

Date of Full Council meeting	Question	Response	
Wednesday 24 January 2024	<p>How effective is gas emissions control of vehicles, secondary smoking, domestic and commercial waste regeneration, all which add to light pollution, concentrated electromagnetic radiation levels, all without robust science or expert resident participation.</p> <p>Will the Councillors listen and consider to authorise a qualified citizen science review on the emissions regulations standards and their implementation in Westminster borough whose standards are not meeting their objectives of maintaining health?</p>	<p>The Council is committed to improving air quality as part of our Fairer Westminster commitments – this includes reaching World Health Organisation guidelines for air quality, which are more rigorous than UK national objectives.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality stated that the Council are currently in the process of developing a new Air Quality Action Plan and will continue to work with leading research institutions, community and campaign groups in this area as we develop our response and further our understanding. The Council are happy to consider wider opportunities for shared learning and input to further inform our Fairer Environment work, where appropriate.</p>	
Wednesday 24 January 2024	<p>I'm a coordinator of Westminster Citizens Climate Action Network (WeCCAN) and we were pleased to see that Westminster City Council is generally doing quite well on the Council Climate Action Scorecards 2023.</p> <p>On a particular aspect, however, WCC scored 0, and this was on the question 'Has the council adopted a new governance or decision making process to put tackling the climate emergency at the heart of every council decision made?'</p> <p>Only 17 out of 186 single tier councils got full marks for this question – will the Council take steps to join those 17 when the 2024 scorecards are assessed?</p>	<p>The Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Ecology & Culture was pleased to see that the Council did extremely well on the Council Climate Action Scorecards 2023, being rated top single tier authority on climate action. However, he recognises that there is much more we need to do here to achieve the Council and citywide net zero emissions ambitions.</p> <p>The Council are continually exploring how we can strengthen the governance and decision-making processes of the Council to ensure that climate considerations are central to decision making. There are many areas where we're moving forward with this, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formulating the Climate Leadership Group, which brings together all Cabinet Members to consider the progress of the climate programme and explore how their portfolios can better support this work. This is aligned with our officer Climate Delivery Board that reviews progress on our climate action plan. - Updating and standardising our internal processes to ensure that climate considerations are considered throughout Council projects and process. This will include climate implications in decision reports and strengthening climate considerations within our internal procurement and approval processes. - Ensuring our financial processes support and strengthen our climate response. All Council projects requiring capital funding must now submit a carbon assessment as a prerequisite of funding approval, and we're also reviewing the carbon footprint of our purchased goods to help us make more informed purchasing decisions moving forwards. - Educating and engaging all staff on climate considerations through our internal 'Zeroing In' campaign. This includes regular communications, the roll-out of carbon literacy training and online e-learning, and guidance to help departments reduce their environmental impact. <p>We will continue to explore ways to strengthen the governance around our climate action work – and ensure that these are better reflected in the scorecards moving forwards.</p>	

<p>Wednesday 24 January 2024</p>	<p>I would like to ask a question on the lighting and associated opening times of the playground in Paddington Recreation Ground. We live nearby and have two little children. The playground is very important to us and we are there nearly every afternoon. During winter, the playground closes very early in the afternoons, due to missing lighting. Staff usually close the playground around sunset, which can be as early as 15:51 in December. Currently, the playground closes just after 4pm. This is problematic for us, as we try to keep our children physically active every day. The sports fields and tennis courts all have lighting and can be used until later. Having discussed this with other parents at the playground and our ward councillors, we understand that there have been discussions on installing playground lighting in the past. Please can you advise why this obvious shortcoming of Westminster's largest open space has not been addressed until now?</p>	<p>The new Cabinet Member for Leisure stated he shared the resident's views on the importance of physical activity, particularly for children and young people. The playground in Paddington Recreation Ground was initially built without lighting as there are no professional standards for safe lighting in playgrounds. It was found at the time that lighting could cause shadows and dark spaces in and around equipment which could be dangerous for children playing at night. With sports fields and tennis courts, the Council has professional standards of lighting which ensure safe implementation so it's easier for them to light these spaces. However, the Cabinet Member understands the importance of play and physical activity for children and recognise how a lack of lighting can make things quite difficult in the winter months. The Council is working to rectify this, and have engaged a specialist lighting company to help them find a solution that is safe and meets the needs of everyone using the playground. The Cabinet Member could not give a timeframe for this right now but he hoped to be able to bring an update on this to the resident soon.</p>	
<p>Wednesday 24 January 2024</p>	<p>Why is the Labour Council so anti cars? Do they not appreciate that some people need them for safety health and age reasons?</p> <p>Why are they putting up parking charges particularly for electric vehicles which I thought they wanted to encourage?</p> <p>To love cyclists is one thing but to have cyclists on the pavement and dumped bikes is unfair on the elderly.</p>	<p>The Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality stated that it would be completely wrong to say the Council is anti-car. To the contrary, the Council has supplied and installed more EV charging points than any other UK local authority to support residents transition to lower carbon transport solutions.</p> <p>Westminster residents with an Electric Vehicle (EV) will pay less than £1.50 per week to park their car outside their home, and visitors with EVs who pay to park will still be paying considerably less than in neighbouring London boroughs. Previously, pay to park charges for EVs were as low as 8p per hour, which isn't sustainable in the context of controlling and maintaining kerbside access.</p> <p>The Council absolutely aren't anti-car, instead we want to support residents to use sustainable methods of transport wherever possible.</p> <p>The Council also fully appreciates the role cars can play in mobility, and that some people aren't able to take public transport. The Council manages disabled parking permits (both blue and white) and supplies approximately 700 disabled bays across Westminster to assist those with mobility challenges.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member agreed that dumping bikes on the pavement and blocking access is unfair, not just for older people but for everyone trying to get around our city. He advised that the Council introduced a network of more than 300 parking bays in Oct 2023 to ease the problem of dockless e-bikes being left on the pavement but unfortunately, we need clear legislation from central government to regulate these bikes and keep the city's pavements clear and safe. The Council are now urging people who cycle into Westminster on e-bikes to use common sense and not park in overflowing bays or leave their bikes in a dangerous position. Dockless e-bikes are a popular and environmentally friendly way of getting around the city, and we must all play our part to ensure our streets are accessible for everyone.</p>	

<p>Wednesday 24 January 2024</p>	<p>Following the pandemic we have seen a rise in mental health difficulties in young people especially, will there be plans for more mental health support for young people in schools but also outside as waiting lists for mental health support provided by the NHS are at an all-time high?</p>	<p>The Cabinet Member for Communities, Children and Young People absolutely shares the resident's concern for young people living with mental health issues here in Westminster.</p> <p>The Council's whole approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health support for children and young people is to invest in prevention and early intervention services, and to support our NHS colleagues wherever possible to increase capacity and access to specialist services. Although nationally CAMHS waiting lists are at an all-time high, the Cabinet Member was pleased to say that locally the CAMHS waiting times are reducing due to increased capacity and recruitment. The Council has made significant progress in keeping wait times under the national waiting time of 18 weeks, and seeing the majority of children and young people for their first appointment within 4 weeks of referral. As of November 2023, 100% of children and young people were seen within national wait times and 59% were seen for their first appointment in CAMHS within 4 weeks. Investment in prevention and early intervention also includes Mental Health Support Teams in 54 Westminster state schools which provide whole school support to pupils, parents and teachers. The Council have also increased the number of Mental Health Youth Workers in our Youth Hubs for young people to access support in environments they feel comfortable in. Lastly, the Council also commissions a wide range of emotional wellbeing and mental health support, and the Council's 'We Got U, U Got This' mental health campaign is designed to promote our range of services and empower our young residents to feel confident accessing services to support their mental wellbeing.</p> <p>Whilst we know that it can be difficult for young people living with mental health issues, the Council is absolutely committed to supporting them and their families and enabling them to live as healthily and happily as possible.</p>	
--------------------------------------	---	--	--