

Minutes

OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET held at
The Town Hall, Hendon, NW4, on Tuesday, 18 January, 2005

PRESENT:

- *The Worshipful the Mayor (Councillor Wendy Prentice)
- *The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Brian Coleman, AM, FRSA)

Councillors:

*Steve Blomer	Arun Ghosh BSc BVSC AH	*Susette Palmer BA (Hons)
*Maureen Braun	Mphil CBIOL MIBIOL,	*Kanti Patel MEng, MCIOB
*Fiona Bulmer	MAPHV, MRSM	FFB, MCMI
*Terry Burton	*Brian Gordon, LL.B	*Barry Rawlings
*Anita Campbell	*Eva Greenspan BA, LL.B	*Colin Rogers
*Wayne Casey BA (Hons)	*Christopher Harris	*Paul Rogers
MIIA	*Helena Hart	*Brian Salinger
*Danish Chopra	*Lynne Hillan	*Gill Sargeant
*Jack Cohen	*Sean Hooker, BA (Hons)	*Joan Scannell
*Melvin Cohen	*Daniel Hope	*Alan Schneiderman
*Katia David BSc, MBA, JP	* Anne Hutton	*Gerard Silverstone
*Jeremy Davies BA (Hons),	*Mark Langton	* Agnes Slocombe
CPFA	*Malcolm Lester FCCA	*Ansuya Sodha MBA (Middx)
*Peter Davis Ctext, FTI,	*Victor Lyon, BA (Hons)	DipM (CIM), Cert Ed
FCFI	* Kitty Lyons	Susan Steinberg
*Aba Dunner MCIJ	*John Marshall	*Leslie Sussman, MBE
*Kevin Edson	*Linda McFadyen	*Andreas Tambourides
*Olwen Evans ACIS	*Kath McGuirk	*Soon-Hoe Teh
*Claire Farrier	*David Mencer	*Jim Tierney
*Anthony Finn B.Sc (Econ)	*Alison Moore	*Allan Turner
FCA	*Jazmin Naghar	*Phil Yeoman
*Mike Freer	*Robert Newton	Vacancy
*Vanessa Gearson BA	*Matthew Offord	
AKC, PhD	* Monroe Palmer OBE FCA	

*denotes Member present

118. PRAYER (Agenda Item 1):

The Mayor's Chaplain offered prayer.

119. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2):

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Susan Steinberg, Arun Ghosh, and from Councillor Jeremy Davies, Jack Cohen, Kitty Lyons and Jazmin Naghar for lateness.

120. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 14 DECEMBER 2005 (Agenda Item 3):

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 14 December, 2004, be approved.

121. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS (Agenda Item 4):

A minute's silence was held to remember all those who had died during the tsunami and their families.

The Worshipful the Mayor voiced the Council's appreciation of all the work of the Council's staff who had been involved in the successful emergency evacuation of residential properties in Cricklewood, over the weekend of the 8/9 January 2005.

The Worshipful the Mayor then congratulated Max Caller, past Chief Executive, on being awarded a CBE in the New Year's Honours List.

Finally, The Worshipful the Mayor also congratulated Councillor Vanessa Gearson on the birth of her daughter, Olivia.

122. MOTIONS AND VARIATION OF BUSINESS

With the consent of the Council, Councillor Brian Coleman withdrew his motion, 8.1.

With the consent of the Council, Councillor Phil Yeoman withdrew his motion 8.3 in favour of the amended motion 8.4 in the name of Councillor Andreas Tambourides, which was circulated at the meeting.

Moved by Councillor Yeoman, duly seconded and

RESOLVED – That the order of business be varied to allow the amended motion in the name of Councillor Tambourides to be taken before that in the name of Councillor Sodha.

The Worshipful the Mayor stated that, using her discretion under Rule 34.2, she would allow 30 minutes for debate on each Motion.

123. QUESTION TIME FOR MEMBERS (Agenda Item 7):

Questions were put to the Leader and the relevant Members of the Cabinet. Those questions, together with the original answers provided and the text of any supplementary questions and answers are set out in the Appendix to these minutes.

124. MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR ANDREAS TAMBOURIDES (Agenda item 8.4)

Motion 8.4, as amended in the name of Councillor Andreas Tambourides was moved.

Debate ensued. Upon being put to the vote, The motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED - Council sends our sympathies to all the Countries and communities in the Borough of Barnet that have been affected by the Tsunami disaster. Council is horrified at the devastation caused to millions of families and communities, and extends its thoughts, prayers and deepest sympathies to all affected.

Council commends our Mayor and Deputy Mayor for their timely initiative in organising a multi faith Civic Service of prayer and remembrance on 16th January. Council supports the actions taken by the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council in responding to the disaster, and Council thanks its staff and residents for the support and donations given.

Council is grateful for the efforts being made throughout our many diverse Communities in Barnet to help with the immediate relief for the survivors who have lost their homes and livelihoods.

Council requests support from all parties to set up a steering committee involving Members and officers, under the auspices of our Mayoralty, to look at bringing together all communities in the Borough of Barnet in order to raise funds to adopt a village in one of the areas most severely affected, to assist with immediate basic essentials and ultimately to help in the rebuilding of their infrastructure, particularly to include a school, medical centre and orphanage.

**125. MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR ANSUYA SODHA
(Agenda item 8.2)**

Motion 8.2 in the name of Councillor Ansuya Sodha was moved.

An amendment in the name of Councillor Brian Salinger was moved. Debate ensued. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment moved by Councillor Brian Salinger was declared carried. The substantive motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED - Council condemns all forms of domestic violence, recognising that such violence involves not just males on their female partners, but females on male partners, violence within same sex relationships and inter-generational violence.

Council welcomes and supports the action taken by Barnet Council staff and others including the work done by the Barnet Domestic Violence Forum. (The Forum chaired by Lesley Williams of Williams & Co Solicitors, includes representatives from the Police, the Council, Magistrates, Barnet Women's Aid, Jewish Women's Aid, Victim Support, and the Domestic Violence Support Service). Council will continue to work closely with the Police in tackling the perpetrators and supporting the victims of domestic violence. Council recognises the efforts that have been made across council departments, (Housing, Children and families, Education, Cultural and Corporate services) to deal with the implications of domestic violence for our residents.

Council acknowledges the success of Barnet's Sanctuary Project which has been recognised as a model of good practice by the ODPM, Audit Commission and Greater London Authority. (In its 2004 Annual Report, the GLA's London Domestic Violence Forum highlights the Barnet Sanctuary Project...."In LB Barnet, the Domestic Violence Support Services (DVSS) is a key partner in Barnet's newly inaugurated Sanctuary Project. This installs security measures in the homes of domestic violence survivors, helping them to remain there and maintain contact with family, friends, schools and other support networks. The local authority's Homeless Prevention Manager secured ODPM funding for the project and it is offered to anyone who presents, or is likely to present, to the Housing Department as homeless due to domestic violence")

Council will continue to support both the Barnet women's refuge and the Barnet Jewish women's refuge, and the Christian Action HA project (Elevate) which supports victims of domestic violence.

Barnet Council is aware that a Best Value Review of Community Safety is currently being undertaken - and considers that it would be premature to anticipate any recommendation with regard to the possible creation of a post of co-ordinator for Domestic Violence services."

126. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

In accordance with the Agenda, the Mayor adjourned the meeting for 15 minutes. The meeting reconvened at 8.56pm

127. ADMINISTRATION POLICY ITEM (Agenda Item 9.1)

Councillor Fiona Bulmer proposed the item and moved that it be adopted. An amendment in the name of Councillor Jack Cohen was moved. Debate ensued. Upon being to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor Cohen was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote, the substantive motion was declared carried

RESOLVED - Council notes the progress this administration has made in reducing bureaucracy and increasing efficiency of services for Barnet residents. Council further notes that these efforts are being hampered by the Government's policy of heaping additional regulations and

responsibilities on local authorities including an inspection regime that costs £100 million a year. Council supports the LGA's campaign to overhaul this wasteful and ineffective regime and condemns the excessive regulation and increased bureaucracy imposed on Barnet taxpayers by the Labour government since 1997.

128. OPPOSITION POLICY ITEM (Agenda Item 9.2)

Councillor Alison Moore proposed the item and moved that it be adopted. Debate ensued. Upon being to the vote the motion was declared lost.

**129. COMMENTS ON THE WORK OF THE CABINET (Agenda items 10 and 15.5)
Councillor Monroe Palmer commented**

Barnet Council under the current Administration has embarked on what Sir Humphrey would have described to Jim Hacker as a courageous decision to remove traffic calming measures. Does the Cabinet Member have any conscience on hearing the latest published details of traffic accidents in London? Barnet Council has the worst increase of all London boroughs in the league table for traffic accidents. It is up 1.8% on previous years' figures. It also appeared to have the second highest number of actual casualties at 802 of all London boroughs. Westminster, the borough with the higher actual casualty rate, reduced their casualties by 7.5%. Merton reduced traffic casualties by 30.6%. To be the worst protector in all London is not anything to be proud of. I am not someone, as the previous Cabinet Member will know, who wants bumps and humps at any cost but to remove them and to continue to remove them and other calming measures to the extent we have in Barnet must now worry anyone with a conscience. The Transport Research Laboratory has reported that 20 mile per hour zones reduce killed and seriously wounded by 57%, whereas, when I asked for a meeting with you, Councillor Offord, to discuss the possibility of such a zone within Childs Hill, you responded by email, which I have in my hand, that you would see me for two minutes on a night of a 2004 Council meeting together with Councillor Harris. As even that two minutes did not materialise, I realised then that your offer was at best facetious.

Would you please comment on this policy as it puts people's lives at risk.

Councillor Matthew Offord Responded

I am not going to engage in a slanging match with the council member. First of all I remind you that the Council does have a policy, which does not include the wholesale removal of traffic calming measures.

The one point I am going to mention in the short amount of time I have available is that reducing the number of road accidents is a priority for this Administration. The Transport 2000 report, which you referred to, is based on statistics for the first six months of 2004 and comparing the accident rate for such a short amount of time is misleading because it is influenced by many random factors and there are considerable seasonal variations. Had the report published the figures for the first nine months of 2004 it would have showed a 2% reduction in the accident casualty rate. If it had published the figures for the ten months of 2004 it would have showed a reduction of 4% in the accident casualty reduction rate.

However, I am consoled by figures produced by Transport for London. It is reassuring to note that their statistics comparing the accident casualty rate in Barnet for the year 2002, the year we took control of the Council, and the year 2003 shows a reduction of 10.4%. Better than the London-wide average of 7.1%. There has been a lot of misrepresentation about Barnet's traffic policy. I hope what I have said tonight puts that to rest.

Councillor Susette Palmer Commented:

In May 2002 our Administration handed over to you an admired and excellent Library Service. The excellence of our service had been recognised by the Government with a Beacon Award and I thought that the entire Council was proud of our 17 libraries, two mobiles and house-bound reader service. You constantly assured us that our libraries were safe in your hands.

They were not, were they?

It was a Tory Prime Minister who coined the phrase 'lies, damn lies and statistics' and it certainly applies to your promise about the Library Service. Totteridge Library is closed and it was only pressure brought by the residents and Opposition Councillors that prevented the closure of South Friern. You are now planning to sell one of the mobiles which take the library services to places such as the West Hendon Estate and the Terrace community in Cricklewood which have no easily accessible library. You are also planning staff cuts for the staff you care so much for, Councillor David, of 12.5 people, which is two and half posts at my local library of Childs Hill. This constant cutting of staff across the Library Service, however you rationalise it, makes for unhappy staff and I assure you they are fed up with constant reorganisation, and it gives residents a reduced service no matter how you look at it.

You have constantly cut the media fund. Book and subscription costs go up all the time. Residents already complain, certainly to me and I am sure to everyone else, that there are fewer new books. If you continue with this madness the future of libraries looks bleak indeed. Are you hoping lack of books will mean less people use our libraries and you can justify further closures? I hope not. As usual, the people to suffer most will not be the prosperous ones. Nice middle class people like us can phone up Amazon and order the books we want or need for school, for college or for business. It is the poorer residents who rely on public libraries who will suffer.

Where is the money to come from? Liberal Democrats proposed a saving of £450,000 on the Corporate Performance Office. To spend money on a Corporate Performance Office while Beacon Services and performance indicators go down the plughole is truly fiddling while Rome, or in this case Barnet, burns.

The Library Service is one relevant to all age groups across the Borough, from the babies bookstart scheme to old people, and we the opposition feel strongly that you should reconsider these plans and would like to hear your views.

Councillor Katia David responded:

Madam Mayor, unlike Councillor Palmer, I do not only think about the library in my Ward like she says.

We do not only think about libraries in our Ward. That is why the one-hour difference in the mornings is across the board. In proposing reductions to the Customer Care Service budgets, the principle adopted is, as far as possible, to minimise the impact on our Barnet residents who use the services but at the same time recognising that savings have got to be made to share the reductions across the Borough. All libraries will therefore lose opening hours in order to make a necessary saving of £226,000. The proposal is that they will open at 10am on weekdays and 9.30 on Saturdays, as this is the busiest day. Sunday opening at Hendon, Chipping Barnet and Golders Green will continue at the currently advertised hours. This has not been an easy proposal to put forward but in taking hours from every library and protecting evening and weekend opening, it is intended that all Barnet residents who wish to use the library will continue to be able to do so. This is combined with a review of staff responsibilities at junior levels to ensure that there will be sufficient staff to cover the revised hours effectively and minimise the risk of any unplanned closure. In proposing a reduction to the mobile and home library service, Councillor Palmer, although the loss of one mobile will mean that half the existing sites will have to go, I am seeking to ensure that there will be sites

retained across the Borough and that the best used sites are, as far as possible, kept and I am saying that most sites are not used.

I am still discussing the revised pattern of sites and hours for the one remaining vehicle and reduced number of staff with officers in the Library Service.

130. STATUTORY COUNCIL BUSINESS (Agenda Item 11)

In accordance with Procedure Rule 43, the Worshipful the Mayor allocated 35 minutes for Agenda Items 14.1 and five minutes for Agenda Item 15.

131. REPORT OF THE GENERAL FUNCTIONS COMMITTEE 6 JANUARY 2005 (Agenda Item 14.1):

Councillor Joan Scannell moved reception and adoption of the Report of General Functions Committee dated 6 January, 2005, with the following recommendations:

- 1. Budget 2005/2006 (CI 14/12/05) Report of the Head of Human Resources – Agenda item 5);**
 - (1) That the list of posts affected by the budget proposals as set out in Appendix A to this Item be approved.**
 - (2) That, following completion of the statutory consultation with Trade Unions, the Head of Human Resources be instructed to serve the necessary notices to take effect immediately.**
- 2. RESTRUCTURE OF THE LAW AND PROBITY SERVICE (Report of the Borough Solicitor- Agenda item 7)**
 - (1) That the proposed restructure of the Law and Probity Service as set out in the Borough Solicitor's report and the revised Appendix B be approved.**
 - (2) That the Borough Solicitor be instructed to issue notice of redundancy as appropriate**

An Amendment to Item (1) was moved by Councillor Steve Blomer. Debate ensued. On being put to the vote, the amendment was declared lost. The substantive motion was put to the vote and declared carried.

RESOLVED - That the Report of the General Functions Committee of 6 January 2005 be approved and adopted.

132. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP (Report of the Head of Committee)

RESOLVED – That Councillor Maureen Braun replace Councillor Kevin Edson on the Healthy Hospitals Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

133. VACANCIES ON SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES (Agenda Item 15.1(3) and (9)):

The Head of Committee's report set out details of the appointments or nominations to be made.

Nominations in the names of Councillors Joan Scannell and Alison Moore were moved. Councillor Susette Plamer advised the Council that the Liberal Democrat Group would not be submitting nominations, pending the outcome of the review agreed at the last meeting (CI 14/12/04 – 113).

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the following persons be appointed or nominated as the case may require to fill the vacancies referred to for the period indicated:**

P2.2	Barnet Hill JMI and Nursery School	Defer
VP33.1	Beis Yaacov Primary School	Defer

P.44.1	Broadfields Primary School	Mrs Leslie Williams (Dr P Bhattacharyya unsuccessful)
P.44.2	Broadfields Primary School	Mrs I Mann
P.44.;3	Broadfields Primary School	Defer (Mrs Norma Fisher unsuccessful)
NP.46.1	Brookhill Nursery School	Mrs J Last
NP.46.2	Brookhill Nursery School	Defer
P.23.1	Brookland Infant and Brookland Junior Schools	Defer
P.10.3	Brunswick Park Primary School	Defer
P.25.2	Chalgrove Primary School	Defer
P.11.2	Church Hill School	Defer
P.28a.1	Clitterhouse Infant and Nursery School	Mr John Scott
P.28a.3	Clitterhouse Infant and Nursery School	Mr Morton Morris
P.39.1	Courtland JMI School	Defer
P.41.1	Dollis Infant School	Defer
P.41.4	Dollis Infant School	Defer
S.04.3	East Barnet School	Councillor Terry Burton
P.43a.1	Edgware Infant and Nursery School	Mrs Barbara Sherling
S.07.1	Friern Barnet School	Mr Timothy Benjamin (Councillor Kath McGuirk unsuccessful)
P.42.1	Frith Manor Junior and Infant School	Mr Richard Cornelius
P.45.1	Grasvenor Avenue Infant School	Mrs Pat Duntonr
P.45.2	Grasvenor Avenue Infant School	Defer
P.48.2	Hampden Way Nursery School	Defer
P.09.3	Monkfrith JMI School	Defer
SP.02.2	Northway School	Defer
SP.03.2	Oakleigh School	Defer
VP14.2	St Catherines RC JMI School	Defer
VP32.2	St Johns CE Primary, N11	Defer
VP.21a.1	St Johns NW4	Defer
VP.16.1	St Josephs RC Junior School	Defer
P.16.1	Summerside Primary School	Defer
P.33.1	The Hyde Primary School	Defer
P.50.4	The Orion Primary and Goldbeaters Primary Schools	Defer
P.1a.3	Underhill Infant School	Defer

(2) That no further representatives be appointed to Edgware District Reform Synagogue Youth Club, Relate North London, SPEC Jewish Youth and Community Centre and Watling Community Association and the current appointments to these organisations be terminated with immediate effect.

134. REPRESENTATION OF THE COUNCIL ON OUTSIDE BODIES (Agenda Items 15.1.5):

The Head of Committee's report set out details of the appointments or nominations to be made.

Upon nominations in the names of Councillors Joan Scannell and Alison Moore, it was

RESOLVED – That the following persons be appointed or nominated as the case may be to fill the vacancies referred to for the period indicated:

VACANCY REFERENCE	PARTICULARS OF APPOINTMENT OR NOMINATION	PERSON APPOINTED OR NOMINATED
1002	Almshouse Charities of Samuel Atkinson and Others	Defer
4526	Continuing Care Review Panel	Mrs Helena Davis
1167	Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute Council	Defer
1167	Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute Council	Defer
1079	Nicholl and Daniel Homes Charity	Mr Fabio Seccatorie

135. CHIEF OFFICER APPOINTMENT PANEL – CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S ANNUAL APPRAISAL(Report of the Head of Committee - Agenda item 15.4).

Nominations in the names of Councillor Jona Scannel, Alison Moore and Susette Palmer were moved.

RESOLVED – That the following appointments be made to the Chief Officer Appointment Panel - Chief Executive’s Annual Appraisal:

Chairman : Councillor Victor Lyon
Vice – Chairman : Councillor Anthony Finn
Councillors : Joan Scannell
John Marshall
Phil Yeoman
Alison Moore
Monroe Palmer

Substitutes:
Councillors: Katia David
Danish Chopra
Wayne Casey

the meeting finished at 10.41 pm

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members
18 January 2005
Questions and Responses**

Question No. 1**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Please could you provide details of the refurbishment work being planned for Stoneyfields Park, Hale, as part of the Council's excellent policy on the improvement of local green spaces.

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Recently, the following work has been carried out on the play area.

The areas between the play equipment have been laid with tarmac to create a level surface.

The vandalised safety surface has been repaired and three sets of swing seats have been reinstalled.

The grass turf in the play area will be re-laid in the spring after the area has been levelled using topsoil. We also intend to provide heavy duty five-a-side football goals.

There are also plans to replace missing fencing and carry out work to the pond, cutting back the overhang and removing debris.

Supplementary Question No. 1**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Councillor Offord, the excellent work which is being done in Stoneyfields Park is appreciated by many residents in Hale. Could you please endorse what I am sure many of us feel? Over the last couple of years the improvements that have been made to many of our parks has been quite noticeable and is a refreshing change from the sad legacy of ill maintenance of the parks which existed from the previous Administration.

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Yes I will Councillor Gordon. As you may be aware, I did receive some criticism of our policy on the introduction of the Premier Parks scheme. I would like to remind Members that this park is actually a non-premier park and I think it is a demonstrable action that we will not neglect such green spaces.

Question No. 2**Councillor Jeremy Davies**

Could the Cabinet member for Resources detail the amount of unsupported Prudential Borrowing undertaken in 2004/05 and the cost to the Revenue cost to the General Fund.

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

Full details on the level of unsupported borrowing were provided to Cabinet Resources Committee in November 2004.

It is not feasible to provide an exact figure as the incidence of expenditure across the year is not even and the timing of long-term borrowing is also dictated by the market as we obviously aim to enter into long-term borrowing commitments when the rates are in our advantage. At this time there is expected to be minimal impact to the General Fund in 2004/05 as a result of this increase in unsupported borrowing.

Question No. 3**Councillor Phil Yeoman**

If the Leader of the Council could explain how the £117,000 staff reduction in Legal Services will improve the quality of service provided to residents and other council services?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

We are constantly seeking to improve the quality of service provision both to residents and other Council Services. That is why we are implementing the new case management system and also hopefully (subject to Council approving the General Functions Committee report) the restructuring of the department. Both are critical to improving service delivery.

One of the other key drivers to improving service delivery is to ensure that the time and energy of lawyers is spent on doing the work which really requires specialist legal skills. For some years now we have been working with other Council Services in identifying other areas of work which the "client department" could carry out themselves without needing a lawyer's involvement. Where some limited training of non-lawyers is necessary, this is provided along with guidance notes and precedent documentation. There are significant efficiency savings where this is achieved, not least because the paper movement between lawyers and other Council departments is simply removed.

Supplementary Question No. 3

Councillor Phil Yeoman

I thank the Cabinet Member for his response. Madam Mayor, the written answer given by Councillor Finn does not tally with the confidential email sent by Law and Probity to Heads of Service and Directors in December. I would say confidential because that is what it says across the top of the email. The email says that these budget reductions mean that the legal practice will need to identify areas of work that it would cease to carry out or have to give a very low priority to and in some of these instances the work concerned can be transferred to client departments. Can the Cabinet Member now come clean and tell us which areas of work will no longer be carried out and which will be given a low priority by Legal Services, and will he now apologise for attempting to mislead Members of this Council in his written answer. Thank you Madam Mayor.

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

I was going to be nice to Councillor Yeoman because he has been cooperative on the other motion but he now has put the cat amongst the pigeons by speaking like this. There is nothing we are hiding in our answer. There is nothing which is hiding in any confidential messages or memos which I have not seen. What we are saying very simply is that we will be more rigorous in identifying areas of work which can be discontinued, some which will be dealt with by non-lawyers and some will be given lower priority. We are going to adopt a pragmatic approach and within the areas of what we can do we would do well and we would continue to offer the borough the service that it deserves and the service it has always expected.

Question No. 4

Councillor Brian Gordon

What is your reaction to the reply of the Mayor of London to Barnet's Chief Executive (27th October) in which the Mayor tried to defend his sharing of a platform with the extremist cleric Sheikh Qaradawi?

Answer by Councillor Victor Lyon, Leader of the Council

I am disappointed but not surprised at the Mayor of London's attitude. In my opinion, he has long appeared to support those whose alleged objectives include the use of violence and are contrary to the principles which we uphold in Great Britain of tolerance, free speech and the use of the democratic process to affect change.

Supplementary Question No. 4

Councillor Brian Gordon

Are you aware, (I am sure you are), that recently this Sheikh Qaradawi was quoted as saying that people deserved to die in the South Asian earthquake. Yet it still seems that Livingstone is defending this man.

Do you not agree that Livingstone's extremism and wild and maverick behaviour has done nothing but bring opprobrium and bring disgrace upon the Mayoralty and we should all treat this man, that Livingstone, with contempt that he deserves.

Answer by Councillor Victor Lyon, Leader of the Council

I am grateful to Councillor Gordon, Madam Mayor, for his supplementary question. I have always found the actions of the Mayor of London somewhat strange. I think the bedfellows that he seems to associate with leave some of us feeling that perhaps his real objective is not the support of Great Britain but possibly somewhere else. That is purely a personal view of course.

Question No. 5

Councillor Jeremy Davies

Could the Cabinet member for Resources detail the following assets/debts balances as at 31 December 2004 for the following: Bank Borrowing & other Short-term Borrowing; Short-term investments.

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

As at 31 December 2004 the position was:-

- long-term borrowing £28.5m;
- short-term borrowing £nil;
- short-term investments £58.8m.

Question No. 6

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

The draft budget includes a £226,000 cut from library opening hours and re-designation of posts. Please set out in detail:

- the proposed changes to library opening hours for every library,
- how the posts will be re-designated - from what to what, and
- how many posts will be lost?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

The proposed change will be applied across all 16 libraries. They will all open every week day at 10 a.m. and 9.30 on Saturdays instead of 9, 9.30 or 10 at larger libraries on Thursdays.

Posts at the most junior level, Library Assistants will be re-designated Library and Information Officers. The next levels of Senior Library Assistant and Assistant Branch Administrator will be merged and there will be fewer posts, they will be re-designated Senior Library and Information officers. These changes will require a greater level of responsibility from these levels of staff and balance the reduction of more senior posts so that the revised opening hours can be maintained.

12.5 posts will be lost under this proposal.

Supplementary Question No. 6

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Thank you Madam Mayor. The reduced library opening hours mean that over fifty hours a week are now being lost from the Library Service.

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the Cabinet vetoed the original proposal from the service to close libraries for one afternoon a week to achieve the savings, solely because of the bad publicity it would generate? What other proposals did she veto and what is being done now to resolve the chaos that the current proposals are having on the rota system for the staff who themselves, as are we, appalled at the way this is being handled?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

Thank you Councillor Schneiderman. Madam Mayor, there were three questions in Councillor Schneiderman's supplementary. The answer to one is no. The answer to the second one is no and the answer to the third one is in my answer. Thank you Madam Mayor.

Question No. 7

Councillor Brian Gordon

Are you aware of the jubilation of numerous Hale residents at the recent first class resurfacing of the roadway in Hale Lane?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

I certainly am now Councillor Gordon! This question echoes the positive comments that were received during the residents' survey undertaken following the works. In overall terms it shows that 90% of residents responding have stated that they also strongly agree or agree with the adequacy of information provided, method of working and quality of the work carried out. A resident from Hale Lane responded to the customer satisfaction survey by saying 'It is an excellent job long overdue'.

I am aware that such sentiments have been conveyed to the resurfacing work contractor (Granville Steel Contracting) road markings contractor (Bellstan), advance warning signs contractor (Highway Maintenance Service), London Buses and the police who were all involved in the project. They are pleased that their efforts have been recognised.

The comments are an endorsement of the Council pledge to target resources to address the repairing of roads and pavements as one of its five key pledges. It will continue to do so by providing a massive investment in the short term thereby eliminating the backlog of outstanding maintenance work we inherited from the last Liberal/Labour administration, within five years.

This will contribute to the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2004/5-2007/8 condition targets for each class of road network as set out in the new Corporate Plan's Service Performance Tables.

Supplementary Question No. 7

Councillor Brian Gordon

Councillor Offord, is not the improvement that is being made to so many roads within Barnet, such as the one I highlighted in Hale, just another indication that we are genuinely concerned about traffic, about the motorist and about the easy flow of people from one place to the other, rather than a contempt for the motorist and a discrimination against private car users which has been the hallmark of the Labour Party and the previous Administration.

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Thank you Councillor Gordon. While I do actually agree with a lot of what you say, the policy of this Council is to protect all road users and I can assure you many people on cycles for example did complain about the many potholes that failed to be repaired under the past Liberal and Labour Administration.

I am sure that you will be interested to know at the end of the third quarter of this financial year, 205 borough roads schemes have already been completed and that figure is two to three times greater than the previous year's work programme. I think this is another area where this Administration is delivering the residents' priorities.

Question No. 8

Councillor Barry Rawlings

The budget headlines agreed by the administration on 14 December included £300,000 cut from the youth service. How will the service be affected and how much money will be left in the youth service budget for 2005/6?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

The savings will be made in various ways. For example administrative expenses will be pared to the bone. The partnership with North London Connexions will help to reduce management costs.

Greater use will be made of shared premises. The move of Oasis from the Herbert Wilmot Centre to shared premises in Barnet Burnt Oak Leisure Centre with vastly improved facilities for young people is an example of an economy which has resulted in a much better service for young people. We will also seek to maximise the use of external grant and other sources of funding. Thus 6 of the 8 members of the Drug support team will be externally funded. The Finchley Youth Theatre is generating income by working with schools. Housing associations are also providing facilities as Peabody has done on Strawberry Vale.

There will be many exciting developments in our provision for young people. The savings we are making have meant that at a time when the government is asking local authorities to reduce costs the schools budget remains very strong. The need for redundancies is not envisaged.

Supplementary Question No. 8

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Thank you. I will see if the Cabinet Member can actually answer directly the supplementary, which is simple, which is whether he agrees with this quote.

That, 'because young people often find themselves in difficulty this can lead to anti-social behaviour or crime and that the Youth Service offer help to disaffected young people and is absolutely essential and that Youth Service cuts are reflected in the increase in petty crime on our streets. So without early intervention and help to put these youngsters on the right road we are simply encouraging a criminal society'. These are the words of Councillor Lynne Hillan at the Council meeting in January 2002. Could he say whether he thinks Councillor Hillan is right to condemn cuts in Youth Service or is it just a case of Tory hypocrisy?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

What Councillor Hillan was talking about, Madam Mayor, was the disgraceful way in which the previous Labour Administration ignored the Youth Service and created the problems to which she was referring. What we are seeking to do is to ensure that the Youth Service has reduced administrative costs so that the money can be put into service with the young people rather than people sitting in offices. And we are also seeking, as I have said in my answer, to secure external funding for some of the work of the service which again is to the advantage of the service as well as the advantage of young people and the Council Tax payer.

Question No. 9

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will the Leader of the Council support the proposed alternative GLA Budget proposed by the Conservative Group on the London Assembly?

Answer by Councillor Victor Lyon, Leader of the Council

I always support the judgement of the Conservative Members of the Greater London Assembly in trying to reduce the unnecessarily high precepts of the Mayor of London. No doubt, Cllr Coleman as the elected Member of the Assembly will be casting his vote appropriately.

Supplementary Question No. 9

Councillor Brian Coleman

Thank you Madam Mayor. I am always grateful for the deep personal support of the Leader of the Council.

Will the Leader of the Council welcome the announcement that the Conservative Group on the Greater London Assembly will be proposing a precept rise of 0 percent?

Answer by Councillor Victor Lyon, Leader of the Council

Madam Mayor, Councillor Coleman will of course know that my feelings are reciprocal and of course I support anything that will keep the GLA precept down. All I know is that we have tried as far as possible in our Administration to be extremely careful and our suspicion with the over-90 percent increase in four years, which the Mayor of London has imposed on Londoners, is unacceptable and cannot continue.

Question No. 10

Councillor Danish Chopra

The Council is proposing to scrap the £50,000 grant to Barnet Action 4 Youth in 2005/6. What work does the group do, how long has the Group been receiving a grant from the Council, and what help is the Council offering to ensure the group continues its work in future?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

The council offers a mix of funding types to the voluntary and community sector, including fixed-term 'project' grants over a maximum of three years, essentially to support a specific programme of work or to help set up a new activity.

All fixed-term grants require an 'exit strategy', showing how a recipient expects the project to end naturally or to continue with other funding sources once the council's grant ends. The aim is to help more groups to expand and develop their services by periodically recycling funds in favour of new projects.

Barnet Action 4 Youth (BA4Y) has been supported annually towards delivery of its 'SPLASH' programme, offering activities during the school holidays for 11-16 year-olds to divert them away from crime and anti-social behaviour, since 1993. More recently, the funding was converted into a three-year grant on the basis of an undertaking from BA4Y to seek sustainability funding from other sources to replace the council's grant when it expires in March 2005.

Since April last, the cost of the SPLASH programme has been met from a new funding stream, 'Positive Activities for Young People', and the final year of the grant has been reallocated to other elements of BA4Y's work, in particular a series of 'Youth Action Groups', targeting young people with behavioural or attendance problems at school.

The main purpose of the grant has therefore come to an end.

BA4Y will, nevertheless, be considered for a smaller one-year grant in 2005/06 towards other diversionary activities for young people, subject to the availability of funds.

Supplementary Question No. 10

Councillor Danish Chopra

Thank you Madam Mayor. Labour Government funding, of course, for the 'SPLASH' programme is certainly welcome but the Council should also be investing in youth activities to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. Taken with the Youth Service the cuts amount to £350,000.

Councillor Freer says that Barnet Action4Youth can apply to the grants budget but that is also being cut.

How can the Tories, Councillor Freer, be taken seriously on anti-social behaviour when all their actions prove the very opposite.

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

Thank you Madam Mayor. We always take Councillor Chopra seriously which is how we take anti-social behaviour seriously. You will find over the last two years the grants budget actually has achieved reductions whilst maintaining grants to the voluntary sector. I call that improved efficiency.

As I have said in my answer, Barnet4Youth will continue to be funded the way they used to be for their activities and I do not expect them to cease what they are doing.

Question No. 11

Councillor Brian Coleman

What is the proposed subscription payable to the Local Government Association for the year 2005/6 and does he think Barnet receives value for money from that Organisation?

Answer by Councillor Victor Lyon, Leader of the Council

The proposed subscription to the LGA is £88,293 which is an increase of 1.4% on the current subscription. At the half yearly Assembly, I voted for a Conservative amendment for a nil increase. This was voted down by the Labour and Liberal Democrat members.

Supplementary Question No. 11

Councillor Brian Coleman

Would the Leader agree with me that it is highly regrettable that the Labour/Liberal Democrat Groups at the General Assembly of the LGA did not vote to freeze subscriptions and it rather knocks a hole in their argument that they provide value in local government, and would he also agree with me that there are significant economy savings to be made in the running of the Local Government Association?

Answer by Councillor Victor Lyon, Leader of the Council

Yes. Can I thank Councillor Coleman for his supplementary and to say you will see in my answer, Madam Mayor, that I voted for that amendment because I believe it is so. There is waste. I am hopeful now that the LGA has a Conservative Leader and Chairman that we may well find those economies which he is talking about.

Question No. 12

Councillor Linda McFadyen

If the Cabinet Member would make a statement on how the proposed £200,000 budget reduction by learning disability 'reprofiling' will be achieved and detail any changes to the eligibility criteria?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

The reduction will be achieved through the deletion of vacant posts and revisions to working arrangements. There will be no changes to the eligibility criteria and I believe the changes will allow us to provide a more appropriate and modern service and so improve the experience of those using these services.

Supplementary Question No. 12

Councillor Linda McFadyen

Thank you Madam Mayor, yes I do have a supplementary and the reply from the Cabinet Member is not particularly helpful and nor was the reply I got back from the Service.

Fortunately, for me, I have the Community Care Budget Briefing handed to staff members that says that the cut involved is going to get rid of five full-time jobs, although I accept that the Council has deliberately left them vacant and downgraded the services to make this cut more palatable. The Briefing also says the Council is moving away from residential care for people with learning disabilities to supported living.

Can the Cabinet Member explain what consultation has been undertaken, in general terms, with service users and their families and whether individual service users and their families will have the right of veto over any changes to their living arrangements? After all, these are some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

There has been consultation over a number of months and we will continue to provide the services we are required to, to those families, and do so in a sensitive manner and I think that the consultation that has been carried out has been done in that sensitive way. I think, as I said in my answer, that the changes we are making to the service will actually improve services for users and I am always surprised that the Labour Party wants to leave these kinds of services stuck in the past rather than trying to provide a modern and appropriate and non-patronising service to these vulnerable people.

Question No. 13

Councillor Brian Coleman

What is the proposed subscription payable to the Association of London Government for 2005/6 and does he agree with the London Borough of Bromley that membership of both the LGA and the ALG is unnecessary duplication?

Answer by Councillor Victor Lyon, Leader of the Council

The proposed subscription to the ALG is £163,462. I disagree with Bromley as I believe that as the LGA is largely composed of Authorities outside London many of whom are District Councils they are unlikely to take a sufficient interest in London's problems. It is therefore important there is a separate body composed of all political parties who can lobby for London. However, I am disappointed that the review by the "three wise men " into the financial running of the A.L.G. including grants paid to Outer London Boroughs has been delayed.

Question No. 14

Councillor Kath McGuirk

The budget headlines propose a £90,000 cut in the noise service. How will this be implemented/what are the changes to the service?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger

The Out of Hours Service currently operates from Monday to Sunday with two Noise and Nuisance Officers working from 20.00 Hrs to 0700 Hrs the following day. A single officer covers the period from 15.00 Hrs to 2000 Hrs dealing with new service requests arriving in the late afternoon and being the link person between the 'In Hours' Service and the 'Out of Hours' Service.

Two shifts are worked on Saturdays and Sundays commencing at 0700 Hrs and 1400 Hrs to provide single officer cover over the weekend. On Saturday nights throughout the summer an additional patrol operates from 2000 Hrs to 0400 to cover the seasonal increase in complaints. This additional patrol is made up from day staff volunteers who are paid overtime for their additional work.

The total number of complaints received during 2003 / 4 was 4336. The lowest number of complaints received in any one month was 263 (October 2003) and the highest 597 (July 2003). The number of complaints received during the summer months were greater than the number received during the winter months with the busiest months being June, July and August.

There was also a weekly pattern for complaints received with the busiest period being between 2000 Hrs and 0000 Hrs on Saturdays and 0000 Hrs to 0700 Hrs on the Sundays. The weekly pattern can be summarised as follows:

Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
%age of calls	9.66	9.09	8.67	9.54	10.89	26.04	26.1

Note: Since Sunday calls include calls made after Saturday midnight, the Saturday night/Sunday morning period of the week can be seen to have generated the greatest number of complaints.

Taking the above into account the restructured service proposes to reduce from a 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 52 weeks per year service to:-

- 0900 to 1700 Hrs Monday Friday ('In Hours' Service);
- Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights from 2000 Hrs to 0700 Hrs.
- Double patrol on Saturday nights during periods of high demand.
- Saturday and Sunday day time patrol between 0700 Hrs and 2000 Hrs.

The 'Out of Hours' team currently consists of seven officers working 25 hour shifts per week. The weekend service described above is to be provided for the equivalent cost of three officers (one team of two working nights and one officer working days). The estimated saving of £90,000 takes into account the cost of providing additional cover by the 'In Hours' staff during the busy summertime weekend periods, annual leave and sickness.

The new service will focus on periods of peak demand. Where weekday/evening night visits or monitoring is necessary then special operations funded by one off overtime will be arranged.

Supplementary Question No. 14

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Thank you. I thank Councillor Salinger for his precis of the service as it was and as it is going to be, but the short answer is that there will be no noise service to help residents from Monday to Friday after 5pm until 9am the next morning. This is going to be about as popular as scrapping the rat catchers' service was last year. Will the Cabinet Member give an undertaking to reconsider this cut so that this Council can take anti-social behaviour seriously?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger

This Council does take anti-social behaviour seriously and if Councillor McGuirk does not believe that she might just as well leave now because she is standing on her own.

The changes to this service have been developed to reflect the use of the service, bearing in mind that you have got there the figures for the average number of calls over that period, and I have been assured by officers that if there are persistent problems in any one area on any particular time that is recurrent from week to week that we will have the facility and the staff available to deal with it.

Question No. 15

Councillor Brian Coleman

What consultation with Opposition and backbench Councillors did Councillor Finn undertake before signing the delegated powers report introducing the new bureaucratic, inconvenient and frankly stupid arrangements for Councillors equipment allowance?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

The action was taken under delegated powers by the Head of Committee in consultation with myself. As ever I am ready and willing to meet with councillors from all groups to see if improvements can be made to the arrangements.

Supplementary Question No. 15

Councillor Brian Coleman

Madam Mayor, I assume Councillor Finn meant to answer 'none' to my question because that appears to be the answer. Does he now regret the way this decision was taken and will he go about ensuring that appropriate arrangements that meet agreement from all parties, backbench and executive member councillors or whatever we are supposed to call them, are now implemented?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

No!

I am happy the decision I took was correct and I believe it is correct. However, I did not realise that other people found it difficult to maintain records and to fill in little boxes in tax returns which I am very used to and perhaps I did not appreciate the difficulty and the time that other people, Members, have to spend on these things, which I take very naturally.

So, perhaps, I should have consulted others, which I will now do and if anybody comes up with better ideas for managing the system we will, as ever, listen and take on board if they are so desirous.

Question No. 16

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

The Human Resources Occupational Health Service is being closed to save £80,000. How will the Council offer support to staff with occupational health problems in future and what assessment has been made of the impact of the loss of the service on staff sickness absences?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

The contract with the existing provider for the Council's Occupational Health Service will not be renewed in April 2005 when the doctor and nurse retire. Two options were identified to continue occupational health provision. The first which was discounted, was to enter into a contract with another provider on similar terms. The second option, which will be progressed subject to Council agreement is for service areas to access occupational health facilities through a range of local providers with costs billed directly to service areas. Other than specific health promotion, existing service level provision will remain unchanged, i.e. pre-employment screening, statutory medicals, attendance management referrals etc.

This change of service provision is therefore not solely related to costs savings, as the service areas will pay for the service provided and should ensure that service areas utilise occupational health provision efficiently.

The change in service delivery of the occupational health function should have no impact on levels of staff sickness.

Supplementary Question No. 16

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

Yes I have a supplementary here. Thank you.

Service areas will be required to pay for pre-employment screening, medical assessments for ill-health retirement, medical assessments for attendance, management cases and statutory medicals, by accessing GPs.

Could the Cabinet Member explain how much extra money each of the individual service areas is getting in this year's budget to specifically meet the extra responsibility that is being placed upon them to deal with occupational health?

Councillor Katia David

Madam Mayor, just to let you know that last month 31 hours in total were spent by senior HR staff on researching Councillor Sodha's questions. I rest my case.

Question No. 17

Councillor Brian Coleman

In what way does Cllr Finn consider the loss of a half time member of staff in Mayor and Member support help either the Mayor or members?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

It would result in a saving of £13000 per annum which of course is to the benefit of all Barnet residents.

Supplementary Question No. 17**Councillor Brian Coleman**

Thank you Madam Mayor. I am desperate to be patronised again by Councillor Finn so here we go. Would Councillor Finn agree there is a serious piece of work to be done on providing modern and effective support to councillors of all parties, both non-executive and executive members and will he undertake to do that piece of work?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

Councillor Coleman, I do not mean to patronise you because it is my new year's resolution to be nice to Councillor Coleman. I made two new year's resolutions. One to be nice to Councillor Coleman and not to patronise him and the second one was not to listen to any new year's resolutions which I made.

Quite seriously though I am always open, as you know, to looking into ways where we can improve member services. The idea of this was not particularly to improve member services so your question is really a bit fallacious. It was not meant to help the Mayor or Members, it was just to make a saving and in fact it was a saving of £13,000, which we intended to make.

However, what I suggest is when we do meet, and I hope you will find time to come to this meeting to discuss any arrangements which we can improve on, we will talk in general about improving Member services and I hope that will go a long way to satisfying you and everybody else. If you look to my other answer it was extended to everybody who wants to come. I will arrange a time and invite everybody to come along who wants to participate.

Question No. 18**Councillor Paul Rogers**

The Council meeting on 14 December 2004 agreed to consult on cutting £37,000 from community centres. Could the Cabinet Member for Housing provide a detailed explanation of how this will be achieved and what impact there will be on the services offered?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger

Following consultation with Barnet Homes, and to reflect the usage by Council tenants, it has been agreed that a higher proportion of the costs will be met from the HRA resulting in a saving to the general fund.

There will be no impact on the service provided.

Supplementary Question No. 18**Councillor Paul Rogers**

Thank you Madam Mayor.

Is it not bad enough that tenants and leaseholders, many of them are on low incomes, are expected to pay twice for everything already, once through the Council Tax, once through the rent and service charges, without the extra burden being placed upon them of their limited levels of income, is this not just yet another unfair tax on them by the Conservatives?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger

No, it is bringing one community centre into line with the same way that we finance most of the other community centres.

Question No. 19**Councillor Brian Coleman**

Which areas of the Council Services are dragging us down in relation to our CPA rating?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

The Council continues to make good progress towards our goal of being an Excellent Authority. Even though the evaluation goal posts have moved we have continued to make progress. However we will continue to rectify many of the inherited weakness; in particular:

- it would be advantageous to regain a point on Social Care (adults). Positive results include the success at limiting the number of delayed discharges of people from hospital to a care place per week. These are now regularly zero and the total number of reimbursable days is, on average, less than seven. In addition, 84 per cent of new care packages for older people met waiting time standards (2nd band);
- by continuing work to address weaknesses in human resource and financial management systems. This Administration's investment in SWIFT and MCS is reversing the under investment in IT by the previous Administration will allow us to make a quantum leap in these areas.

Supplementary Question No. 19

Councillor Brian Coleman

When does Councillor Freer expect our CPA rating to improve?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

At the next inspection.

Question No. 20

Councillor Allan Turner

In his reply to question 22 at the December council meeting, the Cabinet Member gave details of commuted payments in respect of Section 106 agreements in the years 2003 and 2004. In those two years there was a total of £5.05million in commuted payments. Would the Cabinet Member provide Council with a breakdown of the schemes where this money has been spent, and the number of units that have been developed with this money? Why were there no figures for commuted payments in 2002, given that there were figures for the subsequent years, and what are these 2002 figures?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

In 2003 and 2004, the council received commuted sum payments for affordable housing totalling £1.929 million. The £1.929 million is the total currently available to spend and the council has 5 years from the date the payments were received to spend this money on suitable schemes. £1.300 million of the amount available to spend was received and banked in November and December 2004.

In March 2003, the council spent a total of £98,000 of commuted sums monies received for affordable housing, this commuted sum monies contributed toward the costs of providing 13 homes, 8 of these homes were at Days Almshouse scheme in Edgware and 5 at Farm Court in NW4. The contribution made towards the Days Almshouse scheme allowed the Almshouse to secure £312,975 external funding from the Housing Corporation and without our contribution this funding would have been lost.

In 2002, the council received £40,000 in commuted sums for affordable housing.

Based on current planning permissions approved to date, the council are expecting to receive further commuted sum payments in the coming year if the planning permissions approved are acted on.

Supplementary Question No. 20

Councillor Allan Turner

Thank you Madam Mayor. I have got two supplementaries. One is filled with rhetoric and the other one is vaguely sensible. I say vaguely sensible.

It is a two-fold question. Given inflation and the market forces that impact upon building costs, i.e. when there is a slump, building labour and costs are much less than during the boom years, if the money was spent now we would get better value for money than if we spent in five years time, we would increase the number of units overall that we could gather by this means.

And, secondly, if the sums are invested, where does the interest accrued from the invested sums go? Does it go to the building fund to build more or does it go into the Council's central coffers?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

I have not a clue. It is not my portfolio. This question that you just raised should really be raised to the Housing Department. If you like, I will ask the Lead Member for Housing to respond to you on that but it is not something which is within my portfolio.

Question No. 21

Councillor Brian Coleman

What was the cost of the "Civic Reception " held at the Arts depot ?

Answer by Councillor Victor Lyon, Leader of the Council

The cost of the reception following the Civic Opening by the Mayor on 23 November 2004 was £9526.11. This was a modest but prestigious event which gave an opportunity for the Borough to show its support for the Arts and to give those involved with Community Focus and Barnet College, as well as some Barnet schools, the opportunity to present some of their work. It also gave the Borough the chance to show its gratitude to organisations and private individuals who have donated money towards the Arts Depot. As invitations were sent to many Authorities and organisations in North London, it is likely to have obtained future bookings for events at the Depot. I therefore regard the event as a marketing operation as well as a civic event. The Borough has spent several million pounds in supporting the building of the Arts Depot and gives a substantial subsidy to the Arts Trust Board each year, so apart from the artistic advantage of ensuring its success, there is a financial one as well.

I am sure as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, Councillor Coleman was sorry that other commitments prevented his attendance at the function.

Supplementary Question No. 21

Councillor Brian Coleman

Thank you Madam Mayor. Yes, I think I had an urgent appointment washing my hair that night.

Madam Mayor, has the Leader of the Council had the latest flyer from the Arts Depot for their new production of New Lives, showing twice nightly between the 26th of January and the 28th of January, which says "Have you ever walked the streets at dusk observing the lives going on behind the windows? Your journey begins when you enter a dark and silent forest. Gradually a pathway appears lit by a myriad of whispering domestic lamps. Follow the light, listen to the voice, keep to the path and watch out for the roar of the hoovers. New Lives takes a fresh look at the way we live by letting you spy into the lives of people in their private rooms. Are they really living there or are they merely waiting for time to pass. New Lives celebrates the Arts Depot's new building".

Will the Leader of the Council be attending this performance at the Arts Depot?

Answer by Councillor Victor Lyon, Leader of the Council

I cannot. Actually I got the invitation today. That particular night I have another commitment. This is only one part, Madam Mayor, of an extensive programme that I understand the Arts Depot is compiling that will appeal to different tastes, different age groups, people of different ethnic backgrounds, and as far as I can tell, I have only been to one performance there, which was a pantomime to which I took my grandchildren.

And I have to say that although it was intended for very young children, it was superbly done and if their other productions are of the same high quality I am sure that people in the borough will support them.

The important thing, and I cannot emphasize this too much, that this Arts Depot admittedly when it was originally proposed, our Group opposed it because we were not told the truth about the costs. We did not like the monstrosity of the building itself. It is now up. It is essential, in my view, that we support it. It will give pleasure to a great many people and I am not the artistic director but I have every confidence in the people who are now forming part of the Trust and I hope all Members and all citizens of this borough will do their best to support this valuable enterprise.

Question No. 22

Councillor Gill Sargeant

When will the agreement with Choices for Grahame Park be signed and what is the latest update on progress with the regeneration?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger

The agreement between the Council and Choices for Grahame Park (including the two RSLs) will be signed as soon as possible after it has been agreed by The Cabinet. It is hoped to take a report to the Cabinet meeting in March 2005 if all the outstanding issues have been resolved.

Following the resolution to grant planning consent to the proposals last year, the Officers and Choices for Grahame Park have been working together to develop the business plan, which will be the basis around which the legal agreement is structured, so that it meets the specific requirements of the finance company which has provisionally agreed to provide the substantial amount of funding required for this project. This is an extremely complex proposal that needs to reflect a variety of different potential situations that could arise over the life of the project, and is taking longer than was originally envisaged.

The Council is committed to the Regeneration of Grahame Park proceed as quickly as possible, and the Officers have assured me that as soon as the project has been to Cabinet and the necessary resolutions obtained, it should be possible to set a firm timetable for the works to begin, and to advise all of the residents who I know are also keen to see progress.

Supplementary Question No. 22

Councillor Gill Sargeant

Thank you very much Madam Mayor. I just want to say that the Cabinet Member refers to some outstanding issues with regards to Choices for Grahame Park and the signing. Could he tell us what these outstanding issues are please?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger

There are a number of detailed outstanding issues. I will write to the Member and list them for her.

Question No. 23

Councillor Brian Coleman

Does the Cabinet Member know what the London Diocesan Board for Schools plan to do with the site of Christ Church Secondary school when the school closes in July 2005?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

As Councillor Coleman knows the School will become an annexe to St Mary's High school so that current year 10 can complete their secondary education and sit external exams.

So far as the future is concerned discussions have taken place between Barnet officers, the DfES and the London Diocesan Board. The outcome of these discussions has been handicapped by the fact that the DfES tends to penalise those boroughs with successful Education Services and rewards those who are performing badly. However there is agreement with the LDBS that the answer to the future is not a Christ Church Mark Two. For many years Christ Church has failed to appeal to parents who were happy to send their children to local CofE primary schools. Those who are publicly mourning the loss of the School all too often failed to support it.

There are various educational uses which should be considered for the site. Possibilities could include additional single sex places for girls, a Greek School or a multi faith school.

It is unfortunate that Stephen Twigg's visit to Barnet has been cancelled following his promotion. I hope that it can be quickly reinstated so that we can discuss the future of this important site and other educational matters. It should after all be relatively easy for him to 'pop over the border' and visit us.

Supplementary Question No. 23

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will Councillor Marshall give a guarantee to this Council that he is still pursuing the Conservative Party Manifesto commitment for a new girls' secondary school in the Finchley area?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

Yes, and I am also pursuing other possibilities. I think it is very unfortunate that Stephen Twigg cancelled a visit to the Authority which was due to take place next month and I hope that he can be bothered to come over and talk to the Authority as it is neighbouring his constituency and it should not take him very long to come across the border so that we can discuss this and other issues.

Question No. 24

Councillor Jim Tierney

If the Cabinet Member could explain how cutting £109,000 worth of jobs in the Planning Service will improve the quality of service provided to residents?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

In line with other service areas planning is obliged to make budget savings for 2005/6 which amount to £124,000; of this amount £109,000 will be met by reduction in planning and enforcement posts. It is accepted that the loss of these posts will not improve services to residents but the impact will be kept to a minimum by targeting non-statutory areas of the service.

Supplementary Question No. 24

Councillor Jim Tierney

Thank you Madam Mayor. I thank Councillor Melvin Cohen for his answer. Unlike some other Cabinet Members at least Councillor Cohen has the good grace to admit that the service is getting worse and it is something confirmed in the residents' survey when only 18 percent of people thought the actual service was improving.

And this is notwithstanding the £450,000 planning delivery grant 2003/4 and £750,000 this year. The Planning Service has some major pieces of work coming up over the next year. The final version of the UDP, the beginning of the LDP, and so on.

Can you assure us that none of these areas will be affected and could you explain which non-statutory areas of the service will be cut and downgraded as a result of the budget proposals? Thank you.

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

I am not going to take any lectures on the Planning Service from Councillor Tierney. I am rightly proud of the Administration's record in Planning. It brought up the Planning Service from just being taken over by the ODPM to a borough which has now got opportunity borough status. I will not take that criticism from you Councillor Tierney.

Question No. 25**Councillor Brian Coleman**

Will the Cabinet member facilitate the formation of a group of London Boroughs through which the Northern line runs to put concerted lobbying pressure on London Underground Limited and TfL?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Yes I will. I think all of us who are forced to use the Northern Line every day are sick and tired of the repeated delays and disruptions to the service.

Supplementary Question No. 25**Councillor Brian Coleman**

I welcome, Madam Mayor, Councillor Offord's commitment and look forward to working with him on what I hope can be an all-party effort to sort out the mess that is currently the Northern Line that is giving hours and hours of misery to tens of thousands of residents of this borough on a daily basis.

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Thank you very much Councillor Coleman. I would like to just briefly congratulate you on your recent performance at the plenary session of the GLA. I hear they are going to call that Coleman's Question Time. Well either that or this one here tonight.

Anyway, my prime concern at the present time is the extent of the signal failures on the line and the recent failure of the cab radios, which led to the adoption of double manning which in turn, reduced the service frequency drastically. I know back in August of 2004 there were 55 and 40 signal faults respectively and 72 in October 2004. I think I was caught in every single one of them on my way here to the Town Hall.

Of course I will take up your proposals. I am very keen on inviting other boroughs to engage with this and if I can find someone to chair it, perhaps even the Chairman of the Greater London Assembly will be prepared to do that and we could speak about that at a later time?

Question No. 26**Councillor Colin Rogers**

Now that the Cabinet has decided not to impose a 'pavement tax' on small business across the borough, can the Cabinet Member explain how the administration intends to extract more money to cover this shortfall, as they have threatened in the local media?

Answer by Councillor Victor Lyon, Leader of the Council

As is usual prior to the formulation of the annual budget, Cabinet will review many possibilities for improving its sources of income. Although it is a practice employed by some other local authorities, the possibility of imposing a fee for premises which were utilising pavements to add to their usable floor space was one of the options considered by Cabinet but rejected as it might have impacted unfairly on small businesses. There are no plans for replacing this possible source of income and Councillor Colin Rogers should not be naive enough to believe everything he reads in the local newspapers.

Supplementary Question No. 26**Councillor Colin Rogers**

Thank you Madam Mayor. Thank you Councillor Lyon for his advice not to believe everything I read in the newspapers. I think the best advice is actually not to believe anything Councillor Lyon says.

I saw in the local newspapers last May that Councillor Lyon was promising a zero increase on the Council Tax, so why should anyone believe him now when he says there will not be a pavement tax or a replacement tax.

Should not this Council be helping our local town centres to thrive? Encouraging a café type culture that starts to reclaim our streets from anti-social behaviour.

Answer by Councillor Victor Lyon, Leader of the Council

I am grateful of course to Councillor Colin Rogers. Unfortunately, his hearing is as bad as his reading I suspect because I have never promised a zero Council Tax. What I have said all along is that I would work towards as near to zero as is possible, and that is exactly what I am doing. As far as the remainder is concerned, I suggest that Councillor Rogers takes on board what is said and, you know, just, in fact, to be quite honest Madam Mayor, I have forgotten the end of his question. So, all I can say is that if he cares to talk to me afterwards I will try and give him an answer.

Question No. 27**Councillor Phil Yeoman**

If the Leader of the Council could set out how many posts will be lost in Legal services as a result of the £117,000 cut?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

Four posts will be deleted - three full time (two currently unfilled solicitors posts and one legal executive post currently occupied by a temporary member of staff) and one part time (vacant half of a job share solicitor post).

Supplementary Question No. 27**Councillor Phil Yeoman**

The Tory Group really are a happy bunch are they not?

The email I have received to the Heads of Service paints a completely different picture to the one painted by Councillor Finn. I wonder whether he actually knows what the views of his senior managers and Heads of Service actually are. Madam Mayor, it is not acceptable for Cabinet Members to attempt to mislead councillors in their written answers. Councillor Finn knows full well that he has been caught out and he should apologise to the Council and I will be allowing everyone and the press to see the actual email that I have received.

The stopping of work within the legal practice includes no longer drafting witness statements, witness statements this is, not collecting evidence and not carrying out investigations relating to evidence, all of which will adversely affect the Council tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. Services are being told to do the specialist work or, we have heard this one before, pay consultants to do the work for them, and as the email concludes the scale of the capacity reduction has meant, unfortunately though, there is no alternative.

Will the Cabinet Member now give us a guarantee that any costs of hiring consultants to do the work undertaken, which the Legal Department previously undertook will not exceed the £117,000 identified as the cut in the Legal Service budget?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

The supplementary question you asked is nothing to do with the question. The question you asked was how many posts were left, and the answer is given in my answer but if you really wish to go into off-the-beat things I will so do and I will be pleased to meet and talk with you.

What we are saying is very simply that some items which are being dealt with by lawyers at the moment are not economic so to be continued to do. With limited training, non-lawyers can provide the guidance notes and precedent documentation which will allow the same actions to be taken on a much cheaper scale with savings, efficiency savings to the Council, efficiency savings to the members of the community. We will be pragmatic to choose which items we are going to give to non-lawyers and to trained lawyers and we will be making savings. I can guarantee you that we will not, as a result of this, incur anything like in outside costs the £117,000. That is a guarantee.

Question No. 28

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

How will the mobile library service change as a result of the scrapping of one of the mobile library units? Will there be shorter stops/less frequent stops/stops cancelled altogether?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

50% of the Mobile Library Service timetable will be lost. Busier sites will be retained as far as possible with a priority also to parts of the borough where access to a static library is difficult. The exact details of the timetable are still being worked on and I will let you have this when it is available.

Supplementary Question No. 28

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

I thank Councillor David for her written answer, which at least gives some information, unlike her answers to my supplementary questions.

Can she give an assurance that the same number and duration of mobile library stops will be continued to the borough's housing estates where access to books for children is of vital importance? And will she give a specific assurance that no cuts will be made to the stops on the Dollis Valley Estate?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

Thank you Madam Mayor. In proposing a reduction to the mobile and home library service, although the loss of one mobile will mean that half the existing sites will have to go, I am seeking to ensure that there will be sites retained across the borough and that the best used sites are as far as possible kept, and I am still discussing the revised pattern of sites and hours for the one remaining but I will write to you with the sites that will be remaining, hopefully most of them.

Question No. 29

Councillor Barry Rawlings

The budget headlines agreed by the administration on 14 December included £140,000 from further staff savings. Could the Cabinet Member explain what this means in detail, which posts are affected, and how the service will be affected?

Answer by Councillor Christopher Harris

Further staff savings' - (£140,000) will be achieved by the deletion of the following;

- 3 posts at Curtis family centre
- 1 post in the C&F central commissioning team
- 1 post in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

All 5 posts are currently vacant hence there will be no resulting need for redeployment or redundancy.

Clearly, given that all of these posts have been vacant for some time, there will be no immediate impact on the service. Evidently this means that service provision will continue as at present moment at time but in future years that may be reviewed.

Supplementary Question No. 29

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Thank you for your answer.

What seems to be happening is that staff posts are actually frozen, not advertised, so when the cuts come, you can say we are getting rid of these posts and it makes no difference to the service because the service has already gone downhill.

Now we know that the Council is planning another series of budget cuts this July. Will the Cabinet Member now rule out cuts to the Children's Services in that round of budget cuts?

Answer by Councillor Christopher Harris

Councillor Rawlings, I certainly will not discuss anything to do with July. My Service is a very well funded service and you said that the Service has gone downhill. During that eighteen months in which these posts have been frozen, for good reason because we were thinking about restructuring, during that eighteen months I may remind you that we had a CSCI inspection where our Service had considerably improved since the last time they came under your Administration. We went into the top 15% of the country in terms of children's services rather than dragging in the bottom quartile. That is not to say that if we are once more generously funded, if we get a Conservative central government, we may not reconsider how we deliver some of these services, but for the moment I think we can say that we are doing very, very well and that we certainly having made a great improvement during that eighteen months as the CSCI report shows.

Question No. 30

Councillor Danish Chopra

The Council is proposing to scrap the £12,500 grant to the Barnet Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme in 2005/6. What work does the group do, how long has the Group been receiving a grant from the Council, and what help is the Council offering to ensure the group continues its work in future?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

Like BA4Y, the grant in this case is another fixed-term award over three years, approved in 2003, specifically to help BRSVP develop a joint project (with Disability Action in the Borough of Barnet) to expand volunteering opportunities in the community for disabled people.

Arising from delays in launching the scheme, the grant has been re-phased to extend to December 2006, and the provision in this year's budget (to support the final year of the award) will be carried forward to 2005/06.

BRSVP has been in receipt of a small annual revenue grant towards its main programme of activities, currently including a Sunday lunch service for homeless people, since 1999/2000 and there are no proposals to discontinue this core assistance.

Supplementary Question No. 30

Councillor Danish Chopra

Thank you Madam Mayor.

Can Councillor Freer tell me what work is the Council planning to do until the 4th of May next year to help BRSVP access other funding to ensure their work helping people with disabilities to volunteer will be continued?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

We will continue to offer the support we offer to all the voluntary sector, both through our Grants Unit and through the Voluntary Service Council in terms of the vast database we hold accessing additional funding streams.

Question No. 31

Councillor Linda McFadyen

If the Cabinet Member would provide Council with a detailed explanation for the £1.174m allocated for higher inflation and other pressures within the budget headlines announced in December, including setting out the current rate of inflation within community care and providing a breakdown of the 'other pressures'?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

A prudent figure has been set aside to allow for inflation. The precise level of inflation will vary between different contracts, and the specific terms on which these contracts are settled are commercially sensitive.

Supplementary Question No. 31

Councillor Linda McFadyen

What is written on the papers may be a reply but it certainly is not an answer. Turning to the inflation level, the performance management plan shows pressures of over £5 million for 2005/6 including £1.1million for inflation, but less than £1 million in 2006/7 including no extra money for inflation.

How is it possible that inflation in social services can be rampant this year and non-existent in a Council election year? Perhaps the Cabinet Member can explain which contracts the Council has entered into where the annual increase in the contract price is above inflation?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

I know the Labour Party does not know much about contracting and procurement and the way the commercial world works but it would be completely inappropriate for me to stand here and start outlining the precise details of the contracts which we are entering into.

Question No. 32

Councillor Kath McGuirk

The budget headlines propose a £70,000 cut in grounds maintenance. How will this be implemented/what are the changes to the service?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

It will be implemented by officers and will result in the rationalisation of redundant sites and a revision of staff responsibilities.

Question No. 33

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

Since 14 May 2002 the Tory Council has scrapped over 400 council jobs. Can the Cabinet Member confirm that there will be no more jobs cut before 4 May 2006?

Answer by Councillor Victor Lyon, Leader of the Council

Cllr Sodha should not be confused between posts and actual numbers of people who have lost their jobs. She is well aware that the on-going policy of this Administration is wherever possible to redeploy people into other positions where their posts are made redundant. She will also know that when this Administration took control in May 2002, the organisation of many departments was a shambles and it has been necessary to reorganise the workings of the Council. This of course is also part of the Governance policy of the Gershon report to make Councils more efficient. I cannot give any guarantee on the establishment up to May 2006

Question No. 34**Councillor Allan Turner**

The Cabinet Member rightly noted in his response to question 47 at the December council meeting that there is always a time lag between planning approvals and completed constructions. Given this time tag, could the Cabinet Member inform Council how many units of affordable housing have been given planning approval since 14 May 2002? Would the Cabinet Member provide a breakdown of the type of affordable housing that has been given planning approval since 14 May 2002, i.e. for rent, shared ownership, key worker, etc?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger

In total 437 affordable homes have been given planning permission of which 355 of these homes are rented.

Question No. 35**Councillor Gill Sargeant**

Could the Cabinet Member explain why there have been continuing delays on the opening of the sports pitch in Grahame Park?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger

I refer the member to the answer that she was given the identical at the last council meeting. If Cllr Sargeant has any influence with EDF energy, now is the time for her to use it.

Question No. 36**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What works are required to bring East Finchley library up to the standard required by the Disability Discrimination Act?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

The requirements of The Disability Discrimination Act are not just about physical access. The library can be used as it is at present. Some added signage would aid the visually impaired but the library can continue to function without major works.

Question No. 37**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

The school meals charge is increasing to £2. What was the schools meal charge in 2002/3, 2003/4, and 2004/5?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

The figures are:-

02/03 £1.50p

03/04 £1.60p

04/05 £1.70p

Those children who are entitled to free school meals-some 16% of Barnet schoolchildren- are exempt from these charges.

Question No. 38**Councillor Danish Chopra**

What projects/borrowing are the proposed extra £3million prudential debt repayments covering in 2005/6?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

This information was provided to Cabinet Resources Committee in November 2004.

I should point out that the £3m does not only cover prudential (unsupported) borrowing, it also covers supported borrowing (which is included in the Capital Finance FSS block) and interest on balances. £1.5m of the £3m was already included in the Financial Forward Plan approved by Council in March 2004.

Question No. 39**Councillor Linda McFadyen**

If the Cabinet Member would make a statement on the proposed changes to funding of Age Concern announced in the budget headlines in December, and their impact on the future configuration of services within the borough?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

This change stems from a proposal from Age Concern who believe that they can provide an improved service by operating from two centres, Ann Owen and the Meritage Centre.

Question No. 40**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

The budget headlines propose a £90,000 cut by SEN transport efficiencies. How will this be implemented/what are the changes to the service?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

It will be implemented by officers and will result in the redundancy of one post that has been responsible for computerising route planning. This work is now completed and hence the post is redundant, saving £30,000. Retendering the minicab service included the introduction of discounts based upon the level of work commissioned. The retendered rates along with discounts offered by suppliers will deliver a £60,000 saving.

I am sure you will agree that there is no reduction in service but a significant improvement in service efficiency.

Question No. 41**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

Amongst the proposed redundancies, can the Cabinet Member please give a breakdown of age, gender, and race? Can the Cabinet Member also please say which services will be cut as a result?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

For the 2004/5 efficiency savings, a maximum of 37 employees will be made redundant with 1 post yet to be identified. A number of staff have lodged appeals against selection for redundancy, therefore a full breakdown of staff by age, gender and race cannot be provided until the appeals have been completed. Also several employees may be redeployed to vacant posts and the final figure should be reduced. As agreed at the Corporate JNCC, Human Resources will provide the requested breakdown once all the individuals have been identified.

The services affected by these savings are:

Committee and Special projects – 2 posts

Customer Care – 9 posts

Education 2 posts

Environment – 19 posts

Human Resources – 5 posts

In Customer Care, the Interpreter and Translation Service will no longer be operated in house but the service will be commissioned by Heads of Service from external providers. Other service areas will maintain service provision with minor service reorganisation addressing reduced staffing levels.

For the 2005/6 Budget reductions, the Budget report to the Corporate JNCC on January 5th 2005 and General Functions Committee on January 6th 2005 identified that 78 posts were at risk of redundancy and the areas where current service provision would be altered. At this point, prior to Council approval, it is too early to identify many of the individuals at risk of redundancy and therefore a breakdown by age, gender and race cannot yet be undertaken.

Question No. 42**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

How much money will it cost to bring East Finchley library up to the standard required by the Disability Discrimination Act?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

Basic works, including signage would cost in the region of £14k to improve access to the ground floor.

Question No. 43**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

What is member doing to improve access for wheelchair users in public buildings in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

Audits of the all the public buildings have been carried out to ensure that services are offered to the public in the most accessible way. The audits have also informed the Corporate Asset Strategy and the provision of services is being focussed in to buildings which do not present barriers to users, while moving out of sites which cannot reasonably be adapted.

Had Councillor Sodha bothered to attend the public forum on disability on 7th December 2004 to which she was invited, where access to public buildings was discussed, she would be aware that the increased use of the more accessible buildings such as Building 5 at North London Business Park as well as the improvement works now under way at Barnet House were welcomed by those attending.

Other works schemes to public areas such as the Housing Benefits reception at Fenella due to start early in 2005 also include full access for all.

Question No. 44**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What works do the Council believe are necessary to refurbish and modernise East Finchley library?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

The library can continue to function as a library without any extensive refurbishment works. To maximise the use of space in the building, a lift would need to be added to the first floor.

Changes are however limited by the listing order on the building.

Question No. 45**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

Does Barnet have a Directory of accessible public toilets in the borough?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

Yes.

Question No. 46**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

How much money will it cost to refurbish and modernise East Finchley library?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

An initial meeting has been held with English Heritage indicated that the listing order on the building would make the works complicated and by implication costly, particularly if a lift were to be installed to the first floor. The listing order includes much of the internal layout, shelving and counter which will limit the amount of change possible. The works needed to modernise and refurbish East Finchley have not been costed as there is at present no identified capital funding.

Question No. 47**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

What is the percentage of staff employed by Barnet who have a disability?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

Human Resources have been conducting a data cleanse exercise on information held on employees. Prior to this exercise the percentage of staff identified as being disabled was 0.7%. The revised figure is 1.1%, however, data questionnaire forms are still being processed. Once a full return has been achieved HR will be contacting staff who have identified themselves as being disabled to determine what the Council can do to address their needs as part of a comprehensive Disability Action Plan.

Question No. 48**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What meetings have been held between English Heritage and Cabinet Members/ Directors/ Heads of Service on the future of East Finchley library, and what is the outcome of these meetings?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

There has been one meeting of officers with English Heritage, including an in house architect. At the meeting the likely implications of the listing order on the library were explored. It was clarified which internal fixtures, fittings and partitions would have to be retained and the practicality of installing a lift was looked at. No further action has been taken because of the limitations of the budget and the overall financial position on the council.

Question No. 49**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

Are you aware of the Scope campaign 'Time to get Equal now' and if so what is the Council doing about equality for all in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

I am aware of the Scope campaign, 'Time to get equal now' which has been endorsed by amongst others Nelson Mandela and Bill Clinton. This campaign is focused on disability and the negative perceptions of disability. The Council, whilst recognizing the merits of this campaign intends to take a strategic, inclusive and holistic approach to all equality issues, e.g. The Barnet Race Equality Scheme, the Disability Action Plan and the ongoing commitment to achieving level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Question No. 50**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What is the cost of bringing all the borough's libraries up to the standards required by the Disability Discrimination Act?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

We are continuing to provide a service within the constraints of some of our buildings. There is work that needs doing on a rolling programme as budgets permit. The priority is to have improvements to at least one library each year in each area as set out in the Performance Management Plan.

Question No. 51**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

What did the Cabinet Member do in 2004 to promote equal access for all to public transport?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

On bus matters, virtually all buses in Barnet are now low floor and wheelchair accessible.

The Council's programme for roads and parking schemes involves the protection of bus stops through parking restrictions and the imposition of greater disciplines on motorists. During 2004 schemes at North Finchley, Finchley Church End and Temple Fortune resulted in better car parking disciplines and easier access for buses at stops.

Last year's BSP included a bid for some £44,000 for bus stop improvements but this bid was not accepted.

London Underground and Network Rail are responsible for public access to their stations within the borough. No stations are currently fully accessible. I shall continue to seek that such works are undertaken by the relevant organisations.

Question No. 52

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

The Equal pay act was passed nearly thirty years ago. Does the Cabinet Member believe it right for Barnet women to have to wait until 2007 for a review of the Equal Pay audit that Barnet Council is undertaking? Is it not time for fair pay for women?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

The Council fully complies with the 1970 Equal Pay Act and does not operate pay differentials for male and female staff. By 2007, the Council will have conducted a Pay and Grading Review as required by 2004 National Pay Agreement. The Pay and Grading Review is far wider than an equal pay audit and will examine the following;

- A new pay and grading structure
- Details of the approach to be taken to determine the relative sizes of the jobs included*
- Proposals for protection
- Proposals for premium rates
- Proposals for progression
- Proposals for back pay
- Proposals for appeal against assimilation proposals
- An Equality Impact Assessment of proposed changes to grading and pay and other conditions.
- An Equal Pay Audit where local pay reviews have been completed without such an audit.
- Proposals for bonus and other performance payments
- Proposals for any cost savings or productivity improvements required to offset the cost of implementation
- A timetable for implementation by 31 March 2007
- Resources necessary for the pay review and their estimated cost.

Question No. 53

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

How will the Council mark International Women's Day?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

The Council has no plans to mark this event which falls on 8th March this year and has not done so in previous years.

Question No. 54

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

At the council meeting on 8 July 2003, in response to my question: "Will the Cabinet Member confirm that the definition of institutional racism will continue to be used by this administration?", the Cabinet Member responded by saying she could not answer the question because she did not understand it. Has the Cabinet Member since found the time to read the MacPherson Report and could she now say whether the definition of institutional racism continues to be used by the Council?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

The comments attributed to me at the Council meeting on 8th July 2003, are inaccurate. I recall clearly that I was unable to answer the question posed because it was unclear and inaudible as Cllr. Sodha was referring to her notes, not through any lack of understanding on my part.

I am fully aware of the recommendations of the report made by Lord McPherson of Cluny and the definition of institutional racism will continue to be used by the Council.