

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY
(BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING MEETING)

24 FEBRUARY 2021

QUESTIONS ON REPORTS

ITEM 2.4: CAPITAL PROGRAMME REFRESH FOR 2020-21 TO 2029-30

1. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR VICTOR CHAMBERLAIN

Climate Emergency – According to Appendix 2, the council has just £9m to spend over 10 years allocated to specific initiatives on Climate Emergency (including just £1.7m on air quality initiatives). I am pleased to see suddenly an additional £25m added to this. Having declared a Climate Emergency 2 years ago, the council should now have a clear and costed action plan. Please could the cabinet member detail exactly on what and when they plan to spend this new £25m capital, whether its sufficient to achieve targets, and how much of it will be allocated to improving air quality?

RESPONSE

The council is committed to reducing carbon across the borough and for Southwark to be carbon neutral by 2030.

We published a draft strategy last summer, and since then have carried out extensive public engagement and formal consultation with residents in the borough to ensure that our final strategy and action plan meets the needs and ambitions of our residents.

The consultation closed on 15 January 2021. Officers are reviewing this to enable us to publish a strategy and full action plan shortly. As the action plan is not complete, it has not been possible to fully cost the plan in this budget round.

The inclusion of an additional £25m in the capital fund means that money to meet capital costs associated with carbon reduction is available in addition to revenue and capital expenditure, which is already contributing to carbon reduction.

To date we have taken significant steps in working towards Southwark becoming carbon neutral by 2030. The money announced today will allow us to continue and expand upon the actions we have already taken. Some examples of the areas we can prioritise include; further operational estate carbon reduction. We have already halved carbon emissions, and moved to 100% renewable electricity for all our council operations, but there is further work to do to ensure that our estate and operations are carbon neutral.

In addition to this, the funding will allow us to work toward a decarbonised fleet. The council currently uses a range of vehicles to deliver services. To drive down carbon in our fleet, we will be reviewing our fleet size and usage to reduce the fleet where it is not necessary, and investing in electric alternatives. This programme of work will need to be developed, but will involve significant investment in the infrastructure required for an electric fleet.

The funding will also allow the council to accelerate our existing carbon reduction programmes. The council already invests in programmes to promote active travel and reduce the use of cars such as the use of bike hangers and EV charging points. Capital investment will enable us to invest further in these programmes including, where possible, accelerating delivery.

This investment will not be the total cost of becoming carbon neutral, and over the coming decade we will need to continue to make resource available to meet this commitment.

2. QUESTION TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR DAMIAN O'BRIEN

Cycle Hangars – Paragraph 7 of the main report and Appendix 1 of this report at paragraph 93 notes that there is a bold commitment to double the number of Southwark Cycle Hangars from 224 to 448 in 2021. However it also notes there is now a growing waiting list of over 7500 cycle hangars needed in Southwark. Does the cabinet member agree this is failing Southwark cyclists if the Council Plan target for Cycle Hangars is only 6% of the need? How does the member intend to resolve this and supply more hangars faster?

RESPONSE

For information, each individual cycle hanger can accommodate six cycles. The waiting list is for individual cyclists and not for actual hangars.

The council target of doubling the number of cycle hangars by March 2022 to 448 is based on the current level of funding and the ability of the council's contractor (Cyclehoop) to increase their level of output. It is confidently anticipated that the target will be significantly exceeded by March 2022.

In addition, the highways team are currently working on a long term strategy for 22/23 and beyond that will address the backlog. This will include other procurement strategies such as in-house manufacture, multiple suppliers, and an accompanying capital growth bid to support dealing with the growing backlog.