

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members  
11 April 2006  
Questions and Responses**

**Question No. 1**

**Councillor Brian Gordon**

How might the government's proposal to give the Mayor of London greater powers on housing, planning and other matters affect the London Borough of Barnet?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council**

A response was submitted to the Government's consultation paper. In summary, our views on how the proposals (which were presented as a series of options, rather than a single proposal) might affect Barnet were as follows:

**Housing:**

The Mayor is potentially given too much power over our housing allocations. In particular giving the London Housing Strategy statutory force may gradually erode local authority influence in favour of the Mayor and reduce our ability to develop local strategies reflecting local needs and aspirations. Whatever extra powers the Mayor obtains need to be phased in over the first few years to allow us to meet existing commitments.

**Skills and training:**

While we support a more co-ordinated approach which reflects the fact London is a single labour market and does not respect Borough boundaries, we would oppose any attempt to centralise any Learning and Skills Council functions relating to planning and funding 14-19 learning.

**Planning:**

Our view is that since the creation of the Mayor and Assembly in 2000, the current system works well and the balance of powers between London and local level is about right. For example, in Barnet's case no strategic planning application referral has been directed for refusal since the Mayor took office. We therefore supported the option for minimal change.

The other options could result in a significant adverse impact on the local planning authority and Barnet's powers to plan for its own area effectively.

The proposals to give the Mayor powers of direction over the Development Plan are both unnecessary (as the Mayor already has significant power to ensure "general conformity" of a UDP or LDF and in Barnet's case the Mayor and GLA were fully consulted and significantly influenced the local and strategic planning policies.

The vitally important role of local planning authorities to be close to and reflect the views of their local community, including the linkage between LDF's and community strategies, could be undermined by giving greater powers to the Mayor. Local democratic accountability would be eroded, particularly if the Mayor became the planning authority or had powers to direct approval of a local planning authority refused application and the local Statement of Community Involvement undermined. Also, London Borough strategies such as the Three Strand Approach could be demoted or overridden by the Mayor.

The Mayor having powers to direct approval would undermine our ability to protect our communities and local environments and achieve sustainable development if strategic reasons for approval took no account of local impact or circumstances. The Mayor would be unlikely to address local community concerns or provide appropriate mechanisms for public involvement in decision making, something we have a track record of.

Finally, the Head of Planning has also expressed concern that an increase in GLA powers will lead to Planning Officers being 'poached' from the Boroughs to the GLA family.

**Waste:**

We agree in principle with a single waste disposal authority in London, although we would need to consider full details of remit and composition and would expect any London-wide body to have a partnership approach towards strategic waste planning and local waste planning making use of our detailed local knowledge and geographical expertise, and links with residents and businesses.

However there is no justification for the Mayor to have the power to allocate sites for waste facilities or make development control decisions. It is also totally inappropriate for the GLA to look after waste collection, which is a local service and one highly visible to local residents, although this does not preclude voluntary collaboration with other waste collection authorities.

**Question No. 2**

**Councillor Wayne Casey**

How are the work programmes of the team responsible for street cleaning and the team responsible for maintaining grass verges coordinated?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

Litter is removed from highway verges as part of scheduled sweeps which take place approx 7 times per annum (January to December) and this is coordinated with grass cutting where the schedules coincide, as grass cutting is a seasonal activity that takes place between April to October.

Litter is cleared prior to cutting by grounds staff to ensure effective operation and to leave sites in a neat and tidy condition. In addition, the highway verges (where present) are cleared of litter as part of the block cleanse and where the grass cutting cycle coincides with the block cleanse then the grass is cut and litter is removed as part of the overall operation.

Coordination activities are complicated and stopped by weather factors. Street cleansing and de-littering activities can take place under virtually all weather conditions but not so with grass cutting. Grass cutting is not carried out during wet conditions as the resultant cut tends to be poor and the removal of any grass cuttings from hard surfaces is problematic.

**Question No. 3**

**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

Consultation with users groups is a very important part of providing and improving quality services. Why then does the Council not carry out consultation with a disabled users' group when considering services for disabled; and will the Council now consider my suggestions of setting up a disabled users group precisely for this purpose?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

The Council undertakes a wide range of consultation with all members of the community. Adult Social Services has set up, in partnership with health providers, the voluntary sector and service users and carers, a Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment Partnership Board. Disability Action for the Borough of Barnet (DAbB) along with other organisations such as the RNID are active members of this Board.

In addition, the Council funds Barnet Council for Voluntary Service's support for the Physical Disability Network which provides the Council with an important mechanism for consultation with service users, carers and voluntary sector providers.

**Question No. 4**

**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Would you agree that the determined stance taken by the Edgware Councillors (Hart, Lester and Scannell) on behalf of residents in favour of scaling down the Spur Road/ Stonegrove development is an excellent example of how local Ward Councillors can have a constructive influence on Cabinet Policy?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council**

Yes.

**Question No. 5****Councillor Wayne Casey**

Will the Leader write to the Royal Mail pointing out that the careless littering of the streets with elastic bands by their staff is now illegal under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council**

Yes...I already have

**Question No. 6****Councillor Anita Campbell**

Why has the administration not been active in listening to the residents' recent problems regarding anti-social behaviour in Ridgeview Close, Mays Lane and the Dollis Valley estate in Underhill ward and acting to combat it?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council**

It is quite wrong to suggest that the Council and its partners have failed to listen to, or deal with, the concerns raised by residents in the Ridgeview/Mays Lane area of Underhill. Officers of the Council and Barnet Homes have been working closely with residents since September of last year, and particularly since Christmas, when the level of complaints increased significantly. A combination of approaches has been used, including the use of the mobile CCTV van; a Police operation over a weekend which resulted in 9 fixed penalties for public disorder, 13 harassment warnings and action related to other offences; identifying the ringleaders and cautioning them and/or inviting them, with their parents, to sign Acceptable Behaviour Contracts; issuing Notices Seeking Possession where the perpetrators are Council tenants; and launching a local consultation on gating off the alley ways which have been both a focus of anti-social behaviour and provided an escape route for perpetrators. Our officers, and the beat officer, continue to monitor the situation closely and are in regular communication with residents.

**Question No. 7****Councillor Brian Gordon**

Does the Council have any authority at all to curb the excesses of clamping firms operating on private roadways within the borough who have been known to extort huge sums of money from motorists on the spot in order to release their vehicles?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

Answer received from Cabinet Member and being validated – to be circulated separately

**Question No. 8**

**Councillor Jack Cohen**

How many planning applications in Childs Hill Ward have been withdrawn by the applicant?

- A) year end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2002
- B) year end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2003
- C) year end 31<sup>st</sup> march 2004
- D) year end 31<sup>st</sup> march 2005
- E) year end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006 (or as at today's 18<sup>th</sup> march date)

**Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen**

Attached is raw data on withdrawals of planning applications in response to the above question.

Data has been produced for Childs Hill ward specifically but to put it in context we have produced some other wards data within the Finchley & Golders Green Area, Hendon ward and the total for the borough at the end.

These figures show some increases across the board due to the correlated increases in planning submissions overall. However the percentage rate has not increased by any noticeable amount which remains constant at about 12 - 15% although there are variations in wards at different times and years due to the level of development activity. For example, where a number of major developments come forward in Childs Hill Ward, say The Crown Hotel the number of planning applications and consequently withdrawals may rise. Similarly, in other wards such as Hampstead Garden Suburb where increased development activity in Bishops Avenue, former Neurological Hospital site and a number of telecom mast applications has resulted in an increase in both submissions and withdrawals.

The ODPM has been advising local planning authorities on producing new and relatively tougher validation guidance for planning applications which Barnet is fully adopting. Therefore, total numbers of withdrawals due to inadequate first submissions has increased in recent years and the standard of quality of submissions expected has risen.

There is no reason to say that Childs Hill Ward has a specific issue or withdrawal problem any more than Hampstead Garden Suburb Ward or Hendon Ward. The Planning Service does not apply a validation or withdrawal policy for specific wards. We apply a consistent approach across the borough, irrespective of wards. Variations merely reflect the level of development activity across different wards at a particular time or year.

<b>Numbers of Withdrawn applications</b>						
	<b>Childs Hill</b>	<b>Golders Green</b>	<b>East Barnet</b>	<b>Garden Suburb</b>	<b>Hendon</b>	<b>Total</b>
2001/2	15	7	17	17	21	201
2002/3	24	19	21	74	21	457
2003/4	22	25	22	46	24	421
2004/5	37	22	21	66	39	599
2005/6	41	20	19	45	36	597

**Question No. 9****Councillor Anne Hutton**

What plans are there for the use of Friary House in Friary Park?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

The plan is to offer a lease to suitable bodie(s) to occupy the property with a use which satisfies planning and the general ethos of the location. We will be seeking potential occupants from the council's existing tenants who may wish to move there in the first instance. We continue to discuss the building as a potential home for a number of voluntary and charitable organizations. This is a long term solution.

**Question No. 10****Councillor Brian Gordon**

What is your opinion concerning the recent Labour Party leaflet that described Barnet's conservative Councillors as "far right extremists"?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council**

It is a sad reflection of the desperate state of the Labour Party that they have to resort to abuse in this way.

Others have misguidedly accused me of being a socialist, now Conservatives in Barnet under my leadership are described as being far right extremists, so I guess that probably means we have got the political balance correct.

**Question No. 11****Councillor Jack Cohen**

1) In reply to my question number 5 at the Council Meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2006, you confirmed Barnet runs the Coroner's mortuary at Dolman Close. In respect of this mortuary

- a) how many staff are employed and at what grade
- b) are they directly employed by the London Borough of Barnet, if not who does employ them
- c) if employed by Barnet please provide details of the line management structure.

2) In relation to the Finchley Mortuary how many episodes were recorded of organs being removed from bodies in the years 2002,2003 ,2004 , 2005, 2006 ( to date)

3) in relation to Finchley Mortuary when organs are removed from a body is there an audit trail that will confirm the organ parts are returned to the body and if so when was the last time the Council's auditors inspected the records.

## **Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

1a At present there is one Mortuary Manager who runs the Mortuary on a day to day basis. We are presently in the process of recruiting a Mortuary Assistant post who will be responsible to the Mortuary Manager.

1b The Mortuary Manager is directly employed and managed by the Council

1c Mortuary Manager  
Care & Repair Manager  
Environmental Services Manager  
Environmental Protection Manager  
Head of Planning and Environmental Protection  
Director of Environment

2 The incidence of any organ being removed and sent for further examination during post mortem is very rare and probably only occurs about once a year. It usually only occurs in criminal cases and those in which the cause and time of death can not be established by post mortem alone.

Finchley Mortuary is unable to provide further detail on this point as these documents form part of the Coroner's own records and the information can only be released by Dr Dolman himself.

3 If further examination of an organ is necessary the event is fully documented to ensure an audit trail - please see below:

Under the Coroners Act the Coroners Officers monitor all Coroners cases from start to finish and keep records which are held by the Coroner at the Haringey offices.

When a sudden or suspicious death is admitted to the Mortuary for post mortem the pathologist may decide that a certain organ needs further examination to establish the cause of death. The pathologist will ask the Coroner's permission and if the Coroner agrees the organ is collected, usually by the police, and sent for examination. When it is returned the Mortuary Manager at Finchley returns the organ to the body witnessed by a pathologist who signs confirmation of this fact. (see description of forms 1- 3 below kept by Finchley Mortuary to evidence this organ removal and replacement) The Coroner will also have records of this process which are kept at Haringey. NB - No major organs are ever removed from a body or retained without specific permission from the Coroner and only then to establish a medical cause of death. When this has been established the organ is reunited with the body.

These are the records kept by Finchley Mortuary during removal of an organ for further, specialist examination:

Form 1 Internal record of organ location - contains:

Name of deceased, date of post mortem, name of pathologist (carrying out post mortem), name of Coroners Officer, organ description, reason for retention, Coroners permission granted yes/no and relatives informed yes/no

Form 2 External record of organ location - contains:

Name of deceased, date of collection of organ, address removed to, signature of police officer collecting organ

Form 3 Record of organ return/disposal - contains:

Name of deceased, date of organ return, signature of police officer returning organ, date organ returned to deceased, signature of Mortuary Manager following reuniting of organ with body, witnessed by name of pathologist and signature.

Michael Bradley of the Audit section has confirmed that no audit has been conducted of Finchley Mortuary recently but that any audit should look at any and all high risk aspects of the service or function under review. He reports that the records of organ removal and return kept at Finchley Mortuary appear to be key records and would almost certainly form part of any audit.

**Question No. 12**

**Councillor Linda McFadyen**

Would the cabinet member agree with me that June is too late to effect an AFZ in Burnt Oak to safeguard residents from nuisance this summer?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council**

Given how cold it has been when I have been out and about in recent weeks, it is hard to predict what the weather might be in June, or when summer might start.

The introduction of new alcohol free zones is on the agenda and they will be introduced when the Council and the Police agree is the right time to do it.

**Question No. 13**

**Councillor Brian Gordon**

How many members of the Council took the trouble to fill in the long questionnaire under the "Ethical Governments Audit"? Does the questionnaire actually achieve anything?



## **Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council**

30 of the 62 Council Members ( 48.39% ) responded to the Ethical Governance Questionnaire. This is considered to be a very reasonable return and statistically reliable. The questions asked covered Members attitudes to ethical values, their understanding of the Council's ethical framework and their views on standards of conduct and probity within the Council. The Questionnaire was part of a wider Ethical Governance Audit which included a staff questionnaire, citizens panel focus group and desktop review to ascertain whether the Council has in place the various policies and procedures to ensure a sound ethical framework.

The ethical framework forms part of the Local Government Act 2000. The objective is to help ensure high standards of conduct in local authorities and many other public bodies. The purpose of carrying out an ethical governance audit is to enable an assessment to be made of the extent to which there are robust and relevant ethical values of the Council which underpin the day-to-day behaviour of both Members and Officers. The audit verifies the extent to which the constituent parts of the ethical framework ( codes of conduct, good practice, etc. ) are in place but, also, more importantly, the extent to which those who are expected to follow that ethical framework actually do so and are seen to do so. It is equally important for the local authority to install confidence amongst the residents of the borough and beyond in its decision making processes and the administration which supports those processes. In order to do so, there needs to be a well developed ethical framework which is able to promote high standards of conduct and eliminate or largely reduce contraventions. The framework needs to be an integral part of all of the Council's work. It is not sufficient for the Council simply to have codes of conduct in place. It has to ensure that they are well understood and that both Members and Officers receive the right levels of training and encouragement and support to comply with those codes of conduct.

Any well run organisation should have the necessary ethical framework in place and be prepared to review its effectiveness. Local authorities are no different in that respect and, given the important role that they play in people's lives, it is perhaps even more important that they adhere to the highest principles of ethical governance so that the public have full confidence in the probity of their elected representatives and the officers who implement their decisions. This is an aspect upon which local authorities can expect close scrutiny from Audit Commission corporate assessors.

The Council's Standards Committee considered a report on the outcome of the Ethical Governance Audit at their meeting on 21 March 2006. The view of the Committee was that this was an extremely useful exercise and approved an action plan designed to strengthen Barnet's ethical framework. The report to and decision of the Standards Committee are available on the Council's website.

**Question No. 14****Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Does the Environment Cabinet Member agree with the Conservative Shadow Chancellor George Osborne MP that many areas of the green belt are little better than scrubland and should be used to provide social housing, and how will this be applied by the administration in Barnet?

**Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen**

I refer the Member to Barnet's revised Unitary Development Plan Policy O2, which went through a public inquiry in 2004 and was agreed by the Independent Inspector and Secretary of State, in accordance with Government Green Belt Guidance PPG2. The revised UDP is on the Agenda tonight for adoption. Barnet's local planning policy on Green Belt is therefore UDP Policy O2.

**Question No. 15****Councillor Andrew Harper**

Could the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport please update Council on LBB policy on cycling and its place in achieving a cleaner, greener borough?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

The Council has recently submitted its Local Implementation Plan to the London Mayor and with regard to cycling makes the following comments:

Barnet's approach is to maintain:

- Well surfaced, uncomplicated carriageways on main roads which provide a convenient, safe and comfortable ride for confident, experienced cyclists;
- Well maintained carriageways on alternative routes along quieter roads; which although less direct, provide a comfortable, safer alternative for less confident adult cyclists and for children cycling with adults or alone; and
- A number of off road routes that complement the above.

In addition Barnet Council will work with cycle groups to identify where new cycle facilities are required, focussing particularly on:

- school journeys;
- providing secure cycle parking at stations;
- around town centres; and
- other potential cycle trip generators.

Before implementing improvements for cyclists on the main road network, the Council will be undertaking corridor studies to fully understand the needs of all road users and to ensure that an appropriate balance is achieved between the sometimes conflicting needs of all road users.

**Question No. 16****Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

What criteria or methodology is used by the Council for tracing work done by undertakers ie tarmac areas on utility hazard boxes or around drains surface water areas? Is a record kept of each undertaker when any jobs are done (date) so as to recall a return to the area to complete the job properly?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

The activities of the utility companies work on the public highway are generally governed by the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991. In accordance with the Act, Highway Authority's have a duty to maintain a street works register of this work and all utility companies are required to send a notice of intention to carry out work on the public highway.

This notice is sent electronically and the type of notice will vary according to type of work and classification of the street. The notice must state the commencement date and the duration. This register effectively provides a record of all utility activity. Additionally, the Act gives Highway Authorities the power to inspect street works by utilities at three stages of a works history; whilst work is in progress; within six months following interim or permanent reinstatement and within three months preceding the end of the guarantee period. If an inspection fails, a utility company has to carry out a repair within a set time depending on the potential danger of the defect. A charge for inspecting 10% of works in each of the three categories (i.e. 30% overall) can be made. Additional inspections are carried out and further defect notices issued until such time that the defect is resolved to the Council's satisfaction.

Also, all works in Barnet are inspected upon completion and any works that are found to be overrunning the notice period, are issued with a notice under section 74 of the act that allows for a charge to be levied on the utility company for each day that they overrun.

**Question No. 17****Councillor Wendy Prentice**

Could the Cabinet member for Environment and Transport please give me an update on the installation of CCTV in Mill Hill and High Barnet?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

The CCTV cameras in High Barnet have been operational for eight months and are monitored on a 24-hour basis from the Council's CCTV Control Room. In that time it has been used in 300 incidents resulting in 99 arrests at the scene.

The CCTV cameras in Mill Hill are currently being installed. In terms of progress to date: All poles have been installed and electricity supplies have been installed into each of the poles. BT are currently installing Fibre Optic cabling to link the poles to the Control Room and on completion of this work the cameras will be installed. It is anticipated that the cameras will go live late April, early May 2006

**Question No. 18****Councillor Zakia Zubairi**

Whilst welcoming the millions of pounds from the Labour Government for the rebuilding of the Aerodrome bridges, how is the Council going to ensure that other infrastructure needed as a result of the redevelopment of the former RAF East Camp and other developments in Colindale will be met before and not after the massive developments planned for the area?

**Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn**

I'll remind you that the Government, Labour or otherwise, does not have any money, as it comes from the taxpayer not some businessman who wants a peerage.

In addition to the £7 million ODPM grant negotiated and secured by Barnet Council, over £22 million of Section 106 planning contributions towards infrastructure have so far been secured through the planning permissions at Beaufort Park and Grahame Park which will see the investment on a phased basis as housing developments comes on stream. New community, health, educational, transport and other infrastructure are already programmed and timed so that both existing residents and the growing population will benefit as Colindale is regenerated. In respect of transport infrastructure in the Colindale area, there are a wide range of highways works (including the bridges), appropriate parking controls, and pedestrian and public transport improvements that have been secured as planning obligations arising from the Choices and Beaufort Park planning applications. The triggers for these works / contributions will result in phased implementation, co-ordinated where possible, and largely reflecting the roll-out of development.

Phase 2 of the Colindale Development Framework will seek to establish the next wave of necessary infrastructure as other sites at the Hospital, tube station and Barnet College come forward.

**Question No. 19****Councillor Andrew Harper**

Please would the Cabinet Member for Resources outline the ratio of employees working in education and the rest of Barnet's payroll, who are classed as high earners (over £50,000 a year)?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

There are 229 employees who earn above £50,000 of which 168 employees (73%) are employed in Education and Schools

**Question No. 20****Councillor Colin Rogers**

Current Council plans for East Finchley have demolished The Herbert Wilmot Centre, the library has been downgraded, Stanley Rd Field is under threat, Martin Schools will be demolished and rebuilt (and their playingfield reduced in size) and the Martin Schools allotments are under threat. This is East Finchley's bleak future. Apart from these smash and grab attacks on East Finchley, what plans does this Council have for ameliorating the ward's sorry plight - other than repaving the High Road again?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council**

I take it from Cllr Rogers question that he would like the council to:-

- 1) Have retained The Herbert Wilmott Centre, which had long outlived its expected life, (from when it was constructed) and would have left the small numbers of children who still used the centre regularly playing in a potentially dangerous environment.
- 2) Leave the Stanley Road 'playing fields' to decay still further. They have been rented to a community trust who failed to maintain them and have been unusable for years.

I take it he would also do nothing to improve the facilities at Martin school, and would leave the playing fields in the same condition that they are now.

Can I also remind him that the previous Labour Liberal administration had secretly planned the destruction of the old library and the construction of a large Waitrose store (with a library on top) which would have involved the destruction of a number of small shops between Baronsmere Road and the Station

The real threat to East Finchley would come from the re-election of a Labour/Liberal Council

**Question No. 21****Councillor Olwen Evans**

Would the Cabinet member for Resources care to comment on the state of the library service? In particular, how much money is spent on materials in proportion to other costs?

## Answer by Councillor Mike Freer

Materials expenditure as a percentage of Gross service Expenditure:

Authority	2004-2005 Actuals	2005-2006 estimates
Barnet	12.6%	12.9%
Bromley	12.2%	11.9%
Enfield	9.3%	8.8%
Sutton	12.1%	10.9%

As can be seen, we are increasing the % of our budget actually spent on materials. The other main costs are Employees and “support services costs” which covers recharges from other departments and central costs outside the department. Barnet continues to spend well above the norm on support costs.

Authority	Employees	Premises	Support Services costs
Barnet	£12,221	£1982	£5505
Bromley	£13,529	£2140	£1223
Enfield	£13,426	£3173	£1088
Hounslow	£15,166	£2749	£1473
Sutton	£12,590	£2541	£4153

Our strategy is to spend money on the front line not on back –office admin. We inherited a skewed approach to spending on Libraries, based on an odd belief that more spending equalled a better service. This is patently untrue and the previous administration failed to tackle endemic inefficiency.

## Question No. 22

**Councillor Alison Moore**

The Waste Management best value review sets out that “lowering costs indicates that at least one element of service provision will be affected – there is a tension between different factors in the value for money equation (quality, productivity, cost, user satisfaction and effectiveness”. Which of these elements does the Council believe would be affected and how?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

The objective of the Waste Management Best Value Review was to review current waste management arrangements and to establish a strategy for going forward. The review was deliberately broad covering a range of waste management services. Research carried out as part of the review found in general that authorities with lower costs had lower satisfaction, and those with higher costs had higher satisfaction.

The first part of the strategy work has been completed, with the agreement of the Waste Strategy at the meeting of the Cabinet on 3 April 2006. The Waste Strategy considers the long-term framework for waste in Barnet. Its timeframe is 2006 to 2020, and it deals with overall strategic issues. The operational action plan that will cover individual materials, collection methodologies, specific targets and tonnages will be developed in the future. This work will also consider the different factors in the value for money equation, and the balance between them.

I know that you want some quote so you can scaremonger in the local elections but that simply will not happen. This administration has established an unprecedented level of trust with our residents in our sensible and managed approach to compulsory recycling. We will now do the same with waste management.

**Question No. 23**

**Councillor Maureen Braun**

Would the Cabinet member for Resources care to comment on how much this Borough spends, in proportion to its population, on Library facilities compared to other London Boroughs?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

Net expenditure per 1000 population excluding Capital Charges

Authority	2004-2005 Actuals	2005-2006 estimates
Barnet	£22,762	£20,454
Bromley	£19,717	£20,035
Enfield	£21,497	£21,840
Hounslow	£21,300	£20,412
Sutton	£22,757	£22,959

We have now brought Barnet into line with similar Boroughs, but it must be remembered that we continue to have more libraries per head of population.

**Question No 24****Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

How many people are still waiting for adaptations to their homes, when are they likely to get these, and what is the timetable for finishing this work for those still waiting?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

The numbers of people waiting for adaptations varies depending on whether they are tenants of Barnet Homes or have applied for disabled facilities grant funding. Equally the length of time anyone has to wait for adaptations varies depending on the nature of the adaptation. Adaptations are carried out as quickly as resources will allow.

**Question No. 25****Councillor Helena Hart**

Please could the Cabinet member for Resources outline how much Barnet's Library Service spends on the average book?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

The average cost per book for this indicator is simply a division of the total budget spent on books divided by the number of books purchased. It does not take account of procurement arrangements or contract terms. Barnet Libraries are affiliated to the Central Buying Consortium Library Book contract through the London Supplies group; achieving discounted terms which have been described as "at the cutting edge" of the market.

Barnet Libraries have been working actively with other library authorities to drive forward efficiencies in procurement in line with the recommendations of the PKF report "Public Libraries: Efficiency and Stock Supply Chain Review"

Authority	2003- 2004 Actuals	2004-2005 Actuals
Barnet	£10.31	£6.23
Bromley	£7.73	£9.27
Enfield	£7.73	£7.60
Hounslow	£8.53	£8.71
Sutton	£9.59	£6.95

The significant reduction in the average cost per book is due to several factors;

The high price of hardcopy Reference texts is a major factor in the overall average cost. In addition, the transition to online reference services, available at all libraries and 24/7 by customers with a library ticket has also reduced the number and range of hardcopy Reference books purchased but increased access considerably.



Stock planning at every library has been targeted to ensure a higher proportion of paperback titles are purchased which are the preferred medium of most modern readers and are more cost-effective.

The re-stocking of Hendon library in this particular year involved the purchase of a large number of 'backstock' paperback titles which are comparatively inexpensive. Barnet currently sits 17<sup>th</sup> out of 33 London Boroughs in the average cost per book league table. The norm will tend at current values to £7.50 approx which allows for a balance of paperback to hardback, popular titles with some more academic texts.

**Question No. 26**

**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Is it envisaged that plans for Friary House will be for community use long-term, and not just community use to get the administration through the election?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

See answer to question number 9.

**Question No. 27**

**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Would the Cabinet Member for Environment not agree with the statement made at last Council that a grotty area contributes to a feeling of neglect in a neighbourhood? Does he not feel this would logically extend to the state of the roads and pavements?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

I would agree with the statement and the decision of the Liberal and Labour Groups to put an end to the road and pavements resurfacing and relaying programmes is an indication of how they do not want to improve Barnet but let it fall back to the disgrace it became under their administration.

**Question No. 28**

**Councillor Linda McFadyen**

The London Borough of Barnet won a Local Government Chronicle Award in the Public/Private Partnership category for the modernisation of care facilities for older adults. Given that the Cabinet Member for Community Services has sought to take the credit for the award, perhaps she could explain why Conservative councillors voted against this very programme to modernise care homes when the decision was taken at Council on 3 June 1999? When is she going to give credit where credit is due to Councillor Phil Yeoman - the Cabinet Member who actually got this decision through in the face of Tory opposition?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

The award was for the implementation and management of the reprovision programme over the past four years. The credit is due to the staff in Adult social services for their work in ensuring the partnership with Barnet Community Homes has worked effectively and brought about real improvements in care for vulnerable older people in Barnet.

**Question No. 29**

**Councillor Terry Burton**

Does the Leader of the Council agree with me that Barnet FC is a great team, a vital part of the Borough of Barnet, and that it is in this Borough's interests that they both prosper and remain within the Borough?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council**

I have consistently made clear that I want to see a successful football club in Barnet playing a full part in our local community.

In the year that I have been Leader I believe that I have tried to engage the Club in discussions to secure its future but sadly those efforts have been rejected by the club. For 10 years they have argued that they want to move from Underhill. Members should reflect on the fact that the club have refused to even come to the table to discuss the possible use of Montrose playing fields as a site for a new stadium.

**Question No. 30**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Does the Cabinet Member for Housing agree with the Conservative Leader of the Opposition David Cameron MP that it is important to ignore 'nimbyism' when seeking to increase the provision of social housing?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

The Three Strands Approach adopted by the Council ensures that new housing development will be managed in a way that protects and enhances those aspects which people most value about the character of Barnet. This approach is enshrined in the emerging UDP and a detailed Supplementary Planning Document providing detailed guidelines for new affordable housing, including social housing development, will back this up. Any individual schemes coming forward will be considered by the Planning and Environment Committee within the framework set by these policies.

**Question No. 31**

**Councillor Terry Burton**

I am aware of the following improvements made to Oakhill Park in East Barnet:  
-Oakhill Park is one of the 16 Premier Parks in the Borough and has been entered for the national Green Flag Award as a Corporate target.  
-The park has a five year management plan (as part of the requirements for Green Flag

award submission) and this was implemented in full consultation with the East Barnet Residents Association, and where expenditure is targeted to specific tasks and projects over that period.

- The park is staffed by a dedicated Park Keeper who prioritises work to ornamental features such as rose beds, the rockery, paths and litter, as well as being the high profile public interface, recognisable by the issue of Corporate clothing.

- All the paths within the park have been cut back and edged to present a clean profile.

- The herbage alongside the Pymmes Brook is programmed to be cut once per year. This is due to the value of the stream corridor for nature conservation. Work will also be carried out to remove seedling trees and shrubs where they impede the flow of water/and or the bank safety.

- The rodent situation has been identified and the councils cleansing section is dealing with any baiting required, but the situation of rodents alongside its natural home is exacerbated by feeding and fast food litter, so this is one of the Park Keeper and Cleansing sections priorities to keep bins emptied as often as possible.

- Tree work within the park has been programmed by the Tree Section and healthy and safety work has been targeted, with dead wood, canopy work and survey work within Oakhill Park Woods Local Nature Reserve as a priority, as well as new trees planted to give spring flower and colour.

- The Basket ball court was completely refurbished last year, with grants obtained by the 'Friends of Oakhill Park' and one of the Tennis Courts is programmed for refurbishment this year.

- Tarmac surfacing was carried out at the park include the widening of the entrance at Parkside and the Cat Hill/Rushdene Avenue area. Further footpath surfacing is identified for the 2006/07 financial year.

- New entrance fencing and bollards was installed at the main entrance at Parkside this year.

- New monohinge safety gates were installed at the playground, to comply with DDA requirements.

- Rose beds and shrub beds within the bowling green area were replanting last year, with the Bowling Club accepting responsibility for the maintenance of these features.

- New corporate style signage is on order and will be installed shortly -Ground Maintenance buildings have been renovated to improve aesthetics.

New fencing was installed around the bowling club and rear of the Cafe, to prevent the exterior of these buildings for being constantly graffitied.

- Fencing repairs are planned for this year to the fencing damaged by burnt out cars around the bowling green perimeter.

- The main pavilion was completely refurbished internally last year, painted in conjunction with the 'Princes Trust'.

- The Park Keeper targets the 'painting out' of graffiti as soon as it occurs.

- Security bollards have been installed at prominent points around the park to prevent 'joy riders' from burning out cars, especially the Daneland area.

-Greenspaces have worked with the London Wildlife Trust to prevent the same situation of cars being burnt out in the woods.  
-A new hand rail is being installed at the Brookside flight of steps, for public safety.  
-Orders have been raised and work currently in progress includes the Cafe and main Sports pavilion, to include roofing, veranda work, exterior lighting and we are working with the Charity 'First Step Trust' to paint the outside of the sports pavilion.  
-The external WC's are now locked, due to the constant vandalism at this site, however the Park keeper will always allow access to these facilities whilst on duty. This locking up is for a trial period to try and deter the vandalism. We are conscious of the inconvenience and will re open them as soon as possible. This is one of the subjects we raise with Police liaison meetings.  
-Poop scoop and litter bins are emptied at least once per week, but this situation is currently being reviewed with a more high profile service delivery being implemented by the council's cleansing section.  
-A new style of Premier Park litter bin is being installed in 2008.  
-This entire programme is another success story of this administration and is typical I'm sure for many parks and green spaces throughout our borough.  
-Additionally we should thank our officers and staff on a job well done.  
May I ask the Cabinet Member if he could outline any achievements I have missed, the plans for the future, and the money spent in the past year on this park and all parks across the Borough.

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

I think that covers most of the issues that this administration has produced for the park. But the Member could mention the predicted investment in our parks and greenspaces across the whole of the borough, which is in the order of £4.61 million, and the spend for Oakhill Park of £157,407.

**Question No. 32**

**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

How many black boys from African and Caribbean cultures have been excluded from primary and secondary schools in the last year and how many have been re-integrated in mainstream school?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

I should like to thank the Councillor for giving me an opportunity to point out that the number of permanent exclusions fell to only 5 in the Spring 2006 term. In the last 12 months 13 Black and Black Caribbean pupils have been excluded from school. 4 subsequently became 16 and left schooling. 3 have been reintegrated into mainstream schools and 1 has been placed by Brent. The others are attending alternative provision such as the Pavilion Pupil referral unit. When I visited the Pavilion a few weeks ago I was impressed by the dedication of the staff and their commitment to their pupils.

**Question No. 33****Councillor Terry Burton**

Mr Mayor, I see in the 2006/7 Budget that Asylum Seekers entering this borough during 2005/06 had an estimated cost to our tax payer of £157,800 to aid them. Thankfully, due to new Government legislation for 2006/07 there will be no cost to our taxpayers anymore, as apparently the Government will be paying all costs directly. What concerns me and I'm sure our tax payers is what percentage of this £157,800 from 2005/06 will be reimbursed to this council by the government and if so when?

**Answer by Councillor Christopher Harris**

We have applied for a special circumstances grant of £156,347 for 2005/6 to close this funding gap.

Our special circumstances bids for 2003/4 and 2004/5 were successful so we are optimistic. We await a government decision which is often not forthcoming until much later in the year. It would obviously be nice if we could ask for interest on the money but unfortunately I don't think this is part of the criteria we can work to.

**Question No. 34****Councillor Zakia Zubairi**

Of which is the Cabinet Member more proud: cutting funding for the Flightways Resource Centre in Grahame Park or cutting funding for the sheltered workshops for blind people?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

I am very proud of the massive improvements we have made to Adult social services over the past four years which mean that the most vulnerable people in Barnet now receive a significantly better service than they did when Cllr Zubairi's group ran the council.

**Question No. 35****Councillor Brian Coleman**

Could the Cabinet Member for Environment please comment on the state of the recycling service in Barnet?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

Barnet has a comprehensive range of recycling services, through which items are collected for recycling and reuse. In 2005/06 Barnet had a statutory target of recycling 27% of all household waste, and a local public service agreement to recycle 30% of household waste. The recycling and refuse figures are still being collated for the full year, however it is anticipated that the recycling rate will be at the upper end of these levels.

### Compulsory Recycling

Monitoring of the scheme continues, and shows that participation levels in the black box scheme are around 80%. This is a good level and continued monitoring improves this.

For those residents who continue not to recycle, letters and visits are made by our Recycling Assistants, and notices issued. During 2005/06 it was only necessary to issue one Section 46 notice (the first formal step towards prosecution), and this household started to recycle shortly afterwards.

### Kerbside recycling performance

Over 25% more tonnage was collected on the black box scheme in 2005/06 than in 2004/05. The tonnage collected per household compares very favourably with other councils both within and outside London.

### Green Garden and Kitchen Waste service

The service is now available to all residents in Barnet who have gardens, and approximately 55% of households have taken this offer up. Kitchen waste excluding meat bones was added into the collection service in October 2005. All the organic waste is taken to an in-vessel composting facility in Edmonton.

### Civic Amenity & Recycling Centre

The site now accepts 39 different materials for recycling or reuse. The latest materials added are computer discs, CDs, videos and audio tapes which are collected for recycling, and spectacles which are collected for reuse and given to Vision Aid Overseas.

### Publicity

This is a key area of work as it generates interest and participation in the services provided. Recent publicity has included a wrap around in The Times on 23 February, and a letter from myself that was delivered as part of the block cleanse programme, "tonnometers" on the back of ECT vehicles, and adverts around the borough ("Valentines" and "Let's recycle more").

### Schools Work

The Schools Recycling Challenge continues to be rolled out to all primary schools. So far 35 schools have completed the challenge, and the challenge is underway in 7 other schools.

### Office Recycling

A new office recycling service for the four main sites including the Hendon Town Hall complex started in March. White paper, mixed paper, cans, plastic cups and cardboard are now collected for recycling. A similar service will be rolled out to the smaller sites including the libraries later this year.

In addition to winning the Letsrecycle.com national award for Best Local Authority Initiative in 2005, the council's recycling schemes were highly commended in the Local Government Chronicle Awards on 13 March.

**Question No. 36****Councillor Colin Rogers**

Why is there no mention of Councillors of any description on LBB's website home page, and what is the mean number of clicks taken for our site's first time users to locate their ward councillor?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

There are full details of every Councillor on the website (<http://committeepapers.barnet.gov.uk/democracy/council/listcouncillorname>) ; 2

**Question No. 37****Councillor Terry Burton**

Mr Mayor, I see yet again in the Revenue Budget for 2006 -2007 That Asylum Seekers (Unaccompanied Children) had a current estimate for 2005/06 of costing this council £198,230 to help and aid these unaccompanied children. I am further shocked to see that this expense to the council is expected to rise in 2006/07 to over £368.020. Can we please have an idea of when we may have a final actual figure on the cost for 2005/06 as well as 2006/07 and again I must ask, what percentage of these vast amounts of taxpayers money can we expect to be reimbursed to this council and if so when?

**Answer by Councillor Christopher Harris**

This relates not to the costs associated with 'looked after' unaccompanied asylum seeking children but to those aged 18+ who have now left our care but with respect to whome we have ongoing responsibilities under the Leaving Care Act.

The infamous Hillingdon ruling increased the cost to Barnet.

Final figures will be available when the Council's final financial 'out turn' for 2005/2006 is available

This expenditure is not reimbursed to the Council since the government have set a threshold of 40 which must be exceeded before any grant support becomes available Barnet's numbers are below this threshold.

**Question No. 38****Councillor Alison Moore**

Why is there no mention of moving towards recycling plastics and cardboard in the Waste Management Best Value Review or Waste Strategy?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

The objective of the Waste Management Best Value Review was to review current waste management arrangements and to establish a strategy for going forward. The review was broad covering a range of waste management services, and did not consider specific materials.

This question is a little surprising as it was the Liberal / Labour administration that signed a contract which failed to include plastics and cardboard collection.

**Question No. 39**

**Councillor Brian Coleman**

Please would the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport tell me how many Councillors were consulted on the recent proposals for Partingdale Lane and how many responded?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

Elected Members in Mill Hill, Totteridge, Woodhouse and West Finchley were sent a consultation letter on the proposals. Only one councillor response was received as part of the consultation process.

**Question No. 40**

**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

How are the existing residents of West Hendon going to benefit from any planning gain (section 106) from the estate regeneration, and when will the residents be consulted on this?

**Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn**

The regeneration of the West Hendon estate will bring significant community, economic and environmental benefits to both the people and area West Hendon. In addition to the physical transformation of the area centred around the creation of a new urban quarter linking the Broadway and the Welsh Harp, the Section 106 agreement has secured 680 new affordable housing units; £6.35 million for improvements to local educational facilities including the re-provision of Lakeview Children and Family Centre; £1.39 million towards public transport and pedestrian improvements; a £1 million training and employment package targeted at local need; a new community and health centre, youth sailing base and sports pitch and £648,000 towards environmental improvements in and around the Welsh Harp. Critically the scheme also secures the part widening of the A5 with extensive improvements to pedestrian crossing facilities and highway junctions. Both the Mayor of London and the Government Office for London have supported the scheme whilst the Housing Corporation has committed significant housing grant to the delivery of affordable housing and improved decent homes.



The project will be delivered in a series of phases over a number of years and the planning benefits outlined will come forward to ensure that the needs of the community are fully met. Residents will be consulted comprehensively during the detailed planning stages of the project and will be given every opportunity to engage in and influence the regeneration of their changing area and community.

Cabinet last week approved to enter into a Principle Development Agreement, which sets out an ambitious programme to work with development partners and realise the benefits of the regeneration project for the people of West Hendon.

**Question No. 41**

**Councillor Leslie Sussman**

By how much has spending on temporary accommodation been reduced since 2002?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

The measures we have taken both to control the numbers of people needing temporary accommodation and to implement more cost effective ways of acquiring temporary accommodation means that we have succeeded in reducing expenditure by 81 % from £3.6m in 2002/03 to a projected out-turn of only £687k in 2005/06.

**Question No. 42**

**Councillor Anita Campbell**

Why is the administration only giving the Suzi Earnshaw Theatre School a one year lease for the Bull Theatre, and yet pretending that the building has been saved for community use?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

The site was previously marketed with community use encouraged. This process identified a number of planning issues over the use of the site by groups other than theatre groups.

The current position is that we are negotiating the details of a lease for SETS to occupy the building to July 2007, whilst a detailed planning brief is undertaken to confirm the uses of the site. The process of the planning brief will take the views of the community into account.

There may be other bodies who could satisfy the resulting planning brief and so a fair and open process for determining who should be given the opportunity for occupation on a longer term will result. We cannot for reasons of probity extend a long lease to an individual body without going through this process. In addition we can not offer a long lease to any organization until the uses such organizations propose are permitted uses. I am delighted SETS is using the site successfully but it would be improper for me to short circuit due process. Suzi Earnshaw is aware of the reasons why this approach is being taken.

**Question No. 43****Councillor Olwen Evans**

With the Government closing so many Post Offices, does the Cabinet Member for Resources have any plans to provide additional facilities for Residents to pay bills issued by the Council?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

In light of this Government's headlong rush to close Post Offices (which Labour MPs failed to oppose in Parliament), I am conscious that many residents may find it difficult to pay bills issued by the Council. However I am confident that the new Conservative Administration after May 4<sup>th</sup> will be able to offer a significant increase in payment options. The council's banking contract is being re-tendered this year, with the new contract expected to operate from 1 April 2007. The current intention is to bring together all existing banking and merchant services contracts into a single contract, or at least to offer it on that basis in order to test the market on whether it would be practical and more cost effective to organise in this way. Merchant services include payment by dr/cr card over the website and the telephone payments system.

At the same time it is our intention to include other payment methods in the contract, such as paypoint or some similar service. Such services have a wide availability e.g. paypoint has 10 outlets in High Barnet alone and 6 in the NW4 postcode. We are committed to modernising and widening access even if the service isn't provided from a Council building .

**Question No. 44****Councillor Anne Hutton**

What plans are there to 'manage' car usage within Friary Park?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

The management of car usage within the park is designed to remove the risk of pedestrian and vehicle accident. At present the only vehicular access permitted within the park is for its direct maintenance, for 3 permits for disabled members of the bowls club and deliveries to the park café limited to 20 minutes waiting time.

**Question No. 45****Councillor Eva Greenspan**

What progress is being made with the modernisation of facilities for people with learning disabilities in Barnet?

## **Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

Work began on site in September 2005 in the first phase of our partnership with Notting Hill Housing Trust which will see £24 million invested in transforming the council's services for people with learning disabilities. Listed below is the progress being made on each of the sites.

The new enlarged Rosa Morison centre, including a hydro therapy facility, is scheduled for completion by the end of September 2006.

The new Flower Lane is scheduled for completion by the end of September 2006. Flower Lane will provide a centre of excellence for people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders delivering a multi disciplinary approach across health and social care and will be accredited with the National Autistic Society.

The new integrated replacement service for Broadfields is planned for completion by early August 2007.

At Grendon Lodge site a new 6-place care home is being constructed and completion scheduled for early October 2006 and will in part replace the existing Oaktrees Care Home.

The new Valley Way is making significant progress and completion is scheduled for early September 2006. This will deliver increased respite capacity (from 4 to 6 places) and again will be accredited with the National Autistic Society.

A new 6-place care home will also be constructed on the playground site adjacent to the existing Broadfields Resource Centre and the completion date is scheduled for early April 2007.

A new 10-place supported living scheme at Norfolk Close was completed and fully commissioned in early September 2005.

A new 9-place supported living scheme at Pricklers Hill that will replace New Fieldways residential care home is scheduled for completion in early October 2006.

A new 9-place supported living scheme at Grendon Lodge to assist in the reprovision of Oaktrees residential care home and flats is scheduled for completion in early October 2006. This scheme will also facilitate 4 service users moving from NHS campus provision at Harperbury into community accommodation.

**Question No. 46**

**Councillor Linda McFadyen**

When the Council Leader spoke to a local Burnt Oak police officer about the setting up of an AFZ in Burnt Oak the council leader gave his support provided it could be policed and would not be ignored and that he was given assurances that this was the case. Will the council leader therefore join me and support my request that the Cabinet Member urgently progresses the process of implementing an AFZ in Burnt Oak?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council**

I refer Cllr McFadyen to the answer given to Q 12.

**Question No. 47**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

When will South Friern library be closing, for how long, and what alternative library provision will be provided during the closure?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

It is not possible to give an exact date as legal services are still processing the documents of sale. We are still hoping for a summer start to the building of the new library. In the interim between the closure of the old and the reopening of the new we will be providing a mobile library service.

**Question No. 48**

**Councillor Zakia Zubairi**

Why is the Council so complacent about taking action against anti-social behaviour on the Grahame Park estate?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council**

The Council is not complacent about tackling anti social behaviour on Grahame Park or anywhere else in the Borough.

**Question No. 49**

**Councillor Colin Rogers**

Can you give an assurance that East Finchley Library will be able to continue to meet the Disability Discrimination Act?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

I am surprised that any East Finchley Councillor raises this question as the previous administration wished to relocate the library. The ground floor is accessible. The top and bottom shelves can cause difficulty. However as they are listed we are restricted in what we can do. As part of our strategy of refreshing the stock we are going to concentrate books as far as possible on the other shelves.

**Question No. 50**

**Councillor Alison Moore**

Does the Cabinet Member support the proposal contained within the Waste Management best value review for the Council to install 'spy' microchips in residents' bins to keep tabs on missed bins and over-heavy bins?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

I am sure you have not read the report so I will advise you what it says. The recommendation contained in the report is to "re-evaluate existing data collection methods in order to develop more precise information on specific areas, looking specifically at the costs and benefits of investing in technology that will improve service monitoring and efficiency such as GPS, on boarding weighing and chips in bins that will provide data". Currently we rely on collection staff to manually advise on missed and over-heavy bins.

I have to say I am not immediately convinced of this method, but will always consider any possibility of improving both the waste collection and recycling services – even if that means analyzing what (Labour controlled) Croydon council has done with microchips.

**Question No. 51**

**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

How many residents from Wendover Lodge (sheltered housing in West Hendon) have now been moved, how many are still there and can the member please reassure residents that they will have the full service of the warden until they are finally moved?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

12 residents from Wendover Lodge have now been rehoused, leaving just 3 residents and the resident sheltered housing officer (SHO). The SHO has been supporting the residents throughout the process and she will be the last person to move out of the block

**Question No. 52****Councillor Anita Campbell**

Why is the administration only opening a second register office in Barnet House for just six months?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

The changing of registry services has to be approved under a statutory scheme which involves public consultation and approval by the Minister. Whilst committed to a scheme that serves the North of the Borough, we have still not fully explored all the available long term options, ie Barnet Hospital. It would therefore be wrong to carry out this consultation prior to committing to a permanent site.

**Question No. 53****Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Will the Education and Children Cabinet Member provide the results of the public consultation on the Primary Schools Capital Strategy?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

The Chief Education Officer will be reporting to a meeting of the Cabinet in June. Meanwhile the results of the consultation have been very supportive. There is a recognition that investment in our primary schools was neglected in the immediate past by the previous administration. Teachers welcome the commitment of this administration to invest in education. I myself received representations from Councillor Prentice about the possibility of relocating Foulds School on its existing site. Those who are concerned about education in Barnet welcome the commitment of this administration to a First Class Education Service.

**Question No. 54****Councillor Zakia Zubairi**

If the Cabinet Member could explain how the cuts to libraries since 14 May 2002 have improved the borough's libraries service?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

The latest survey of residents showed increased satisfaction with our libraries. As we look to the future we should be seeking to make greater community use of several of our library sites. I welcome the fact that unlike many authorities no long term closure proposals were included in the 2006-07 Budget.

**Question No. 55**

**Councillor Alison Moore**

If a Conservative administration runs a tender for the refuse collection service then will an in-house bid be allowed?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

A decision on whether to include or not an in-house bid will need to be established nearer the time for any market testing as discussed in the Waste Management BVR – there are balancing factors to be considered – an in-house bid can provide a benchmark for comparison but also act to scare off external interest and will also be influenced by the type and scale of operation being tested.

**Question No. 56**

**Councillor Anita Campbell**

Why were the residents living in the blocks of flats on the Dollis Valley estate told that the entry locks to their flats could not be repaired because there was no money allocated for this work -when their lives were being disrupted by vandals entering the flats and causing all manner of damage and threats?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

A consultation exercise was held August 2005 when all residents were asked whether they wanted a new door entry system on the blocks or to leave the doors as they are. They were also asked whether residents would like us to replace broken windows in communal stairwells with metal grills. 10% of the people consulted replied of whom 19 wanted to leave the doors as they are while 15 requested a door entry system. 14 people wanted to replace the broken windows with metal grills. Because only a small number of residents responded and there was no clear mandate for either proposal the council decided not to proceed with either scheme at present. However, we are currently consulting on a pilot scheme in Millbridge to block off the interior corridors, which we would expect to provide similar benefits.

**Question No. 57**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Given the £250,000 cuts in Children & Family Centres and that Meadway and Hampden are not part of the children's centres' plan, what are the Administration plans for these sites?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

The £250,000 is an efficiency saving for 2006-07 whilst investment in the existing children and families centres is suspended during the period of construction of the new children's centres. The monies suspended from the budget are returned to the budget when the new centres open.

There is already a proposal for Hampden Way Nursery School to become a children's centre in a new building. This proposal is set out in the Primary School Capital Investment Programme and so has been subject to the initial, informal consultation with parents, staff and governors. If Cllr Rawlings has missed this detail I will, on request, happily arrange for a copy of the strategy to be forwarded to him, with the relevant section highlighted for ease of reference.

In time, all the existing children and families centres will become part of the network of children's centres. This includes Meadway.

These will complement Wingfield which has been awarded Children's Centre status by the DfES (our first in Barnet).

**Question No. 58**

**Councillor Zakia Zubairi**

When is Colindale ward going to get it's own premier park?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

The objective of the Premier Parks Strategy was to provide a Premier Park with in 1 mile (1600m) of the majority of Barnet's residents - that did not mean that every ward would have a Premier Park.

As part of the regeneration of Grahame Park, the park that shares its name will be re-designed and landscaped to provide a Premier Park. In the mean time the residents of Colindale Ward can use the five Premier Parks that sit around its boundaries. Their distances from the ward boundary are as follows:

West Hendon Playing Fields	125m
Mill Hill Park	185m
Sunny Hill Park	260m
Watling Park	500m
Hendon Park	1000m



**Question No. 59****Councillor Alison Moore**

The Waste Management Best Value Review states about refuse collection: "The service will need to look forward and develop its own future, with the support of senior management within its new position in the corporate structure, otherwise it would be better off to be sourced externally." What criteria has or will be set to evaluate whether the service achieves this successfully, and therefore will not need to be privatised?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

The objective of the Waste Management Best Value Review was to review current waste management arrangements and to establish a strategy for going forward. The review was broad covering a range of waste management services.

The first part of the strategy work has been completed, with the agreement of the Waste Strategy at the meeting of the Cabinet on 3 April 2006. The Waste Strategy considers the long-term framework for waste in Barnet. Its timeframe is 2006 to 2020, and it deals with overall strategic issues. The operational action plan that will cover individual materials, collection methodologies, specific targets and tonnages will be developed over the next year. In conjunction with this the service delivery mechanism will be examined. Once again I repeat, the criteria for evaluating the current refuse service has not been set.

**Question No. 60****Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

What are the final figures for the number of compulsory redundancies, voluntary redundancies, early retirements and redeployments resulting from the service cuts in 2005/6?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

Working from the assumption that the question relates to the service changes contained in the budget for 2006/7 originally reported at Council on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005.

- 14 staff at risk have been redeployed and posts previously occupied by agency staff have been filled by permanent 'at risk' employees
- 20 staff have volunteered for redundancy
- 9 employees have been made redundant
- 3 employees will be made redundant by the end of April if redeployment opportunities are not identified.

**Question No. 61****Councillor Anita Campbell**

Many residents in my ward and in other wards say that it is now very difficult to try to speak to, and get advice from, the Council these days, so how is the Council going to address this problem?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

The initial results from the most recent Annual Residents Attitude Survey show that Barnet outperforms the average for the rest of London by 12% in regard to how easy it is to contact the Council by telephone. The figures for how well the Council listens to residents' concerns are well in line with the rest of London and there are also improvements in the figures for involving and responding to residents. Performance against the relevant performance and internal indicators shows that targets for speed of response from the corporate customer services functions are being met or exceeded. Major improvements to the two main reception facilities at Fenella and Barnet House have now been fully implemented and initial feedback from customers has been extremely positive. A major redesign of the website and the implementation of a new content management system have both contributed to the number of 'hits' rising from just under 50,000 in November 2005 to almost 170,000 in January 2006. The fact that this administration has recorded the highest customer satisfaction rating of any outer London borough is testament to the improvements in customer service we have delivered. We are delighted not only at this achievement but also to have reversed the decline in satisfaction the Lib/Lab administration presided over.

If the residents of Underhill wish to improve the service they are receiving they can make a 33% increase in service by electing a third Conservative Councillor to represent the Ward.

**Question No. 62****Councillor Barry Rawlings**

What will be the cost to the council for each of the next 15 years of the various PFI plans?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

The only Private Finance Initiative is the 25 year Street Lighting PFI contract, due to commence in April 2006. This contract will replace all street columns that require replacing. Completing the PFI contract will also deliver £56m of Government grant to Barnet residents over the next 25 years. The initiative actually reduces the annual cost to the Council.

**Question No. 63**

**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

Together with many council colleagues, I saw the wonderful work done by Community Focus in March at the artsdepot. How is the Council helping them so that they can carry on this excellent work with disabled and able-bodied people?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

Community Focus is respected throughout the Capital for the work that it does for arts provision for the disabled and elderly. Their grant has been approved to allow them to continue and expand this work and we are also grant funding a position of a consultant to assist them with this expansion and to advise on bidding for future grants. We will continue to support them in the future.

**Question No. 64**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

How much has the administration spent on consultants in 2002/3, 2003/4, 2004/5 and 2005/6?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

I will provide a verbal answer

**Question No. 65**

**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

Only 1.88% of Barnet's workforce is classified as disabled. This puts Barnet right down to 21<sup>st</sup> Place in the London league table, and well below Lewisham (8.46%) Hounslow (5.91%) and Harringey (4.11%). How is the Council going to improve on this dreadful performance so far?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer**

Cllr Sodha is out of date. For 2004/5, the percentage of disabled staff was 1.88% based on the data held on the former HR system Delphi. This placed Barnet 21st out of 33 London Boroughs (including the Corporation of London).

However since this BVPI was reported considerable work has been undertaken to improve the quality of HR data.

The Performance and Strategy Unit have been conducting a detailed human resources data cleanse exercise to collect information from employees to enhance HR data and to support the Modernising Core Systems project.

Confirmed information gained directly from employees now demonstrates that 2.22% of Barnet staff are disabled under the definition contained in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Based on the 2004/5 outturn this would mean that Barnet would be ranked 17th out of 33 London Boroughs.

The 2.22% includes employees who have not yet returned their data cleanse questionnaire. From those questionnaires returned the figure is, 2.57% of Barnet staff which would mean that Barnet would be ranked 14<sup>th</sup> out of 33 London Boroughs.

It should be noted that there is a large variation between London Boroughs which may be due to the complexity of the counting mechanism for this BVPI. The percentage varies from 8.46% to 1.26% with only 1 Council in North London (Haringey) recording above 4%.

There are therefore no grounds to assume that the Council has to improve on its performance as by definition 'Disabled staff' are those that identify themselves as such against the definition provided in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and the Council has made every effort to identify disabled employees, hence the rise in the percentage of disabled staff.

Naturally we will continue to encourage employment applications from disabled staff and we will continue to employ the best candidate for the role. Equality & Diversity is not furthered by tokenism of any sort.

**Question No. 66**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

How much has it cost the administration - including officer time - on legal expenses regarding Partingdale Lane?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

The costs expended since it was decided last year to investigate again the re-opening of Partingdale Lane are currently at £24,000 and include the consultation work carried out by Alpha Research and the safety audit by Capita Symionds Gwent.

**Question No. 67**

**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

Are the Teaching Assistants employed in special schools treated the same as Teaching Assistants in other schools in respect of their conditions of employment for eg pay and career structure?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

Yes. The Teaching Assistant Agreement which was concluded last April and implemented in September applies to ALL teaching assistants.

**Question No. 68****Councillor Barry Rawlings**

How much has it cost the administration - including officer time - on legal expenses regarding Barnet Football Club?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council**

The Council has legal expenses in relation to numerous aspects of its dealing with Barnet FC. If the member would be more specific about which aspects of our dealings with the club he is referring to I will attempt to give a meaningful answer.

**Question No. 69****Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

What is the Council doing to ensure that youngsters in this borough have a chance to compete in the Olympics?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Salinger, Leader of the Council**

Barnet has made very good progress in improving children and young people's access to sport and PE in schools. The Schools Sport Partnership Programme is a national programme which has been rolled out over the past 3 years. The first schools sports partnership was developed in the south of the borough with Whitefield School (a school with sports specialise). Barnet was entitled to funding for just two school sport partnerships but because of the success of the programme here, the DfES agreed to double the funding. As a result we now have four partnerships which will include every school in the borough. The hubs for the four networks are Whitefield, East Barnet, Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School (in place) and St James High (starting in September 2006).

Detailed, school by school evaluations are showing:

- Improved quality of PE teaching
- Increase in pupils' participation in sport in both curriculum time and extra-curricular
- Greater enthusiasm from pupils
- Higher profile of sport and PE, including dance.

The last audit of sport within the curriculum showed that 75% of schools are offering at least two hours a week of good quality PE and sport. We anticipate that the next audit, at the end of this academic year, will show even greater improvement. Barnet is therefore well on track to reach the national target of 85% by 2008. Our new Children and Young People Plan has a specific target on improving participation in sports activities by young people.

At the London Youth Games in 2005, Barnet was the most improved borough moving from 29th to 16th.

These achievements will provide a good basis for future international successes by our young people.

We are also improving sports facilities in Barnet to help young people get good support with training

The Copthall stadium track should be refurbished this summer which will make such a difference to the user experiences when they visit. Refurbishment work has also taken place within the stadium to make it user friendly and DDA compliant. There could be the possibility that an indoor athletics and community facility will be sited within the stadium grounds but that idea needs more consideration and would be subject to Council approval.

The partnership with Greenwich Leisure Limited is currently in its 4th year and they, GLL, are actively involved within the 5 Olympic boroughs. There will be further work carried out by them within this borough to enhance the fabric of their facilities. There are currently three pools at Copthall Leisure Centre and a fully equipped Olympic gymnastics facility at Hendon Leisure Centre. These facilities, and the stadium, should enable the Council to attract an Olympic competing country into the borough prior to the games.

Should this be the case, then the spin offs for sports development and the continuing benefits for young people will be tremendous in terms not just of 2012, but of future Olympic games.

**Question No. 70**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

What is the walking distance from Greenways Close to its polling station?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

The siting of polling stations is not an executive function and is dealt with by the General Functions Committee and the Returning Officer. All political parties are consulted about proposed location of polling stations.

**Question No. 71**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

What is the walking distance along lit roads from Parkwood to its polling station?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

The siting of polling stations is not an executive function and is dealt with by the General Functions Committee and the Returning Officer. All political parties are consulted about proposed location of polling stations.