where we do not have a contact to go back to, it is difficult to obtain feedback which hinders evidence gathering and proves problematic for monitoring purposes and case investigation. This change is clearly explained in the online complaints form and generally the only exceptions will be the most serious of allegations, for example damage to a listed building or cutting down protected trees. If anybody questions

this change, we should provide reassurance that any details provided will be strictly confidential.

If you have any concerns or require any further information regarding the new complaint form or the process to be followed please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you all for your assistance.

***James Wagstaff
Head of Enforcement & Technical Services”***

Answer:

The decision to introduce the new complaint form was an operational one to improve the enforcement service and as such there was no requirement for me to be consulted. The procedural change was agreed by the Director of Inclusive Growth as part of ongoing service improvements. Concerns have been expressed by various members who have perhaps misunderstood what these changes mean, and I have asked the Head of Enforcement to send out further clarification before Council.

