

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members
20 December 2005
Questions and Responses**

Question No. 1

Councillor Brian Gordon

As you are aware, a number of Opposition Members of this Council recently voted against CCTV cameras in key areas of the Borough. How should members of the public interpret this as an indication of the policy of those Opposition Members towards CCTV if they were to regain control of this Council?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

As has been identified from the recent resident survey results - crime is once again at the top of the list of residents concerns – and this Administration is listening by installing measures that can assist in reducing crime and the fear of crime in the borough – such as CCTV cameras.

I can't say how other people should interpret the actions of councillors who say one thing but then vote another way in the council chamber. From my own point of view that simply perpetuates increasing cynicism in the public. Fundamentally, if councillors vote against something then do they not want it and in that recent vote it showed that both the Liberal Democrats and Labour do not place any emphasis or priority on CCTV or crime reduction in the borough.

Question No. 2

Councillor Sean Hooker

In respect of the Stonegrove/Spur Road Regeneration project, how much of the Council Taxpayers' money has hitherto been incurred by way of Officers' time and external costs, and in addition committed by way of underwriting agreements, since December 2001; and how much further is budgeted or expected to be incurred before final decisions and agreements are reached for a scheme or schemes to commence?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

Funding for internal (officer) and external costs is from the Housing Revenue Account, and from a small housing capital programme allocation. Work on the regeneration of Stonegrove & Spur Road estates does not come from the General Fund or from Council Taxpayers' money. The total spent to date and projected to the end of the financial year is £808,000. Budget-planning for the coming financial year is currently underway.

Cabinet Resources Committee has authorised the purchase of a limited number of leasehold properties on the estates where the owners are experiencing hardship and are unable to sell, and for the purchase of leasehold homes to enable decanting of the first blocks to be reprovided. These costs will again be met by housing capital funds, or if required through Prudential Borrowing, and would subsequently be recovered from the regeneration project as it proceeds.

The Council entered into an underwriting agreement which could result in the payment of up to £1.28 million were the project not to go ahead. In such circumstances this cost would be met from the land assets available on the site, or from the Housing Revenue Account.

Question No. 3

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

What is the current waiting time for elderly and disabled people needing adaptations to their homes?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Waiting times vary according to the nature of the property and the adaptation required. Significant additional resources have been provided to Barnet Homes to meet increasing demand for adaptations. They expect to spend £930,000 in 2005/6 on adaptations and to date have carried out 150 major works and 400 minor works. Private sector tenants and home owners may be entitled to disabled facilities grant. As a result of a reduction in the funding provided by the office of the deputy prime minister it has been necessary to defer some grant payments.

Question No. 4

Councillor Brian Coleman

When does Cllr Finn expect any of the following to happen with regard to the Stonegrove/Spur Road Regeneration scheme, a) any further planning applications are heard, b) signing or agreeing any 106 agreements or other legal agreements, c) allowing or agreeing to the demolition of the Spur Road Community centre and garages in Green Lane, Edgware and d) signing or agreeing to the sale of any land in the area of the regeneration site?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

a) The next planning application - a detailed application for the first phase - has been lodged with the planning authority. It will be considered by the Planning and Environment Committee early in the new year.

b) It is not known when any Section 106 agreements will be signed. The consent for the outline application approved by Members in September 2004 has not yet been issued as the applicants have not yet agreed the Section 106 that will be required.

c) Cabinet Resources Committee agreed on 29th March 2005 to the sale of the garage and community hall site to Family Housing Association for the construction of 62 new affordable homes. Steps have been taken to acquire a temporary community hall pending the development of a new permanent hall in the regeneration of the estates.

d) Cabinet Resources Committee agreed to the sale of land to Family Housing Association, see answer above, on March 29th 2005. On the conclusion of satisfactory terms this sale will be completed in the new year. With the exception of some right -to buy applications, no further sales are planned at this stage in the regeneration area.

Question No. 5

Councillor Wayne Casey

Further to my question (no 23) which was answered at the November meeting of the Council has the Land Registry search now been undertaken and if so what further action has been taken/is proposed?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

The Land Registry search confirms that the alleyway belongs to property numbers 159-177. It is proposed that a letter is sent to the occupiers of these properties to explain that the responsibility of the alleyway lies with the owners of the same.

Question No. 6

Councillor Mark Langton

Does the Administration believe there is a need for more youth and community centres around the borough to provide services particularly to lower income communities, and if so, how is the Council going to achieve this?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

Barnet foreshadowed the Green Paper by amalgamating the Youth Service with connexions. I am glad that the government has indicated that it will learn from the Barnet experiment and is thinking along the same lines. We now have 34 youth workers working directly with young people including 6.5 detached youth workers. We have revamped specialist projects such as the Finchley Youth Theatre, the Rithmik Project. I am pleased to be able to confirm that Watling football engages more young people than any other youth provision in the borough. Although we had to close the Herbert Wilmott Centre because it was unsafe and had been neglected when Labour and the Liberals ran the Council other youth centres are thriving. In addition the work done at Herbert Wilmott is being undertaken elsewhere. One of the keys to the future is to use Council assets more effectively for example through extended schools.

Question No. 7**Councillor Brian Coleman**

Can Councillor Offord tell the Council of what progress Transport for London have made in improving the environment around New Southgate Station and in particular the desperate need for CCTV and better lighting to enhance passenger safety?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Not a great deal of improvement but TfL have now approved funding to appoint consultants to identify an initial list of station access schemes within the North London Transport forum area and to work up scheme justifications based on guidance they themselves have issued including identifying priorities.

Question No. 8**Councillor Kathy McGuirk**

What tonnage of paving stones/slabs has been removed - as part of the road and pavement resurfacing and repairs - from the Borough's roads in 2004/5 and so far in 2005/6; how much of this has been re-used/recycled and how much has gone to landfill?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

All recyclable materials taken from Barnet footways are taken to Camden Plant Ltd for recycling. Recycled materials is return as Type 1 crushed concrete, throughout London. As the operations involved in planned maintenance involve very little general excavation there is little contamination with clay, hence the great majority of both the concrete slabs and asphalt footpaths is recycled.

The high figure of recycled concrete slabs this financial year is the result of replacing some 8000 m2 of existing modular slabs with new 63mm slabs at North Finchley/Tally Ho.

Areas of material recycled	2004/05	2005/06
Asphalt (Average thickness 85mm)	9240 sq.m (1700tns)	5256 sq.m (967tns)
ASP (Concrete slabs) (1670tns)	3208 sq.m (442tns)	12143 sq.m

All planings from carriageway maintenance are recycled by the industry and the typical use for this material is as secondary aggregates and mixed with virgin stone to provide Type 1 specified sub-bases. It is used in road construction for lower levels of road construction capping layers.

Volume of material recycled	2004/05	2005/06
Asphalt (planings)	70,167 tonnes	45, 920 tonnes
Area of road surface involved	754,286 sq.m	492, 000 sq.m

Question No. 9

Councillor Brian Coleman

Has Councillor Freer considered how exempt information from the Cabinet Resources Committee meeting concerning South Friern Library has appeared in the Finchley & Hendon Times?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

Reply to follow

Question No. 10

Councillor Colin Rogers

According to the local newspapers, the Council has employed consultants to value six hectares of playing fields at between £35million and £50million for a potential sale value. Why has the Council not likewise carried out a public consultation exercise to ask the views of the residents living in the vicinity of the fields who will be most affected by such a sale - particularly those living in already high population density areas, suffering from a lack of recreational facilities and heavy pressure on roads, parking and public transport infrastructure?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

Reply to follow

Question No. 11

Councillor Brian Coleman

Is it correct that the Royal British Legion were banned from selling Poppies in our Libraries?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

Libraries are approached very frequently to collect for charities. The historic position (over many years) has been that there are no collection boxes in any library, for two reasons. First and foremost, because there seems no objective way to select those causes which are supported and those which are not. To open this facility to all comers would result in library counters with several collection boxes each week. Second, because of concern about the security of the boxes which could not be kept under scrutiny continually and which might, therefore, be stolen. Libraries are pleased to promote charities through displays of posters and leaflets.

Question No. 12**Councillor Claire Farrier**

The Council Leader was reported in the local newspapers saying that Montrose Park is the only possible location within the borough to build a new stadium for Barnet Football Club. Could the Council Leader publish in full the review of all possible sites in the borough (conducted for the Inspector's Inquiry) as evidence for the claim that Montrose Park is the only possible site for Barnet Football Club?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

SIZE CONSTRAINT	
Allotments adj.Great North Road	Too narrow to accommodate stadium
St.Stephens	Less than 2 Hectares
Hendon Football Club	Less than 2 Hectares
Hendon College, Greame Park Way	Less than 2 Hectares
Cricklewood Sidings	Constricted/Prohibitive Site Cost
DEVELOPED/UNDER CONTRACT	
Friern Hospital	Developed/Under Contract
RAF East Camp	Developed/Under Contract
Inglis Barracks	Developed/Under contract
Broadfield Avenue	Developed/Under Contract
Mill Hill Gas Works	Developed/Under Contract
Edgware Bus Station	Developed/Under contract
Land South of Tilling Road	Developed/Under contract?????
Arlington Road Playing Fields	Developed/Under Contract

GREEN BELT / MOL	
Bethune Recreation Ground	MOL
Glebe Lands Open Space	MOL
West Hendon Playing Fields	MOL
Allotments/Tudor Sports Ground	MOL
North Middlesex Golf Club	MOL
Lyttleton Playing Fields	MOL & Article 4 & Cons Area
Sunny Hill Park	MOL
Clitterhouse Recreation Ground	MOL
Hendon Park	MOL
Borehamwood Football Club	Open Land Area (Hertsmere MOL).
Land adj. New Southgate Cemetery	MOL
Oakhill Park	MOL
Wingate & Finchley FC, Summers L	MOL
Memorial Sports Centre	Green Belt
Land Opposite Edgware School	Green Belt
Mill Hill Park	Green Belt
South King Georges Field, Barnet	Green Belt
Land North of Mill Hill Ridge	Green Belt
Finchley Golf Course	Green Belt
Barnet Copthall Golf Course	Green Belt
Land Opposite Edgwarebury Golf	Green Belt

REMAINING SITE COMMENT	
North London Business Park	Comer Group Land Poor public transport links
Woodcroft Park	Site may be too small to fit stadium Large land drain and slopes through centre of site Close to station
Allotments – Squires lane	Would involve loss of probably all the allotments (over 2Ha) at one of the Borough's largest allotment sites
Athletics Ground, Cricklewood	Close to Public transport On Borough boundary next to Hampstead Cemetery (Camden LB) which has planning policy protection. Site sensitive to high buildings No other nearby playing fields (1 mile radius) so loss of athletic ground likely to be strongly resisted
Montrose Playing Field	See Briefing Note
Met Police Ground –Aerodrome	Good Public Transport Few Planning Constraints Owner unwilling to sell land

Watling Park	In area of open space deficiency Criss-crossed with paths and old trees Stadium would use up almost all of park and playing field
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Question No. 13

Councillor Maureen Braun

When is the APA expected?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

I am delighted that the results of the APA have now been published. This demonstrates very real progress by both Children's social services and the education service since 2002 - progress for which she helped to lay the foundations when she was a member of the Cabinet. Education is the escalator of opportunity which should offer all our children chance to maximise their talents. The APA demonstrates that the future for Barnet children is rosy under this Administration.

Question No. 14

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

What is the Council doing to ensure there is at least one black or ethnic minority staff member of the Directors' Group or Management Board?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

The Council appoints staff on the basis of merit not colour, and whilst I am Leader of the Council that will not change.

Question No. 15

Councillor Leslie Sussman

Can the Cabinet Member for Education comment on the success of Bishop Douglass School coming out of special measures?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

I am delighted that Bishop Douglass has come out of Special Measures. I forecast at a recent Council Meeting that here would be no secondary schools in Special measures by Easter. The fact that this promise was fulfilled earlier is due to the hard work and commitment of the Headteacher and her staff. I am sure that the whole Council would like to join me in thanking them

Question No. 16**Councillor Mark Langton**

Will the Council undertake a review of how best to use and locate community and youth facilities in and around communities that experience higher levels of anti-social behaviour, and how will scrutiny and ward councillors be involved in such a review?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

I am always willing to consult with local councillors although I am sorry that there will not be many further opportunities to consult with Councillor Langton. I wish him well as he leaves the Council. I am glad that he talks about 'community and youth facilities' as they will often be quite distinct from 'youth centres'. In his Ward the Hollywood Bowl complex is a youth facility which the Council gave planning permission despite the opposition of: Labour Councillors. It is very popular with young people and demonstrates the fact that not all facilities have to be publicly provided. What a pity that his friends were at best lukewarm supporters of this facility.

Question No. 17**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

How is the Council planning to celebrate International Women's Day in March?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

The Council has no current plans to mark this event which falls on March 8th 2006 and has not done so in previous years. We open to suggestions from other members who would like to contribute to marking International Women's Day.

Question No. 18**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

How much has it cost to re-organise the Human Resources service since 14 May 2002?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

The organisational changes made in the Human Resources Service since May 2002 have been self-financing.

Question No. 19**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

Please provide a detailed breakdown of how many consultants, and at what cost including agency commission, has the Council employed in the current financial year, and for what purpose?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

I refer the member to the answer that I gave her to a similar question in September last.

Question No. 20

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

What are the average sickness days in each service area for 2004/5 and so far in 2005/6?

Answer by Councillor Katia David

The average days sickness lost in 2004/5 across all the Council's Services was 7.8. In 2005/6 to date, sickness levels have decreased over the previous year. It is, however, likely that these will show some increase over the remaining part of the year which always has higher sickness levels than the spring and summer months. A detailed breakdown by service for both 2004/5 and 2005/6 to date is attached:

2004/5

Sickness Absence 2004/2005 (LBB by Service Area)			
Service Area	Average No of Employees (Year)	Sickness Days Lost	Average Days Lost (for Year)
Adult Services	532.0	5,002.2	9.4
Borough Treasurers	252.2	2,606.5	10.3
Children and Families Services	281.6	3,246.7	11.5
Corporate Support	22.1	101.0	4.6
Cultural Services	219.7	2,431.2	11.1
Education Service	419.1	3,727.5	8.9
Environment and Neighbourhood Services	928.2	10,091.0	10.9
Highways and Design	261.2	2,293.3	8.8
Housing	174.3	1,694.8	9.7
Human Resources	76.3	569.6	7.5
Information Systems	84.5	386.4	4.6
Law & Probity	108.2	1,076.5	10.0
Planning	66.3	231.5	3.5
Property and Valuation Service	12.4	69.0	5.6
Resources Directorate (CCU)	24.1	232.4	9.6
Resources Directorate (SP)	7.3	11.4	1.6
Strategic Development Unit	5.4	11.5	2.1
Strategic Directors	15.5	24.3	1.6
SUB-TOTALS:	3,490.3	33,806.7	9.7
Schools	4,277.1	26,678.3	6.2
TOTALS:	7,767.4	60,485.0	7.8

2005/6

Sickness Absence - April to September 2005 (LBB by Service Area)				
Service Area	Average No of Employees (Year)	Sickness Days Lost	Average Days Lost (for Year)	Annualised
Adult Social Services	397.9	1964.0	4.9	9.9
Borough Treasurer	202.8	595.0	2.9	5.9
Children & Families	254.4	1518.0	6.0	11.9
Corporate Support	36.1	92.3	2.6	5.1
Customer Care	279.2	1001.9	3.6	7.2
Customer Services	22.0	101.0	4.6	9.2
Education	461.3	1814.9	3.9	7.9
Environmental Services	756.3	3263.5	4.3	8.6
Highways And Design	259.2	1372.9	5.3	10.6
Housing Services	165.5	914.3	5.5	11.0
Human Resources	59.9	180.4	3.0	6.0
Information Systems	56.4	138.4	2.5	4.9
Law and Probity	182.0	513.6	2.8	5.6
Modernising Core Systems	23.4	68.0	2.9	5.8
Performance and Strategy Team	4.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Planning	61.6	41.5	0.7	1.3
Property & Valuation Services	10.1	13.5	1.3	2.7
Strategic Development Unit	4.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Strategic Directors	9.0	6.0	0.7	1.3
Strategic Procurement	8.0	23.0	2.9	5.8
SUB-TOTALS:	3254.7	13622.1	4.2	8.4
Schools	3777.5	6589.0	1.7	3.5
TOTALS:	7032.2	20211.1	2.9	5.7

Question No. 21

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

Does the Council count the total number of days off taken by staff due to stress and, if so, what are the figures for 2004/5 and so far in 2005/6?

Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council

The Council does collect information on the reasons for staff sickness absence, including absence due to stress. The data, however, is not complete as in a significant percentage of absences the reason for absence is given as "other". The information currently available would indicate that absence as a result of stress is at a stable level.

Attached is the data available for 2004/5 and 2005/6 to date.

2004/5

Reasons for Absence 2004/2005 (LBB)		
Reason for Absence	Number of Absences	%
Back Problems	588	3.6%
Eye, Ear, Throat	605	3.7%
Genito-urinary	153	0.9%
Headache, etc	709	4.3%
Heart/Blood Pressure	132	0.8%
Musculoskeletal	670	4.1%
Operations, etc	682	4.2%
Pregnancy Related	230	1.4%
Respiratory, etc	769	4.7%
Stomach/Liver	1,531	9.4%
Stress, etc	639	3.9%
Viral Infections	3,306	20.2%
Other	6,335	38.7%
TOTAL:	16,349	

2005/6

Reasons for Absence - April to Sept 2005 (LBB)		
Reason for Absence	Number of Absences	%
Back Problems	200	4.2%
Eye, Ear, Throat	175	3.6%
Genito-urinary	31	0.6%
Headache, etc	227	4.7%
Heart/Blood Pressure	30	0.6%
Musculoskeletal	200	4.2%
Operations, etc	286	5.9%
Pregnancy Related	55	1.1%
Respiratory, etc	190	3.9%
Stomach/Liver	426	8.8%
Stress, etc	197	4.1%
Viral Infections	645	13.4%
Other	2,154	44.7%
TOTAL:	4,816	

Question No. 22

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

When is the Council going to make a decision on the future use of the youth club building in Park Rd and what criteria are to be used for the allocation of its use?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

There are ongoing discussions with regeneration partners. If the building is not required the disposal will be in accordance with legal requirements. I have met community groups to discuss needs and community use would be encouraged.