

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members
7 November 2006
Questions and Responses**

Question No. 1

Councillor Brian Salinger

I assume that the Cabinet Member for Community Services has read the article in the BCAB news (August 2006) regarding the discrepancies between average Barnet rents and the local reference rent used by the Rent Officer service in the advice that they give to the Council's Housing Benefit Dept.

Is the Cabinet Member aware if the claims made are supported by the staff in Barnet Homeseekers and if so what representations have been made to the Rent Officer Service to address this problem and to minimise unnecessary evictions which result in even more expensive and unsatisfactory options for some Barnet residents?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

I haven't asked each individual member of staff from Barnet Homeseekers for their opinion. However, it is the general opinion that reference rents are not a significant barrier to people finding solutions in the private sector.

The rental market in Barnet is particularly high compared with the rent officer's determination and is causing problems for some tenants.

Our Officers meet quarterly with The Rent Service of the DWP and they also offer advice on appeals when there is a discrepancy.

Question No. 2

Councillor Jack Cohen

When will the Auditors report on the Sale of Land at Underhill be published?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

PwC have delayed the publication of the report. No firm date has been announced.

Question No. 3

Councillor Barry Rawlings

How many families have the Council placed in accommodation provided by private agencies where breakfast is also supplied?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

As at September 2006 there were 300 families., a reduction from 410 in April 2006.

Question No. 4

Councillor Brian Salinger

At the Council meeting on 12th September Councillor McNeill appeared not to know of the existence of the ECT site in Frith Lane. Can the Cabinet Member for the Environment please explain the differing roles of the 2 sites and can he detail the site constraints at Frith Lane that he referred to in his speech?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

There are two sites in Barnet which are run by ECT Recycling:

- Civic Amenity and Recycling Centre

This is located at Summers Lane, North Finchley and is open to the public, who are able to dispose of over 35 different items which are recycled or reused, as well as general waste.

- **Depot at Frith Lane**

The ECT depot in Frith Lane is where the 24 vehicles that collect the dry recyclables from residents in Barnet are based, as well as 4 support vehicles, and the bulking facility for the recyclables. This site is not opened to the general public. While the site is suitable for the existing bulking facilities there is insufficient room at the site for a materials' reprocessing facility, where mixed recyclables are sorted into different types. With the amount of recyclables having increased significantly in the last 3 years, there is simply not room at the site to allow the further collection of plastics and cardboard.

Question No. 5

Councillor Jack Cohen

You did not attend the Cabinet and Overview Committee on September 11 and therefore the Committee was not able to quiz you on your reports. You sent your apologies giving the reason that you were absent on other council business. Please explain what this other business was and where did it take place.

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

I made myself available for the start of Cabinet Scrutiny before attending a dinner in the Town Hall. However order of business did not allow me to stay for my items.

The dinner was to establish relations with the new Representative Deputy Lieutenant; Aldermanic Sheriff John Stuttard and Common Councilman Anthony Eskenzi; and former Chairman of the Hampstead Heath Management Committee Catherine Mc Guinness CC.

The Deputy Leader was available for these reports.

Question No. 6

Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

There has been a recent spate of rubbish being dumped in Burnt Oak, which presents a health hazard to many people. What is the Council doing to collect dumped rubbish in Burnt Oak, to clean the areas affected and prosecute the criminals involved?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Unfortunately this is not a recent spate but an on-going problem in Burnt Oak and, as such, is a priority area for this Council. Enforcement officers are targeted on known areas for fly tipping – and I would urge Councillor O-Macauley to accompany these officers on such a patrol to see the problem first-hand.

During September there were approximately 39 reported fly-tips in and around Gold Lane and Abbotts Road. In the last 4 weeks approximately 19 fly-tips have been reported in the Burnt Oak area. All were cleared in the time allowed for fly-tip clearance in the Corporate Plan. Officers investigate incidents of fly tipping as necessary and if a successful prosecution can be effected action will be – and has been taken.

Question No. 7

Councillor Daniel Webb

Has the Leader of the Council seen the recently published Report of the All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into anti-Semitism? Does he endorse the findings? Will he congratulate the members of the Committee including Theresa Villiers MP, and will he ensure copies of the report are provided for Members of the Council in the Group rooms?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Yes and it is an excellent, balanced report. Copies have already been placed in the Group Rooms.

Question No. 8**Councillor Wayne Casey**

Since May 2002 how many applications have been submitted for permission to erect mobile telecommunications masts in Barnet? In the same period, how many petitions of objection were received and what was the total number of signatures?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

140 submissions for telecommunication masts have been received by Barnet Planning of which 90 have been refused and a further 14 withdrawn.

As for petitions of objection these are not recorded with planning data on a systematic electronic database as they form part of committee submissions. To research such data would involve manual checks of a considerable number of staff over many hours and days in both Democratic and Planning services. I do not consider this to be a good use of the Council's time and resources.

Question No. 9**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

Councillor Marshall has admitted that the Council has a problem with boys being permanently excluded from school and he promised that the Council is putting additional resources into some schools to help those who are struggling at Key Stage 3. Which schools are being given these additional resources; exactly what form do these additional resources take; and how will the impact of the additional resources be monitored to ensure effective use and outcomes?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Last year saw a reduction in the number of pupils excluded permanently from Barnet schools from 57 (43 boys, 14 girls) in 2004-05 academic year to 43 (30 boys, 13 girls). Thirteen fewer boys were excluded – a 30% reduction.

A wide range of support is provided to all Barnet secondary schools to help them improve academic standards, behaviour and attendance. The exact nature of the support varies according to the specific needs of the school and that support is monitored and subject to formal evaluation.

Question No. 10**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Would you please give us some information regarding the Council's campaign to remove mounting piles of food waste, from Barnet's streets, especially outside fast-food outlets.

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

I have to say Environment Officers and myself are not aware of mounting piles of food waste on Barnet's Streets. However, in September the Council carried out a fast food litter poster campaign in conjunction with the national campaign carried out by ENCAMS. Posters were distributed to Fast Food Outlets in Tally Ho, Finchley Central and Hollywood Bowl for displaying in outlet premises. Posters were distributed to 65 premises.

Question No. 11**Councillor Monroe Palmer**

Would the Cabinet Member explain why the central reservations of North Circular Road and the areas surrounding Brent Cross Flyover are such a disgrace with continual uncleared litter and debris. If there is no intention of cleaning these public areas would he consider a descriptive plaque on the tin cans and bottles so that Barnet can market them as works of modern art.

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

If the member had been at the last Council meeting he would have heard the answer to the same question asked by Councillor Ellison.

Cleansing of these areas is carried out by the Council's in-house cleansing team, which would include the routine cyclic cleansing of the central reservations and off side channels on all borough trunk roads 6 times per year. However, the operations can only be carried out in conjunction with traffic management (known as block closures) provided by TfL via their contractor WSP Civils. Without this in place, our teams are forbidden to gain access to the central reservation or offside channel.

TfL notified all operational partners that "*following further cuts from TfL's routine maintenance budget the planned block closures on the A1, A41 & A406 have been cancelled from 14th July 2006*". A second communication revealed that there would be no further block closures this financial year.

No, I reject the policy of marketing what you call art in public spaces as being irrelevant and frivolous.

Question No. 12

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

Last year several elderly council tenants and those with disabilities were left waiting for adaptations to continue living in their own homes because of the poor budget awarded by the Council to Barnet Homes. How much has the adaptations budget been increased this year to ensure this hardship is not repeated?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

The budget has been increased by £50,000 this year.

Question No. 13

Councillor Brian Gordon

What is the Administration's view on the "No cold callers zone" recently established in Deans Way in Hale Ward and would we wish to see these emerge in other zones throughout the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

No cold calling zones are one of those ideas that look good on paper but in practice have huge problems. Indeed not only would it disrupt the normal process of Political canvassing but would prevent the Council from canvassing to compile the electoral role for example. The Police do not have the resources to enforce cold calling zones. We have no plans to introduce any in Barnet. This Administration does not believe in empty gestures.

Question No. 14

Councillor Susette Palmer

Does the Member intend to continue with the all party Corporate parenting Group?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Yes, a date for the next meeting will be advised shortly.

Question No. 15

Councillor Julie Johnson

What were the number of books, CDs and DVDs borrowed from each of Barnet's libraries for the years 2004/2005 and 2005/2006?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

Library	Books 04/05	Books 05/06	CDs 04/05	CDs 05/06	DVDs 04/05	DVDs 05/06
Chipping Barnet	304,539	287,659	17,557	16,250	25,434	22,924
Church End	162,107	144,516	4,766	4,391	11,710	11,132
East Barnet	144,131	136,460	8,162	8,433	10,979	10,462
East Finchley	107,624	107,058	9,709	9,306	10,831	10,266
Friern Barnet	53,734	55,793	2,010	1,931	6,849	6,573
North Finchley	155,191	154,042	6,746	6,558	13,249	12,526
Osidge	73,554	76,737	2,546	2,517	5,557	5,609
South Friern	39,764	40,055	1,071	1,087	3,608	3,628
Hendon	156,406	327,511	11,698	17,747	19,206	29,244
Burnt Oak	64,675	60,925	2,041	1,820	7,378	5,467
Childs Hill	43,973	40,706	1,474	1,065	3,380	3,322
Edgware	190,976	179,307	7,072	6,218	12,551	11,142
Golders Green	164,226	135,680	5,103	4,030	9,156	9,450
Grahame Park	33,695	32,585	682	697	4,024	3,616
Hampstead GS	23,254	24,076	1,004	1,093	1,626	1,915
Mill Hill	101,838	94,752	3,997	3,641	8,585	7,012

The cassette format has been overtaken gradually by CDs so these are grouped together and similarly videos and DVDs.

Hendon Library was closed April – October 2004. The nearest libraries are Church End, Edgware, Golders Green.

I should like to praise the staff of the Libraries Service for all they do to maintain this high level of usage.

Question No. 16

Councillor Brian Gordon

Is it not commendable that our Borough has been awarded “Green Flag Status” for four of its premier parks?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Yes of course it is. But in addition, it is also commendable for all the hard work put in by the Greenspaces team and the ‘Friends of...’ groups across the Borough. I am sure Councillor Gordon will be pleased to learn that the Mayor held a reception for a number of Greenspaces staff to show the Council’s appreciation for all their hard work.

I would also personally like to thank Sharon Silverblatt who established the Friends of Hendon Park just over a year ago and who made a terrific contribution to the Park attaining Green Flag status.

Question No. 17

Councillor Susette Palmer

In view of the leaflet sent to all Councillors by Rt Hon Alan Johnson and the Green Paper, "Care Matters" what steps and training is the Administration taking to enable all Barnet Councillors to fully realise and fulfil our role and responsibilities as Corporate parents.

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

A training session for all members is being arranged and the role and responsibilities of councillors as corporate parents will be on the agenda of the next corporate parenting group.

Question No. 18

Councillor Geof Cooke

What percentage of completed appraisals of council employees has been achieved in each of the last four years, and which are the lowest performing services in this regard?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

We do not have records to show the number of staff receiving appraisals for 2003 and 2004.

The last two annual Barnet Council Staff Surveys show that in 2006 48% of staff received formal annual appraisals. It should be noted that 10% of all staff had worked at the Council for less than 12 months or were temporary staff for whom annual appraisals were not required. In 2005, 51% of staff received formal appraisals, with 8% of staff working at LBB for less than 12 months or as temporary staff.

SAP is the tool now used to monitor staff appraisals, and results recorded so far show that in 2005 49% of staff did not receive appraisals in Borough Treasurer's and Internal Audit. This was the highest recorded number of staff not receiving appraisals for that year, but it should be borne in mind that in the absence of formal appraisals there would still have been regular team and 1-1 meetings with managers.

Data for 2006 shows that Environmental Services have the highest number of staff awaiting appraisal at 54%.

Where some of the figures appear low this is not necessarily indicative of a failure by services to undertake appraisals. The figures show only the number of appraisals undertaken and then recorded on SAP, and in reality, more may have been undertaken but not yet recorded. As services begin to use SAP more consistently we will be able to establish a much clearer picture of how each service is performing in offering feedback to staff via formal appraisals.

Question No. 19

Councillor Brian Gordon

Was it not rather churlish of the Labour Party to refuse to attend the opening of the new London Academy in Edgware just because the Leader of the Conservative Party was invited?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Yes, but sadly churlishness is what we have come to expect from the Labour Party.

Question No. 20

Councillor Linda McFadyen

If the Cabinet Member would update Council on progress with establishing the Burnt Oak Alcohol Free Zone, which is supported by Burnt Oak's Councillors and the Burnt Oak Safer Neighbourhood Police Team?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

I fully support the introduction of an alcohol free zone in Burnt Oak but until the Police assure me they have the resources to Police it I will not proceed. Indeed at the moment the Police are unable to properly police the existing Alcohol Free zones in the Borough, as Councillors representing Finchley wards will know. This Administration does not believe in empty gestures.

Question No. 21**Councillor Brian Gordon**

As much as we would, of course, urge all people to keep within the law, what's your view on the Barnet residents who are refusing to pay the part of the council tax attributable to the 2012 Olympics, on the basis that London council tax payers are not getting value for money?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Council Tax is not a hypothecated tax and therefore we can not pick and choose which bits we like and don't like. I share the sentiment that the Olympics will benefit the nation and should be paid for by the nation.

Question No. 22**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

If the Cabinet Member could set out the criteria to judge which council car parks should be eligible for lower car parking charges under the new flexible car parking charges policy?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

There is no set criteria in relation to determining whether a Council car park could be eligible for a lower tariff but the key feature is flexibility which will enable tariffs to be set to reflect local circumstances. I thought the Labour Group would have welcomed such a proposal – but recent comments in the press indicate that it does not appear so?

Question No. 23**Councillor Brian Gordon**

What do you think about the revelation that there has been a burgeoning of new traffic lights under Mayor Livingstone's administration, and how in particular is this affecting Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

I think it is a retrograde step, if all local authorities are intending to improve congestion, a key objective of the Traffic Management Act.

Barnet has 127 signal installations (2.7% of London's signals):

50 Junctions

61 Pelican crossings

10 Dual Pelican crossings

4 Puffin crossings

2 Toucan crossings.

In the past two years, the Council has relocated three pelican crossings; 2 on Watling Avenue and 1 on Mill Hill Broadway and installed 1 new dual pelican on Spur Road.

There has been new equipment installed by TfL (like for like) at the Quadrant, Edgware Road / Capitol Way.

There have been changes at the signals at High Road / Totteridge Lane / Oakleigh Road North junction (modification with additional pedestrian facilities) and A1000 High Barnet (o/s Police Station) to stagger the crossing.

Question No. 24**Councillor Gill Sargeant**

Given that rendered surfaces are now often being used in redevelopments rather than brick surfaces, what research has the Council and/or its partners undertaken to see whether it is easier for graffiti vandals to deface rendered surfaces rather than brick surfaces, and whether it is easier to clean rendered surfaces or brick surfaces?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Operational experience provides the Council with considerable information and knowledge on the best process for graffiti removal subject to surface type. Graffiti offenders do not however distinguish between surfaces and a white painted surface of any type is always a temptation for them. Painted and rendered surfaces can be re-painted. Unpainted rendered surfaces can be a problem to clean as the jetting equipment is more likely to damage this sort of surface as a result of flaking render material. Encouragement should be provided where possible and practical for a suitable top coat on new developments and/or when resurfacing gable ends / walls etc which are subject to repeat graffiti.

Question No. 25

Councillor Richard Weider

How many pieces of equipment and what percentage of council owned electronic road side furniture and street lighting is fuelled by renewable energy?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

100% of all electrical roadside equipment is provided with Climate Change Levy exempt energy.

The new electricity supply contract is part of the Street Lighting PFI and covers all illuminated street furniture for a period of three years.

Question No. 26

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Will the Council consider erecting a blue plaque to former borough resident, the late Reverend Henry Hawkins, who was the vicar for the Colney Hatch Asylum and established the Mental After Care Association charity, which was the forerunner of modern social services?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

No.

Question No. 27

Councillor Richard Weider

What is the Council doing to make it easier for residents of Barnet to be able to buy their first home in the borough?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Meeting people's aspirations to own their own home is a key element of the new Housing Strategy which will be put to Cabinet in November. There will be a range of exciting new schemes to assist our residents onto the housing ladder.

Question No. 28

Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

What opportunities are available for Barnet's black organisations and/or charities for funding towards the celebration of Black History Month 2007, and how is the Council engaging with communities to make this information and advice available?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

I agree with the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality Mr Trevor Phillips OBE that as a Community we should concentrate on integration and any resources that are available should be spent promoting Community integration.

Question No. 29

Councillor Daniel Thomas

Please could the Leader of the Council outline how well, according to the latest CPA, this authority is performing, how much it has improved (particularly since the 1998 inspection), and its prospects for the future?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Barnet is one of only two local authorities nationally to have its CPA categorisation raised as a result of a Corporate Assessment score. Barnet's CPA categorisation has risen from 2 stars to 3 stars.

Barnet Council's Corporate Assessment outcome is in the top four when reviewing CPA Harder Test 2006 outcomes nationally.

Only Barnet, Newham and Manchester received overall scores of 3 as well as a maximum Ambition score of 4. Rotherham also received an overall 3 and a score of 4 under Performance Management.

No other councils nationally have received a score of 4 in any category.

Further analysis of the direction of travel made against the previous Corporate Assessment in 2002 shows that only Barnet and Rotherham have continued improving.

Newham remained the same and Manchester, while retaining the overall score of 3, actually moved backwards on both Performance Management and Achievement.

In the areas of Performance Management and Capacity we can see where the Harder Test is having implications nationally. Only five authorities have scored a 3 in Performance Management while neither Barnet, Manchester or Newham, three of the top performers nationally, scored more than a 2 in Performance Management. Clearly there is an anomaly in the method of analysis that needs to be addressed as a matter of some urgency by the Audit Commission and we have made our views explicit in this regard.

Notwithstanding our views on the analysis of Performance Management and Capacity, the move to an overall 3 is a great result for the authority and reflects the hard work and commitment of staff and members since the last assessment in 2002.

Barnet is well placed to move to an overall CPA categorisation of 4 in the near future based on a track record of good service delivery.

Question No. 30

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

What is the increase in the number of childcare places provided at the new Lakeview nursery?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

The former Lakeview Children and Family Centre provided 26 childcare places for children in need aged 2-5 years. The new Parkfield Children's Centre offers 49 childcare places so an additional 23 places have been developed. Some of these new places will be available to fee paying parents who are working or studying, with 20% funded for children in need. In addition, The Hyde Children's Centre, also in West Hendon, will offer a further 50 places, when it opens in 2008.

Question No. 31

Councillor Hugh Rayner

Please could the Cabinet member for Learning Infrastructure outline the improvements that will be made to Fairway and Northway Schools, in my ward, over the next few years, and why they are so desperately needed?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

This proposal will enable us to replace three buildings which are reaching the end of their life. Both Fairway Primary and Northway Special School have a large maintenance backlog which neither could fund. The children's centre is on 3 floors which is not ideal. Fairway Primary suffers from excessive heat in summer and some of its classrooms are below the recommended minimum size. The new school will be fit for purpose for the 21st century and will help the Council fulfil its commitment of a first class education service.

Question No. 32

Councillor Julie Johnson

When is the Welsh Harp Youth Sailing Base due to be rebuilt, and once rebuilt how is it to be funded?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

The rebuilding for the Welsh Harp Sailing Base is currently proposed for the second half of Phase 1 of the West Hendon Programme. It is required by the draft Section 106 Agreement to be completed before we complete 30 residential units. If we assume the planned start on site for Phase 1 is in the first quarter of 2008 then the earliest the WHSB could be completed would be towards the start of 2010.

Under the Section 106 for West Hendon, our partners Barratts Metropolitan, Barratts Homes and Metropolitan Housing are obligated to provide financial contributions for improving the area's infrastructure, and existing/future provision. This figure is currently anticipated to be £834,000.00 but is dependent on the confirmation of the West Hendon CPO.

Question No. 33

Councillor Richard Weider

Would the Leader please clarify the Administration's stance on the Government's proposal to require faith schools to take 25% of their intake from other faiths or from those of no faith.

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

I welcome the Government's U-turn on the proposal to require new faith schools to take 25% of their intake from other and non-faith communities. This Borough has an exemplary mix of faith and non-faith schools and this Administration does not support any proposals that undermine the very ethos of faith schools.

Question No. 34

Councillor Gill Sargeant

Graffiti vandals regularly target the newsagent's property on Sheaveshill Avenue in Colindale, and other Members will be aware of similar problems relating to private property in their wards. What is the council doing to remove graffiti on private properties where residents and small business are the victims of repeat attacks?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

The shops including the newsagent's property in Sheaveshill Avenue fall within the Colindale Town Centre Zone where graffiti is removed and recorded by our graffiti team. High levels of graffiti have been recorded in Colindale and the Council is working with the police to identify the culprits.

A surveillance operation earlier in the year targeted Colindale Town Centre and intelligence led to an arrest warrant being served by the police on a person suspected of using the "REAVER" tag. Further information has been received recently and in the last fortnight the Council's graffiti officer wrote a statement for the police regarding another Colindale graffiti offender. This offender has been responsible for a large amount of damage to council (particularly Rushgrove Park) and private property. Police applied for a warrant for this offender on 25 October 2006.

There is CCTV in the town centres to the North (Burnt Oak) and the South (West Hendon). Street Enforcement Officers respond to all graffiti CCU dockets regarding graffiti within Colindale, where quotes for removal/graffiti kits are offered in line with council policy. This demonstrates that the council can be seen to be taking positive action on graffiti and working successfully with partners and the police.

Question No. 35

Councillor Marina Yannakoudakis

Please could the Cabinet Member outline what proportion on the money spent on refurbishing the Compton School came from the Government, and the proportion from the Council?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

Very little of the cost was met by grant from Central Government. Grants from the DfES accounted for £413,270, less than 10% of the capital cost. I was therefore surprised by claims to the contrary by certain members of this authority.

Question No. 36

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Which Cabinet Member attended the Conservative majority ALG/London Councils Grants Committee that rejected 25 possible grants priorities presented?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

I attended the Leaders' committee that agreed the priorities.

Question No. 37

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

Given that there is a primary school and a new nursery school on Park Road NW4, what is the Council going to do about actually improving road safety on Park Road now that the road safety measures have been removed?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

The Council has recently invested in resurfacing Park Road NW4 and two humps were removed as part of these works. Consultation is currently being undertaken with local residents, ward councillors and the emergency services on whether the measures should be reinstated on this road as part of the Traffic Management Review.

These measures were not directly outside the school. However, there is a mini-roundabout between the removed measures and the school which should aid in slowing down drivers who travel along this road. The Council has also in the past year carried out some localised widening of the two pedestrian refuge islands directly outside the school to help pedestrians and to slow vehicles through this section of road.

Additionally, the Council has also introduced a School Crossing Patrol Officer and additional waiting restrictions at the junction of Park Road and Audley Road to assist children to cross the road. Furthermore, the WH3 and HC1 Controlled Parking Zones in this part of West Hendon are being extended into Park Road NW4 and will come into effect on 30th October 2006. As part of the scheme residents parking and yellow lines have already been painted on the highway, with the net result of alleviating some of the obstructive parking which has occurred in Park Road over the years. This should also have a safety benefit.

Officers from the Council are working with the school on their School Travel Plan which is also a planning requirement for the new Sure Start Centre which will help to develop any further measures that may be identified by the school that will help them reduce the number of unnecessary car journeys to school and increase walking.

As a recent school governor of Parkfield, I am well aware of the traffic conditions in the local vicinity and have taken a close interest in measures to improve road safety.

Question No. 38

Councillor Jill Johnson

On what date was the promised meeting held between Barnet Council and Brent Council officers and respective police teams to discuss addressing the problems of the Welsh Harp (if the meeting has not yet been held on what date is it to happen) and what are the resulting arrangements for increased security on the Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Operational officers from Brent, Barnet and the West Hendon Safer Neighbourhoods Team met on the 3 October to discuss the Welsh Harp and the implementation of the new (still to be adopted) byelaws.

At this time I am not content with the measures proposed and further discussions will take place on the 8-9 November with the Police, Brent and Barnet Council at a senior level to consider future options for implementation of the byelaws.

Question No. 39

Councillor Barry Rawlings

What budget does the Council have for the provision of blue plaques in the borough?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Zero.

Question No. 40

Councillor Barry Rawlings

How many blue plaques has the Council paid for and erected in the following financial years: 2002/3, 2003/4, 2004/5, 2005/6 and so far in 2006/7?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

A plaque was erected in 1988, three during the 1990s and one in 2005.

Question No. 41

Councillor Barry Rawlings

How many children coming into Barnet care for the first time do not have a Child Trust Fund compared to the total number of children coming into Barnet care for the first time, and is the Council ensuring that HMRC is informed so that the children are eligible for their £500 Child Trust Fund on entering care and the further £500 for which they are eligible when they reach the age of seven?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Since May 2005 the Council has been submitting a monthly return to HM Revenue and Customs. The form lists all children who became newly looked after over the preceding month who were born on or after 01.09.2002. HM Revenue and Customs check that all the children whose names have been submitted have a Trust Fund Account. If they do not then an account is set up which is managed by the Official Solicitor until the child leaves care or turns 16. The account cannot be accessed until the child is 18. Since the Trust Fund system is linked with the Child Benefit system it would be unusual if the child did not already have an account at the point of becoming looked after, unless they are very young babies. Since the system was established the council has notified HM Customs and Revenue of 70 children. A Trust Fund Account has been set up for approximately 50% of these children, usually because they have been looked after almost from birth.

Question No. 42**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

By signing 'The No Bin Bags Charter' (established in 2003 by 'A National Voice', an organisation run for and by young people who are or have been in care) the Council has pledged that Barnet's looked after children and care leavers are not provided with black bin bags to move their possessions between care placements or when leaving care – except in an emergency - and that instead the child will be provided with suitable luggage or a suitcase. How does the Council ensure looked after children are provided with suitable luggage; how does the Council monitor the implementation of the charter in Barnet; and how many looked after children moved their possessions in bin bags during 2005/6?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

All social workers, foster carers, residential workers and placement officers (who deal with external agencies) are aware that children should not move their personal possessions in bin bags. This expectation is implemented in various ways. Residential units will always have a supply of suit cases/sports bags and some of the social work teams also hold a central supply of bags that are given to young people as needed. It is preferable, however, that children choose and own their bags and this is the position that is promoted. It is not possible to monitor every placement change however workers are periodically reminded of the position. Where young people are moving, for example, from semi independence into full independence and they have belongings accumulated over time, they will sometimes use bin bags and cardboard boxes to move some of their belongings. This position is accepted by *A National Voice*.

Question No. 43**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

What are the major issues the Council will be raising (aside from the usual request for additional finance) in its consultation response to the Government's Green Paper 'Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care', and how will the Cabinet Member, Education and Children Scrutiny Committee, care leavers and other interested parties be involved in drawing up the consultation response?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

As the consultation period for the Green paper does not end until January it is premature to outline the details of the Council's response. If the members of the Education and Children's Scrutiny Committee or the care leavers group wish to respond to the Green Paper then I am sure they will do so.