

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members
13 September 2005
Questions and Responses**

Question No. 1

Councillor Brian Coleman

Could the Cabinet Member tell us what discussions he has had and with whom on the future of Christchurch Secondary School site, and was the LDBS involved in these discussions?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

I should like to thank Councillor Coleman for his continued interest in the future of this site. As a former governor of the school he knows it well. One of my first actions when I was appointed to this portfolio was to meet with the Bishop of Edmonton to discuss this and other matters. I have had subsequent meetings with him, the Director of the London Diocesan Board and the DfES. I have also been lobbied by various individuals. I can assure those who live near the school that the Council has no intention of selling the school playing fields which we own for development. As Councillor Coleman knows the school site is not ours. However I have made it clear in the past, as he also knows, that the Authority could not support a Christ Church Mark Two

Question No. 2

Councillor Jack Cohen

In relation to the proposed sale of Parks Golf Courses, Paragraph 8.2 of your report to the 21 July 2005 Cabinet Resources Committee, you mention some staff working at the courses were made redundant. How many staff were made redundant and what was the cost of the redundancies to the Council?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

All seven members of staff working on golf courses took voluntary redundancy and left the councils' service on 2nd October 2004. The majority of the cost was capitalised through the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (£28,788). The balance of the cost, relating to "payments-in-lieu" (£13,978), was met by the council.

Question No. 3

Councillor Colin Rogers

Why is there no service agreement between Barnet Homes and the Council's Corporate Anti-Fraud Team, and how does Barnet Homes deal with allegations of fraud as a result?"

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

This really is a question for Barnet Homes Ltd. However Barnet Homes has an anti-fraud policy and response plan, which sets out clearly how it will deal with allegations of fraud. A whistle-blowing policy is also in place. Further, the Management Agreement between LBB and BHL requires the Council's lead officer (the Head of Housing) to be advised of any allegation of fraud against BHL.

Question No. 4

Councillor Brian Coleman

Is the Cabinet Memembr satisfied with the progress at Bishop Douglas School in coming out of Special measures

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

Since the school went into special measures HMI have carried out four inspections. The Inspectors have recognised that the school has made a steady improvement. They have reported reasonable progress which should mean that the school comes out of special measures by December 2005, the target date. I do hope that local Catholic parents and local Catholic Primary Schools will recognise the progress which has been made.

Question No. 5

Councillor Monroe Palmer

Can the Cabinet Member tell Council when Barnet is going to promote the use of electric vehicles in Barnet, following the lead of Islington Council which won London Borough of the Year Award for sustainable transport? An easy first step being public electric sockets for electric cars as Government will largely cover the cost of installation of the sockets.

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

It is unclear what "lead" is referred to in the question - Islington parking officers have confirmed that there have been no on-street charging points installed for electric vehicles.

With regard to funding, the Department has noted a recent press release on grants for charging points and have enquired on the matter to the Energy Saving Trust who is involved. Though they have not yet encountered requests for charging points on the highway they have said that they would give consideration to the possibility of this.

As you know, I am interested in this idea and very grateful to your constituent, Mr John-Paul Flintoff, who brought the issue to both of our attentions. I have instructed officers to investigate the matter further and report back to me.

In addition as you will recall from the last Council meeting, I am also determining proposals for further reductions in the discount available for owners of electric vehicles who apply for controlled parking zone permits.

Question No. 6**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

How many people have **so** far been identified for not recycling under the compulsory recycling scheme?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

In the first phase of the scheme a number of collection rounds were monitored. Initial monitoring showed that 80% of households were taking part in the scheme, meaning that approximately 250 households per round were not taking part.

More recently detailed monitoring work has been undertaken on one round that had a relatively low initial participation level of around 50%. The participation on this round has increased and it is hoped that with further work over the coming weeks this will improve.

Question No. 7**Councillor Brian Coleman**

Is the Cabinet member satisfied with progress at St Mary's CE Secondary School in coming out of Special measures?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

Progress has been slower than expected. However, as the Councillor knows there have been changes in the Senior Management Team. Peter Blenkinsop , who is now assisting St Mary's , is a good choice. I have known him for some time and am much impressed by the progress at Whitefield since he became Head. I look forward to similar progress at St. Mary's. I hope that the school might come out of special measures by next Easter. That would mean that there would be NO secondary schools in special measures.

Question No. 8**Councillor Susette Palmer**

In view of the excellent pilot study carried out on the Westcroft Estate in Cricklewood by the "Local Solutions" project to provide other activities for young people at risk from drugs, what plans do the Administration have to follow up the street work done with permanent outreach youth workers?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

As Councillor Palmer knows the Westcroft Estate is a Camden Estate situated in Barnet. That is why both Camden and Barnet will be providing services there. I should like to point out that Whitefield School offers a whole raft of activities for young people - from football to basketball, drama to chess, cine club to taekwondo. Some of these activities are targeted at particular minorities such as the Somali homework club and the sport, chess and cultural sessions for Pashto and Dari speakers.

Question No. 9

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

If the Cabinet Member responsible for equalities could please inform Council how many members of the Barnet Safer Communities Partnership Board are members of an ethnic minority?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

I have no idea because it is not an issue.

Question No. 10

Councillor Brian Coleman

How many looked after children does Barnet currently care for?

Answer by Councillor Christopher Harris

We have around 400 LAC - the number varies from day to day as you appreciate.

Question No. 11

Councillor Monroe Palmer

In 1995/96 when Cllr Susette Palmer was Mayor, Barnet Council planted a tree outside the Town Hall to commemorate the tragic death of Israeli Prime Minister Rabin. This November is ten years since that killing. Will Barnet Council mark the anniversary by a cross-Party ceremony outside the Town Hall at the same time as Israel marks this sad loss of an important Statesman?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

There are no plans at present but I will discuss the suggestion with The Mayor.

Question No. 12

Councillor Soon – Hoe Teh

If the Cabinet Member would confirm the comments of the Whetstone Area Forum Chair Councillor Silverstone who, at the meeting on 26 July, admitted that the sale of Friary House is one of the options the Administration is considering for the future of the House, despite the opposition of local residents who were gifted Friary House and Friary Park?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

Cllr Silverstone has confirmed that he said no such thing. There are no plans to sell off Friary House and active negotiations are ongoing to use the building as a centre for community use.

I refer the Councillor to the meeting of Cabinet Resources Committee of 28 July 2004 which considered a report on Friary House.

It was stated several times in the report that there were not proposals to sell Friary House. There has been no change in that position since.

The report also noted that Friary House **was not gifted** to the people of the Borough – instead the property was purchased by a predecessor authority.

Question No. 13

Councillor Brian Coleman

How many looked after children does the Borough have placed in Kent and specifically how many in Thanet?

Answer by Councillor Christopher Harris

- We have been very successful in reducing the number of LAC placed at a distance from home mainly as a result of the recent success of our fostering recruitment - i.e. an increase of 50% in LBB foster care beds over the last two years from 120 to 180 (in line with our LPSA target to have achieved 210 by the end of 2005/6)
- We do however still have 32 children placed in Kent or whom only 5 live in Thanet (the area which Kent says it would like other council's to avoid due to intolerable pressure on their local schools, health services and the police)
- The 5 children in Thanet represent 2 sibling groups who have been there since 1999 and 2001 respectively. The Director of Children's Services has now placed an embargo on further placements in Thanet but clearly it would be quite wrong to move these 5 children who are very settled with their foster carers.
- Barnet council has been very keen to respond to the concerns of Kent CC about the over concentration of LAC in the Thanet area
- The Head of Children and Families visited Thanet personally in April and has as a result placed an embargo on the placement of further children in this small area
- It is important to note that the recent publicity applies to the Thanet district and not to the whole of Kent

Question No. 14

Councillor Monroe Palmer

Would the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport provide the monthly figures for take-up of green waste composters and outline future plans to promote their use to Barnet residents

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Composter Sales Record 2005/06

	Blackwall Compost Tumbler	Linpac Machine	Thermo Ecobin	Mini/Junior Bin	Midi/Large Worm Bin	Green Worm Bin	Cone	MONTHLY TOTAL	Kitchen Bins
Apr-05	1	7	12	28	7	8	1	64	63
May-05	46	9	24	21	10	6	0	116	70
Jun-05	31	4	36	31	6	15	3	126	95
Jul-05	15	4	13	26	5	5	3	71	56
Aug-05	15	3	25	20	11	5	5	84	69
TOTAL	108	27	110	126	39	39	12	461	

Figures for purchases made by residents are reported on a monthly basis as a local performance indicator to the Cleaner, Greener, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Work is currently underway to produce an overarching Waste Prevention Strategy for Barnet. Whilst the detail of the strategy is still to be presented to Cabinet, the draft includes the following proposals in relation to the home composting scheme:

- Review compost bin subsidy programme (in progress), and implement recommendations of review. *(The review considers the merits of using external composter manufacturing companies to handle orders and deliveries. It is envisaged that a subsidy will continue so that residents can continue to buy units at prices below normal retail prices).*
- Promote Home Composting through garden centres and other additional means.
- Provide educational material with subsidised bins.
- Establish Master Composter programme building on the work of WRAP and LCRN.

The promotion of Home Composting will continue to be an important part of the council's work to minimise waste entering the waste stream.

Question No. 15

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

What is the Cabinet Member able to do to alleviate the offence to the Muslim Community caused by the delay in signing the contract for the sale of the former Deansbrook Day Centre by the Council to the Edgware Muslim Community Centre group?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

Subsequent to the Cabinet Resources Committee agreeing to accept the offer from the Edgware Muslim Community Centre, and before officers could reasonably have prepared and sent out a contract, an unsolicited and higher offer was received. The Council is legally obliged to consider higher offers and it could have faced a legal challenge had it continued with the sale to the Edgware Muslim Community Centre.

The Council had no choice in the matter.

Officers are now looking into how a short list of interested parties, including the Edware Muslim Community Centre, can be given an equal opportunity of re-bidding for the property but in a manner which will reduce the chance of further unsolicited bids being received.

In addition, the Leader, myself and several other Administration Councillors have visited the Mosque on several occasions to explain and discuss the issue. The Community Leaders are aware and understand the difficult situation the Local Government Act 1972 has left the Council in. I will be writing to the ODPM pointing out this "flaw" in the legal requirements of the Act.

Question No. 16

Councillor Brian Coleman

Is the Stonegrove Masterplan dead or alive?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

The position on the Masterplan is as it has been since last September, when Planning and Environment Committee resolved to grant outline planning permission for the development of the estates, subject to Section 106 and 278 Agreements and other reserved matters being approved. These matters have not been concluded and the consent has not yet been issued. There are no plans to change the housing mix and numbers and outputs that were the principal objectives of the Masterplan.

For reasons that were explained in the report to the Committee, Cabinet Resources Committee agreed on 29 March 2005 to dispose of the garage site, Site C, to Family Housing Association for the construction of 62 dwellings to provide new homes for the residents of Powis, Collinson and Goldsmith Courts. Site C will be the subject of a separate free standing detailed planning application for consideration by the Planning and Environment Committee. I would expect that all future planning decisions will be made in accordance with the current outline approval, or to put it another way in the context of the Masterplan. This site was always anticipated as the first to be re-developed under the Masterplan.

Agreement has been reached on the acquisition of the land at Spur Road which is being developed as playing fields for the new Academy. This will lead to the Borough acquiring approximately 10 acres of land occupied by the present Academy.

Officers are preparing a report for Cabinet on the options for the future regeneration of the estates. I expect that to be ready for consideration later this year when Cabinet will be able to determine how it wants to move forward.

Question No. 17

Councillor Paul Rogers

What measures have been put in place to issue licenses under the Housing Act 2004 for houses in multiple occupation?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Environmental Health Officers are already participating in training provided by the ODPM to ensure they are ready for the demands of the new legislation when they are introduced. The Council is duty bound to introduce the mandatory aspects of the licensing of houses in multiple occupation and officers are currently drafting the appropriate application forms, documentation and advisory leaflets that will be necessary to introduce the scheme. There will also be a need to consult local landlords on the scheme and officers are designing consultation questionnaires which will be circulated to landlords. The results of the consultation will then be reported to Cabinet with recommendations in respect of the level of fee to be charged and the discretionary provisions to be adopted.

Question No. 18

Councillor Brian Gordon

In the wake of the murderous London bombings which affected the lives of numerous people in this Borough, would the Leader consider writing to the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, asking him to apologise for his association with extremists such as Sheikh Qaradawi, which in my opinion has merely given encouragement to terrorists in pursuit of their evil aims?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

Yes.

Question No. 19

Councillor Phil Yeoman

Has the Council Leader discussed the privatisation of the refuse collection service with the Cabinet Member for Environment, and will the Council Leader give a firm commitment that the refuse collection service will not be privatised?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

The only discussion that I have had with the Cabinet Member for the Environment on the future of the refuse service, followed the frankly mischievous leaking of a draft of a Best Value review in to the future of the service. Cllr Offord confirmed, quite rightly, that in accordance with best practice every option was being considered

To give a firm commitment that the refuse collection service would or would not be privatised would seriously prejudice that process.

Question No. 20

Councillor Brian Gordon

Would Councillor Offord like to join me for a stroll in Stoneyfields Park so that we can together savour the delights of all the improvements the Council has carried out to the facilities in that park?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Is your intention to allow us to look at the play area which has been refurbished, the picnic tables and additional litter bins that have been installed, the five-a-side goals that have been installed to allow informal games of football on the site or the improved gates that have been installed to reduce out of hours access?

I understand that you have been very active since June 2004 working alongside officers and consulting with local residents to put in place a programme of improvements in the Park and not only should local residents, but also the Council, be grateful to you for this.

Question No. 21

Councillor Alison Moore

When considering efforts to divert young people from becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, does the Council Leader agree that if you ask youngsters what they want it is not the youth clubs that many of our generation enjoyed?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

I do not believe that there is a simple answer to this question. Firstly the answer that you will get may be determined by the age of young people that are asked. It might also depend on how the question is phrased.

Question No. 22

Councillor Brian Gordon

In view of the current threat from potential terrorists, some of whom could be living within our Borough, is it not time to consider whether there should be a little more security to monitor people entering this Town Hall?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

There has not been any indication that the risk to local authority public buildings has particularly increased because of the current threat. The recent bombings and attempted bombings have been aimed at the transport infrastructure. Whilst that could change, there have been no indications that Town Halls will be a target.

The Town Hall has CCTV cameras covering all the entrance/exit doors, the driveway, the foyer area, reception area, the first floor landing and back corridor at the rear of Town Hall with monitoring screens located on the First Contact reception desk and in the First Contact Manager's office. The reception desk is staffed throughout the day and evening when the building is open to the public.

At present, from 9am – 4.30pm a security guard is stationed in the foyer area. During these times an increased number of residents are attending the Town Hall to visit the Council Tax and Housing Benefit public counter which has been temporarily moved to the Town Hall whilst refurbishments are being carried out in Fenella.

Other entrances to the building are protected by having keypad entry systems which means that the public can only enter the Town Hall through the main entrance.

Health and Safety issued security advice to all staff on 27 July 2005 to remind them of the importance of wearing name badges, remaining vigilant at all times and advice as to what to look out for from a security point of view.

The security arrangements at all of the Council's buildings are kept under regular review and the relevant staff have met since 7 July to specifically discuss the arrangements for the Town Hall. A number of options to strengthen the existing security for the building, not exclusively for anti-terrorist purposes, are being considered.

Question No. 23

Councillor Steve Blomer

If the Cabinet Member could inform Council how many and which Members have participated in Licensing sub-committee meetings who have not beforehand undertaken licensing training?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

There have been three Licensing Committee development events. Two focusing directly on preparing Members to fulfil their duties in relation to the new licensing regime and one session for Licensing Sub-Committee Chairman.

The two general sessions were held on 28 Jan 2005 and 8 August 2005. The August session was designed to offer training for those who were new to the Licensing Committee, or had been unable to attend the January session. However, those who attended had all been trained before so the August session focused on issues that had arisen from their experiences so far. Our records show that Cllrs Coleman, Prentice, and Burton did not attend either session: In January Cllr Coleman was not a member of the licensing committee and Cllr Prentice was busy as Mayor of Barnet.

The session for Licensing Sub-Committee Chairman was held on 5 Sept 2005. Of the six Chairman, Cllrs Evans, Blomer, and Susette Palmer attended. Whilst Cllrs Coleman, Braun and Prentice did not.

All Licensing Committee members have participated in Licensing Sub-Committee meetings.

I am assured that all members of the licensing committee are fully aware of the contents of the Council's licensing policy and to date the decisions taken have been in accordance with that policy, whether they have been formally trained or not..

Question No 24

Councillor Brian Gordon

Is there a possibility of extending the hours of Police or Street Enforcement Officer patrols around the more sensitive danger spots around the Borough, including public parks?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

The issue of police patrols is a matter for the police but Street Enforcement staff already carry out patrols outside of core hours where circumstances warrant it. These patrols are targetted at specific areas and times.

Question No. 25

Councillor Linda McFadyen

What consultation has been undertaken with local residents - and how has the Council made decisions - on the allocation of finance, prioritisation of works and design for the improvements at Watling Park?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

When alterations or developments are being undertaken in a park that are felt to constitute a material change, then consultation will be undertaken. The extent of the consultation will be in proportion to the scale of the change, in the opinion of the responsible officer. For routine work this would normally consist of putting up notices on site and writing to adjacent homes. For major changes the opinion of interest groups would also be sought and perhaps a staff presence on site provided to gauge opinion.

The majority of the work both undertaken and planned in Watling Park constitutes no material change and therefore has not been the subject of public consultation. The minor exceptions to this have been in response to the call from the public and local police who requested the installation of the goal posts over the summer and the defensive planting. The CCTV was installed as a natural extension of the wider Burnt Oak scheme and it's installation was supported by the consultation regarding public safety during the 2003 Best Value Review.

Question No. 26

Councillor Brian Gordon

Have you any comment to make on the scaremongering rumours emanating from the Opposition about alleged proposals to sell off the Town Hall?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

It is disappointing that Opposition Councillors of both hues continue to peddle untruths about the redevelopment of Hendon Town Hall site.

There are no plans to sell off the Town Hall nor are there any plans to build on the allotments.

Question No. 27

Councillor Colin Rogers

Does the Council's internal Audit Service perform the internal audit function for Barnet Homes or does Barnet Homes undertake this itself (and if so how is this human resourced)?"

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

The Council currently provides an internal audit service for BHL under a service level agreement which will end on 30 September 2005. The Company is presently seeking alternative arrangements for this service and the Head of Housing will be monitoring this since it is important that the Company has adequate internal audit arrangements in place.

Question No. 28

Councillor Brian Gordon

As it is some time since the matter was raised, could you please reiterate the maximum length of time in which Council Officers are supposed to answer letters from (a) members of the Council and (b) members of the public?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

It is expected that all letters will be responded to in 10 working days.

Question No. 29

Councillor Agnes Slocombe

Who is the leaseholder of the youth club on 4a Park Rd, NW9, and why is it so difficult to have the area around this centre cleaned and made environmentally safe and sound?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

There is currently no leasehold interest in the Council premises at 4a Park Road.

The youth club which did formerly lease the premises vacated it a few years ago. Since then the building has been used by the Youth Service for local youth activities but the building is no longer suited to that purpose. In August the Youth Service declared the premises surplus to their requirements.

In accordance with usual procedures, officers will be investigating whether the premises are suitable for other Council uses and will present a report to a future meeting of the Cabinet Resources Committee. In the meantime they will be looking at the condition of the exterior of the building and taking appropriate action to get the Council's land cleaned up.

Question No. 30

Councillor Brian Gordon

I have received a number of representations from residents who are physically unable to push their wheelie bins or move their recycling bins to the front boundaries of their properties. What facility is available – and how quickly is it activated – for such residents to request that the refuse collectors do this for them, and also return their bins or boxes to their original positions with their lids on?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

For those residents who are unable to move their refuse wheeled bin, green wheeled bin or black recycling box to the boundary of their property special arrangements can be made, known as assisted collections. In an assisted collection a designated collection point is arranged between the resident and the collector - for example by the front door. In most cases arrangements can be made over the phone, occasionally a supervisor will visit a resident to make an assessment and collections should be put in place within ten working days of the original call.

All wheeled bins should be returned to their collection point with the lids closed. Black recycling boxes should be returned to their collection point with the lid neatly placed inside the box, to the side of the box or underneath. The lid is not replaced on the box as the placement of the lid is used as a marker to distinguish which boxes have been emptied, and which have not.

Question No. 31

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

Can the Cabinet Member tell me how regularly dog poo and litter bins are emptied in West Hendon and who carries out the checks to make sure they are emptied? I understand that there are going to be new contractors dealing with this. Will there be penalties if these bins are not emptied as stated in the contract?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

The contract is for the dog bins to be emptied once a week. This is monitored by greenspace officers and a colour bag system has recently been introduced to facilitate monitoring (2 colours are used and changed week on week). The system for emptying bins is being reviewed at present and any new contract will have penalty clauses.

Litter bins are emptied 3 times a week in the summer and monitored and emptied as required in the winter. This is maybe 1-3 times a week depending on the site.

Question No. 32**Councillor Brian Coleman**

What communications has Councillor Finn and his Officers had with Members and Officers of the London Borough of Camden in the last six months concerning the proposed Cricklewood regeneration scheme?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

All of Barnet's neighbours (including Camden), the GLA and GOL have been consulted as part of the final modifications to the UDP and the draft addendum to the Cricklewood Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Once this consultation is complete and we have assessed the findings, specific meetings will be organised with appropriate boroughs. This is likely to be Brent and Camden in the first instance given that they are directly affected by potential future proposals for the Cricklewood town centre.

Question No. 33**Councillor Soon – Hoe Teh**

Will the Cabinet Member guarantee that South Friern library will be retained/rebuilt including at least the same or better services, floor space, staffing and opening hours on the current site of the existing library?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

The specification issued to potential developers of the South Friern site included the requirement for the submission of plans to include an allowance for the equivalent space to the current library, accessible to meet DDA requirements, including accessible public toilet provision. The base budget for the Library Service includes provision for staffing the existing library at its current advertised opening hours and there are no plans to alter these.

You may wish to add or not set hares running for supplementary questions: It is intended that a new library would be laid out and presented in a way that makes it fully accessible to all the community in line with modern library provision

Question No. 34**Councillor Brian Coleman**

Will Councillor Freer update the Council on the disposal of the former Friern Barnet Sewage works and will he outline the consequences to Barnet residents if Labour controlled Haringey Council get their way and turn it into a travellers/gypsy site?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

At its meeting on 21 July 2005 the Cabinet Resources Committee considered a report on the change of circumstances relating to the former sewage works site.

The committee noted that Haringey had amended its draft UDP proposal so that only part of the former sewage works site is proposed to be designated for a travellers' site. Officers had made due representations at the UDP public inquiry objecting to any part of the land being used for a travellers' site. In particular officers pointed out that the proposed site does not meet all the guidelines criteria proposed by Government in that the nearest housing (Alexandra Road/Sydney Road area) includes area of high deprivation.

The public inquiry was due to end by the beginning of September. We now have to wait for the Inspector to make his decisions and recommendations.

Question No. 35

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

What progress has been made with regards to the promise made by the Cabinet Member at the council meeting on 28 June to assist the Muslim Community who pray every Friday at Grahame Park community centre and Watling Community Centre find access to premises when bank holidays fall on a Friday?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

Please refer to the answer to question 43.

Question No. 36

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will Councillor Freer confirm the Administration's Policy with regard to Long Lane Pastures site?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

Fruitful and ongoing discussions are taking place with the Long Lane Pastures Action Group to identify a mutually beneficial solution. A draft lease of for the land has been issued and fine-tuning is now taking place. In addition we are taking steps to repair the fence to the site to ensure the site remains secure for the benefit of the Council's interest and the LLPAG. I am pleased that we have been able to deliver on our promise to pursue the area being used as a nature reserve.

Question No. 37

Councillor Paul Rogers

Does the cabinet member believe that the 302 new social housing units planned for the next three years (of which 65 do not have identified locations) is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of Barnet residents living in temporary and unsuitable accommodation?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

I am not sure where Cllr Rogers gets his figures from. In 2004/5 alone the Council awarded planning permission on a total of 924 additional affordable homes, of which 437 were for social renting.

Our programme for 2005/06 projects 261 affordable housing starts in the borough during the year. The Housing Association programme for the next 3 years includes a further 317 affordable homes where the number of units and the bed-sizes have been finalised. This projection does not include sites where the numbers or the mix of property have not been finalised but where partners are firmly planning to develop affordable housing. Nor does it take into account the thousands of new homes, including affordable homes that will begin to come on stream during the period on the major sites at Beaufort Park (RAF East Camp), the Ingliss Barracks and in the Cricklewood regeneration area.

We continue to work with our development partners to identify new opportunities for developing affordable homes for Barnet people.

It is of course the case that this is not sufficient to build our way out of homelessness and housing need in the borough, which is why we are developing our options first approach to assisting people in housing need and preventing homelessness.

Question No. 38

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will Councillor Matthew Offord ensure the users of Alyth Gardens Synagogue especially the elderly and disabled members are catered for should the Temple Fortune Controlled Parking zone be implemented?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Officers along with Councillor Harris held a constructive and productive meeting on Friday 26th August with representatives of the Synagogue in order to address their concerns and any specific issues that may be affected by the proposed CPZ, including that of access to the Synagogue particularly for the vulnerable i.e. elderly, disabled and young children.

The meeting was useful in that it gave the Council more detailed awareness of local issues and will serve to better inform any final decision on the CPZ.

It is intended to hold another similar meeting to include the residents association by the end of September, by which time it is anticipated that a clearer view on the extent and structure of the CPZ will be known.

Question No. 39

Councillor Agnes Slocombe

Will Cabinet Members and senior management offer to meet ward councillors to visit sites of concerns in their wards so that local problems can be witnessed first hand and action can be taken?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

Yes and as far as I know, at least since May 2002, subject to diary commitments and finance being available to effect changes, they always have.

Question No. 40

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will the Leader of the Council write to the Minister for London to insist that the Government funds increased Met Police costs due to the recent anti terrorist operations and that the London Council tax payer does not pick up the cost in a rise in the precept?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

I have already written to The Mayor and on your suggestion I am now copying the letter to the Minister

Question No. 41

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

As the Cabinet Member knows, there have been several complaints regarding anti-social behaviour in the Welsh Harp after 6pm. How often do street enforcement officers patrol Welsh Harp? Is the Member going to do anything about it so that people can lead normal lives? Are there plans to have patrols after 6pm?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

From my own regular visits, and information gained from people who are at the Welsh Harp on a daily basis, I am not convinced that there is such an anti-social behaviour problem as you suggest.

From my own regular visits, and information gained from people who are at the Welsh Harp on a daily basis, I am not convinced that there is such an anti-social behaviour problem as you suggest.

However, to ensure that the site is used in the correct manner, the following actions have and are being taken. Street Enforcement Officers regularly patrol the area during normal working hours in order to:

- prevent people using BBQs outside of the designated area;
- issue Fixed Penalty Notices to people found dropping litter (including excessive feeding of the birds);
- deal with any abandoned vehicles;
- to provide a presence to deter any anti-social behaviour.

Working in partnership with the police, additional patrols were organised for the weekend to cover the summer months (7 May 2005 - 24 September 2005 - 21 weekends) when there are more visitors to the Welsh Harp. These patrols cover the hours of 1pm – 6pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

Street Enforcement Officers and police have found that by speaking to people they complied with requests and behaved in a reasonable manner. No alcohol was evident during patrols. Over the summer there has been an improvement in behaviour as people have been informed of how they should behave on the site by the Street Enforcement Officers on patrol.

The work of the Street Enforcement Officers has been supported by additional work on the Site:

1. The car park off Cool Oak Lane has been closed except for use by organised groups.
2. Signs prohibiting barbecues, swimming, dumping and fishing have been installed
3. Tree debris suitable for camp fires was removed from the site in May to reduce the misuse of the site.
4. Rubbish and litter clearing has been increased to ensure the site remains clean to show that the site is cared for and discourage misuse.

Question No. 42

Councillor Soon-Hoe Teh

Will the Cabinet Member give a commitment that Friary House, which was gifted to the residents of the borough, will not be sold?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

Firstly, I will reiterate for Members that Friary House was not gifted to the Borough but purchased by a predecessor Authority.

The Administration is not considering selling Friary House and so the Councillor's question is irrelevant.

Question No. 43

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

What progress has been made to assist the Muslim Community who pray every Friday at Grahame Park community centre and Watling Community Centre find access to premises to pray on Sundays during the month of Ramadan?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

At present, community centres managed by the Council are not available for hire on Sundays and bank holidays and this is unlikely to change in the immediate future. However, this will be considered along with the availability of multifunctional space which many voluntary and community sector organisations have raised with the Council, through the Best Value Review on working with the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Question No. 44

Councillor Colin Rogers

The Cabinet Member's reply to question 24 at the June council meeting revealed she had been misinformed. The reply related views to have come from tenants was which only extracted after a Barnet Homes housing officer informed the tenants that the fence was staying irrespective of tenants' views. What efforts is the Cabinet Member taking to ensure that contractors are not being given work/there is no perception by tenants that contractors are being given work simply to tide their business over, rather than work being agreed solely for the benefit of tenants?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

As explained previously the request for a fence came from 2 tenants living adjacent to it who were experiencing particular difficulties with privacy and security. It is accepted that there was no prior consultation with other tenants who were less directly affected. When subsequently asked their views the majority of tenants said they approved of the fence. As part of its everyday estate management Barnet Homes has to balance the needs of individual tenants, good estate management and the views of the wider community.

Barnet Homes is managing a capital improvement programme of some £150 million over 5 years and a repairs and maintenance budget of £8.5m per annum. This is a massive body of work that places considerable pressure on the capacity of its contractors. In this context it is stretching credibility to suggest a fence costing £2000 would be built just to keep a contractor happy or 'tide them over'."

Question No. 45**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

Can the member please tell me how many consultants are currently employed and what is their cost?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

Consultants are used by the Council in differing ways. It is not possible to state how many are 'employed' currently. Many are used for specific pieces of work, and on any particular day they may or may not be working for the Borough. The alternative to using consultants in this way would be to employ people with specialist expertise which clearly would be neither practicable or cost effective.

Question No. 46**Councillor Soon-Hoe Teh**

If the Administration continues to consider the sale of Friary House as one of the options, will the Cabinet Member guarantee that alternative community uses and options for Friary House are considered first and given priority?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

There are no plans to sell Friary House and so the question does not arise.

Question No. 47**Councillor Zakia Zubairi**

What progress has been made to assist the Muslim Community who pray every Friday at Grahame Park community centre and Watling Community Centre find access to premises for Taraveeh on the day of the sighting of Ramadan's New Moon, as it is not currently possible to immediately book premises on the same date? How is the Council able to assist the community access premises for the entire month of Ramadan for Taraveeh?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

We appreciate that booking community centres at short notice will always be difficult, as they are used by a variety of groups, and availability cannot be guaranteed. We would expect that the hiring group will have explored mutually convenient possibilities with the Centre Manager

Question No. 48**Councillor Soon-Hoe Teh**

Will the Cabinet Member now give a commitment that the Council will not proceed with the proposed car park next to Friary House and traffic through Friary Park?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

The Councillor's question is inaccurate.

There is no proposal for a public car park at Friary House; it was proposed that the existing hardstanding would be reinstated for the use of the community groups using Friary House.

There never has been a proposal to allow through traffic

Question No. 49

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

If the Cabinet Member will agree to pursue the five goals to achieve Fairtrade status for Barnet Council?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

Whilst sympathising with the objectives of the campaign, it is not a priority at this time, whilst the Borough has pressing issues of it's own. Given that the Fairtrade website itself admits the campaign is time consuming, this would divert much needed resources away from the Council's five key priorities. Perhaps when the Council is in a position of being fully funded by this Government for the activities it expects us to undertake, then we may have the resources available to take on such a campaign.

Question No. 50

Councillor Soon-Hoe Teh

What consultation is being/will be undertaken with local residents on the future of Friary House BEFORE any decision is taken?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

The public have made their views that they would wish the house to remain in community use and that is the policy we are pursuing. Any decisions will be publicised through the normal committee and scrutiny process.