

Minutes

OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET
held at The Town Hall, Hendon, NW4, on Tuesday, 19 December, 2006.

PRESENT:

- *The Worshipful the Mayor (Councillor Eva Greenspan BA LL.B (Hons))
- *The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Terry Burton)

Councillors:

*Maureen Braun	*Christopher Harris BA BSc	*Sachin Rajput BA (Hons)
*Fiona Bulmer	MPhil	PgD Law
*Anita Campbell	*Helena Hart	*Robert Rams
*Wayne Casey BA (Hons)	*John Hart BA MA	*Barry Rawlings
MIIA	*Lynne Hillan	*Hugh Rayner
Danish Chopra	*Ross Houston	*Colin Rogers
Dean Cohen BSc (Hons)	*Anne Hutton	*Lisa Rutter
*Jack Cohen	Julie Johnson	*Brian Salinger
Melvin Cohen LLB	*Duncan Macdonald	*Kate Salinger BEd (Hons)
*Brian Coleman, AM, FRSA	Caroline Margo	Gill Sargeant
*Geof Cooke	*John Marshall	*Joan Scannell
*Richard Cornelius	*Linda McFadyen	*Alan Schneiderman
*Jeremy Davies BA (Hons),	*Kath McGuirk	*Agnes Slocombe SRN RM
CPFA	*Andrew McNeil	*Ansuya Sodha MBA (Middx)
*Mukesh Depala	*Alison Moore	Cert Ed, DipM (CIM), AMBA
Jane Ellison	Jazmin Naghar	*Andreas Tambourides
Olwen Evans ACIS	*Matthew Offord	*Daniel Thomas BA (Hons)
*Claire Farrier	*Charlie O-Macauley	*Jim Tierney
*Anthony Finn BSc (Econ)	*Monroe Palmer OBE, BA,	*Daniel Webb
FCA	FCA	*Richard Weider
*Mike Freer	*Susette Palmer MA	*Marina Yannoudakis BSc
*Brian Gordon, LL.B	*Bridget Perry	(Hons) MA
*Andrew Harper	*Wendy Prentice	*Zakia Zubairi

*denotes Member present

98. PRAYER (Agenda Item 1):

The Mayor's Chaplain offered prayer.

99. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2):

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Julie Johnson, Gill Sargeant, Melvin Cohen, Dean Cohen, Olwen Evans, Danish Chopra, Jane Ellison, Caroline Margo and Jazmin Naghar, and for lateness from Councillors Jeremy Davies and Jack Cohen.

**100. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7 NOVEMBER 2006 (Agenda Item 3):
RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2006 be approved.**

101. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS (Agenda Item 4):

The Worshipful the Mayor advised the Council that former Councillor Aba Dunner was ill and wished him a speedy recovery, at the same time expressing her condolences on the recent death of his wife.

The Worshipful the Mayor also expressed her sorrow in announcing the recent deaths of the father of Councillor Melvin Cohen and grandfather of Councillor Dean Cohen, and of Mr Chand Chopra MBE, father of Councillor Danish Chopra and a former Mayor's escort during the 1988-89 municipal year, supporting his wife Mayor Usha Chopra.

At the invitation of the Worshipful the Mayor, the Leaders of the three political groups spoke in tribute to Mr Chand Chopra.

A minute's silence was held in remembrance of departed friends.

The Worshipful the Mayor also hoped that Councillor Wendy Prentice had enjoyed a happy birthday on the day before Council, sent congratulations to Councillor Margo on her marriage, wished Councillor Anthony Finn a recovery from his back problems, and advised Council that, together with Councillor Alison Moore, she had attended 21st Birthday celebrations in respect of the Phoenix Cinema.

102. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS (Agenda Item 5):

The following Members declared personal and non – prejudicial interests in the items indicated, and remained in the room during the discussion and participated in the decision – making process:

- Councillor Claire Farrier in Motion 8.2, as she worked for CSCI but had no involvement in the inspection referred to.
- Councillors Monroe Palmer and Hugh Rayner in Item 13.1.2, as they were Directors of Barnet Homes.
- Councillor Brian Salinger in Item 13.1.2, as one of the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel was his cousin but they had not discussed the matter.

103. BUSINESS REMAINING FROM LAST MEETING

None.

104. QUESTION TIME FOR MEMBERS (Agenda Items 7 and 13.1.5):

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

Members noted that Question 10 had been erroneously attributed to Councillor Jeremy Davies in the papers which had been circulated, whereas it was actually asked by Councillor Wayne Casey.

105. VARIATION OF ORDER OF BUSINESS

Councillor Joan Scannell, duly seconded, moved that the order of business relating to Agenda Item 8 be varied so that Motions 8.3, 8.2 and 8.4 be heard first.

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried.
RESOLVED – That the order of business be varied to allow Motions 8.3, 8.2 and 8.4 to be heard first.

106. MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR ALISON MOORE (Agenda Items 8.3 and 13.1.4 (ii)):

Motion 8.3 in the name of Councillor Alison Moore was moved.

An amendment in the name of Councillor Brian Coleman was moved.

Debate ensued.

Upon being put to the vote the amendment in the name of Councillor Brian Coleman was declared carried. The substantive motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED –Council is proud of the Conservative administration’s policies to tackle crime and disorder. This includes the roll-out of CCTV in at least one area per year, Alcohol Free Zones, Dispersal Zones, and the effective use of ASBOs.

Therefore Council does not agree with Dr. Rudi Vis MP that CCTV cameras are “intrusive”, but regards them as an effective weapon against criminality.

Council is equally proud to recall its own involvement in the campaign to secure more Police for Barnet.

In addition, Council notes the comments from the Government Office for London at the Safer Communities Partnership Board Meeting on 4 December 2006 that praised both the Council and the local Police for the outstanding improvements in the Partnership’s work in the last 6 months. This means that Barnet has moved from being regarded as a Borough of concern to a model of best practice by the Government.

However, Council regrets that the Safer Neighbourhood Teams could have been in place a year earlier, and comprising more officers in each team, had London Assembly Conservative Group Budget proposals been accepted.

Furthermore, Council notes this would also have been achieved at lower cost to both London, and Barnet, residents.

Whilst Council welcomes the drop in crime recently, and applauds the local Police for their part in this, Council believes that only when the Safer Neighbourhood Teams receive their full complement of Officers, will a lasting difference be made.

Council instructs the Chief Executive to continue to ensure that appropriate resources are provided for the Safer Communities Partnership Board.

107. MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR LINDA MCFADYEN (Agenda Items 8.2 and 13.1.4 (i)):

Motion 8.2 in the name of Councillor Linda McFadyen was moved. An amendment in the name of Councillor Lynne Hillan was moved. Debate ensued.

Upon being put to the vote the amendment in the name of Councillor

Lynne Hillan was declared carried. The substantive motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED – Council notes the inspection of Adult Social Services by CSCI.

Council is proud that the Inspection concluded that the service had “promising” prospects for the future.

Council notes this compares very favourably to Labour-controlled Haringey, which has slipped back this year and has been judged to offer only “uncertain” prospects for the future.

Council welcomes the achievements the authority has made, as highlighted by the CSCI in:

- **Our Work supporting a diverse community**
- **Our work helping those discharged from hospital**
- **Barnet’s Pioneering Projects to help older people with mental health problems.**

Council notes this has been achieved despite colossal under-funding from the Labour Government, and extra pressure put on social care by early discharges from local hospitals.

Council is pleased that Adult Social Care has made extensive use of Direct Payments, and welcomes the news that Devolved Budgets will soon be introduced, allowing people to choose a package of care tailored to them.

Council calls on Cabinet to ensure that the programme of reform in Social Care is rolled out, so that the service can continue to improve the level of care it offers all client groups.

108. MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR MELVIN COHEN (Agenda Items 8.4 and 13.1.7 (ii)).

Motion 8.4 in the name of Councillor Melvin Cohen was moved by Councillor John Marshall. An amendment in the name of Councillor Jim Tierney was moved orally. Debate ensued.

Upon being put to the vote the amendment in the name of Councillor Jim Tierney was declared lost. The substantive motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED – Council is proud of Barnet’s Green Belt, which extends halfway down through the middle of the Borough, and protects the Borough’s pleasant, suburban landscape.

Council is equally proud to recall that the former Hendon Borough Council was the first Council in the country to designate land as Green Belt, back in 1937.

Council is therefore dismayed that the Barker Review into Land Use Planning, commissioned by the Labour Government, is calling for more development on the Green Belt.

Council believes that any relaxation in Green Belt restrictions will lead to a rash of housing developments across the Borough, which would decimate Barnet's environment.

Council notes that at least some of the Barker Review's recommendations are expected to go into the Labour Government's Planning White Paper next year.

Council calls on the Chief Executive to make representations to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, opposing any moves to permit more housing on the Green Belt in the White Paper as a result of the Barker Review.

109. MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR BRIAN SALINGER (Agenda Items 8.1 and 13.1.7 (i)):

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 31.5, as there was no time to debate this item it was referred to Cabinet for consideration and any necessary action.

110. MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR MIKE FREER (Agenda Items 8.5 and 13.1.7 (iii)):

Motion 8.5 in the name of Councillor Mike Freer and amendments in the names of Councillor Duncan Macdonald and Councillor Kath McGuirk were put to the vote without debate. The amendment in the name of Councillor Duncan Macdonald was declared carried and the amendment in the name of Councillor Kath McGuirk was declared lost. The substantive motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED – Council reaffirms its support for the Olympic and Paralympic Games as a national event. Council continues to urge the Olympic Delivery Authority to ensure the benefits are spread across the London Boroughs and that Barnet receives a fair share.

Council is, however, extremely concerned about extra costs now being associated with the Games.

Council notes that the original estimate (for the Olympic Park construction), of £2.4 billion, has now risen by £900 million to £3.3 billion. Tessa Jowell's assertion that the additional £900 million 'is allowed for in the Memorandum of Understanding' and so is likely to come from the Lottery and the London Council Tax payer directly contradicts statements made by the Prime Minister, The Mayor, and Olympic Delivery Authority that Londoners would not be asked to pay more than the agreed £625 million.

Council further notes that £625 million of the original cost is already set to be met by London taxpayers, costing our residents an average of £20 a year for 25 years.

Council understands that the total bill for the Olympics is set to soar to over £8 billion.

Council believes that the budget is spiralling out of control. Council is extremely concerned that Barnet taxpayers may have to “bail out” the Games, after a “Memorandum of Understanding” decreed that overspends are to be met partly from the Council Tax. Council is further concerned that the overspends are to be met partly by taking money away from Lottery good causes.

Council calls on the Chief Executive to write to both the Secretary of State for Culture and the Chancellor, requesting that urgent action be taken to bring the Olympics budget back under control, that the perceived cloak of secrecy currently surrounding the budget be lifted so that fact and fiction can be separated, and requesting that Barnet receives a fair share of investment in facilities.

Council further calls upon the Chief Executive to submit an application before 31st January 2007 to London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) for Barnet to be included in the Pre Games Training Camp Guide listing approved training facilities by location and by sport.

111. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

In accordance with the Agenda, the Mayor adjourned the meeting, on this occasion for 20 minutes.

The meeting reconvened at 9.05pm

112. ADMINISTRATION POLICY ITEM: BUDGET 2007/08 (Agenda Item 9.1 and addendum)

Councillor Mike Freer proposed the item and moved that it be adopted. An amendment in the name of Councillor Monroe Palmer was moved orally. Debate ensued. Upon being put to the vote the amendment in the name of Councillor Monroe Palmer was declared lost and the substantive motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED - Council notes the components of the budget 2007/08.

Council further notes the Budget will be set after careful consideration.

Council believes this authority has been continually under-funded by Government, yet again receiving a Formula Grant increase lower than the London and England averages, and the lowest in the country.

Council is, however, proud that despite this shortfall, the Administration has brought both the Budget, and the levels of Council Tax in Barnet under control in the last 4 years.

Council calls on Cabinet to work to produce the Budget for 2007/08 within the constraints imposed by Government.

113. OPPOSITION POLICY ITEM: SUPPORTING SOLAR SYSTEMS (Agenda Item 9.2).

Councillor Wayne Casey proposed the item and moved that it be adopted. Debate ensued. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED - Supporting Solar Systems

Corporate priorities and policy considerations

This policy item is consistent with Corporate Plan (2006/07 – 2009/10) key priorities *Clean, Green & Safe* and *A Successful Suburb* and with the Corporate Plan’s emphasis on supporting an active community. It is also consistent with the obligation now placed on local authorities to provide leadership and to enable change.

Recommendations

1. That the Cabinet considers an amendment to the Corporate Plan to include an additional service objective under the key priority *Clean, Green & Safe* of “*encouraging the community to take positive steps to improve the energy efficiency of their homes – including through the installation of the new generation of solar energy systems.*” Further, that the Cabinet considers an amendment to the Corporate Plan to change key priority *A Successful Suburb* (service outcome 35) to insert the words “*energy efficient*” between the words “*high quality*” and “*sustainable*”.
2. That the Cabinet considers investigating the feasibility of community-run local cooperatives and/or a single Barnet-wide cooperative for the production of solar energy, and, if feasible, establishing of a pilot project.
3. Depending upon the outcome of (2), the Cabinet considers promoting the establishment of local cooperatives and/or a single Barnet-wide cooperative through *Barnet First* and the Barnet Council website.
4. Depending upon the outcome of (2), the Cabinet considers the desirability, practicality and legality of contributing some of its roof space to the cooperative for the installation of its equipment.

Risk management issues

The risks of the adoption of this policy item will be identified during the feasibility study and pilot exercise. The only risk worth considering at this stage would be the failure to recognise an opportunity and adopt an innovative scheme which would both utilise one of the Borough’s chief strengths – its active community - and confirm Barnet Council’s role as a leading local authority.

Legal issues

The legal issues arising out of the adoption of this policy item will be identified during the feasibility study and pilot exercise.

Financial, staffing and property implications

The role of the Council in respect of the adoption of this policy is to provide leadership and enable change. In the Corporate Plan (2006/07 – 2009/10) it states that “...*the Council is committed to promoting civic pride, supporting an active community...*” It is not the intention of this opposition policy item to commit large sums of public money or resources to its delivery. It is consistent with the following statement from the Corporate Plan

“Barnet’s residents have always taken an active interest in civic affairs. A recent Citizen’s Panel survey showed that 26% of Barnet’s residents volunteer, and 79% have given up their time in the last year to help someone else... The Council have a pivotal role in encouraging and supporting such an active and involved community by listening to residents and working with them to build civic pride.”

Some staff resource will be required to undertake the feasibility study and to establish the pilot. Promotion of the scheme - if this policy item is adopted and found to be feasible - will be through existing facilities i.e. *Barnet First*, the Barnet Council website and through the press office.

The use of Council property for the installation of solar equipment (subject to the necessary approvals) is intended to utilise space that is currently of little use or value and will be at the cooperative’s expense.

Background Information

This Opposition Policy Item and its recommendations have been framed in such a way that it fully recognises the Cabinet’s responsibility for deciding whether to undertake a more formal examination of this proposal. This item is intended to start the debate – it does not represent the final word. Members are asked to consider the points made.

The solar energy Britain has the potential to use each year is 750 times greater than our national energy consumption, yet there are currently on 20,000 homes in the UK with such panels or photovoltaic tiles (similar, but more expensive) to help provide hot water for bathing and central heating.

Great Britain is a long way behind many countries: in Germany for example 140,000 homes have solar panels and there are 400,000 in Japan. Spain has issued national guidelines insisting that the number of solar-assisted (a more accurate term than solar-powered) homes increases tenfold by 2010.

Almost any property can be fitted with a solar-assisted water heating system: all that is required is for the house to have an area of roof that is roughly south facing, for maximum exposure to daylight. The solar panels or photovoltaic tiles absorb the sun's energy and convert it into heat, which joins the heat generated by a standard domestic boiler.

On overcast days the boiler must do most or all of the work, but on brighter days the solar system can provide all of the hot water needed for an average house.

The technology now needed is 90% cheaper than it was in the 1970s and houses with solar roof tiles can in fact generate more electricity than is needed at certain times in the day. This surplus energy can be sold back to local electricity companies making solar energy very cost effective.

As with most renewable energy systems, however, the initial costs make setting up these projects initially quite expensive. Notwithstanding the fact that the savings on electricity bills in the long-term should make up for the initial costs year on year, and the fact that the costs are falling, many householders are discouraged from installing solar systems. This is particularly the case where limited roof space means that too great a proportion of the installation cost would be spent on labour rather than the equipment itself. In some cases, the roof space available precludes investment in solar energy altogether.

One innovative solution to this problem has been investigated and proposed by a Childs Hill resident.

At its simplest, a cooperative of households could be established covering a discrete area (a terrace of houses, a whole street etc.). The cooperative would pay for the equipment and share the labour costs. More ambitiously, however, a cooperative might be established Borough-wide. The co-operative would again pay for the equipment and install it (with the appropriate permissions) in locations where installation fees could be minimised and energy production maximised. The energy generated would be sold to the energy companies with some of the income shared by the investors of the co-operative and the rest set aside for depreciation and development. This would give every Barnet resident the opportunity of investing in and encouraging the development of a highly sustainable source of energy - including those residents who are keen to invest in a larger installation than their small roofs allow and those whose circumstances mean that they cannot afford their own PV installation at all. If the co-operative achieved charitable status, donations could be made to it from those who did not want to benefit directly – e.g. those who might wish to offset their own carbon usage. Such donations could attract gift aid, resulting in them being grossed up by taxation.

Barnet Council's contribution to the development of this idea would be as follows:

- 1. Amending the Corporate Plan to include "energy efficiency" amongst the service objectives**
- 2. Investigating the feasibility of the community establishing local cooperatives and/or a single Barnet-wide co-operative for the production of solar energy, and, if feasible, encouraging the establishment of a pilot project**
- 3. Depending upon the outcome of (2), promoting the establishment of local cooperatives and/or a single Barnet-wide cooperative through *Barnet First* and the Barnet Council website**

There is a further way in which Barnet Council could promote the establishment of a solar energy cooperative. Should the outcome of the feasibility study and pilot prove positive, Barnet Council might consider offering a proportion of the roof space on its own buildings to the cooperative for the installation of its equipment as a "contribution".

In order to lead in this innovation without incurring sizeable expenditure, it is proposed that a feasibility study be undertaken to agree in principle to giving access to rooftops for large scale installation of PV panels. Barnet could thus set the way forward for installers in cooperation with the PV industry, to at their own cost, install, insure and maintain the equipment. Perhaps Barnet could make roof space available on public buildings. Also to investigate whether the Council could encourage/promote a pilot cooperative in Barnet. Council would be seen to be actively promoting renewable energy sources, as technology improves and traditional energy costs continue to rise.

By establishing a residents' co-operative if everyone in a street, an area, or a new development put up panels the proportion spent on the labour content would drastically reduce. If a local co-operative were established, it could purchase PV panels and install them on the roofs of public or quasi-public buildings. The electricity would be sold directly to the grid, producing income to members of the co-operative.

114. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2007-8 (Supplemental Report of the Democratic Services Manager - Agenda Item 13.1.2):

Councillor Mike Freer, duly seconded, moved that consideration of this matter be deferred to a later meeting.

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

RESOLVED - that consideration of the Report of the Democratic Services Manager relating to the Members' Allowances Scheme 2007-8 be deferred to a later meeting.

115. REPORTS EXEMPTED FROM THE CALL-IN PROCESS BECAUSE THEY ARE URGENT (Report of the Democratic Services Manager - Agenda Item 13.1.1):

In accordance with Constitutional requirements the Democratic Services Manager reported on the following decision. The Chairman of the of the Cabinet Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that the decision was reasonable in all the circumstances, that it should be treated as a matter of urgency and consequently exempted from the call – in process.

(i) Report to the Hendon Area Environment Sub-Committee which, in view of the imminence of the commencement of replacement pipeline works by Thames Water in Rushgrove Park as part of the Colindeep Flood Alleviation Scheme, and to avoid any adverse effects on local residents if the necessary works compound was not available in time for the start of the works, agreed to note the response to the consultation carried out under Section 123 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 regarding the grant of a licence to Thames Water to erect a temporary site compound on public open space in Rushgrove Park and to use the main entrance for access for construction traffic.

116. AMENDMENT TO THE COUNCIL'S MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE (Supplemental Report of the Democratic Services Manager -Agenda Item 13.1.6):

RESOLVED - That the Democratic Services Manager make the necessary amendments to the Council's Constitution.

117. COMMENTS RELATING TO THE WORK OF CABINET (Agenda Items 14 and 13.1.3)

Councillor Wayne Casey commented

Madam Mayor, earlier yesterday I sent an email to Councillor Coleman outlining a particular issue in my Ward relating to a very localised crime wave. I don't want to mention the name of the road for, I think, probably obvious reasons, and I informed Councillor Coleman of this because this is the reason why I put this comment on the work of the Cabinet down today.

Councillor Coleman, I think, will probably be in a position this evening to respond to that specific example, but one of the things I would like to know if he could possibly outline this for me as a Member, is it appropriate when Ward Members receive information like this to bring them to him in his role as the relevant Cabinet Member, and if so does he in that role have any influence over the Borough Commander in the deployment of Police resources? I think, on the whole, yes, and members of the public may assume that that is the case, but it would be nice to know chapter and verse on this one.

Thank you, Madam Mayor.

Councillor Brian Coleman responded

Madam Mayor, I'm grateful to Councillor Casey for emailing me in advance. I took up the particular issue this morning with Superintendent Forester, who's

the number two in the Borough Command structure, and I've reported on the particular issue that Councillor Casey has got in his Ward to him.

Madam Mayor, we have a partnership in this Borough approach to the Police. I and indeed the Leader, and other Cabinet colleagues and, I'm sure, actually, Members across all parties work closely with the Borough Commander and his management team at Colindale, and indeed I encourage all Ward Councillors to work very closely with their Neighbourhood Teams and then, if they still have issues that they don't feel are being resolved by their Neighbourhood Sergeants, to work up through the management chain as indeed you would in dealing with Council matters with Council officers.

I and the appropriate Chief Officers of the Council speak on a regular basis both formally and informally with the Borough Commander. I am personally always happy to help any colleague who has particular anti-social behaviour, law and order, crime issues in their Wards in the appropriate manner.

Councillor Kate Salinger commented

Madam Mayor, I was delighted to learn that Barnet's primary school children were in the top ten nationwide for their results in the Standard Attainment Tasks, Key Stage 2 last year.

I was even more delighted to learn that Coppetts Wood School in Coppetts Ward, my ward, and also the educational establishment at which I earned an honest crust for 17 years was the highest achieving school in the Borough, once the value added dimension was added into the results.

These outstanding achievements are testament to the excellent work done by pupils, their teachers, indeed all the teaching and non-teaching staff in the schools borough-wide, their parents – education doesn't stop at 3.30 – and not least the LEA, which has worked hard and cooperatively with schools to ensure that our children receive an excellent standard of education. I hope that the Cabinet Member will individually congratulate each school and I ask her to outline what action she will take in the future to drive up that academic performance even further.

Councillor Fiona Bulmer responded

Thank you very much. It is a great pleasure to be able to formally and publicly congratulate the schools, their teachers, the pupils and their parents on what really has been a fantastic achievement.

As Councillor Salinger said, the English and Maths results at Key Stage 2 were the sixth highest in the country, and just as important the value added score put us at the third highest in the country, and that is really significant, showing that we are focussing not just on those high achieving children but those who might start out with some disadvantages in life, and I'm really proud of that.

Councillor Salinger highlighted the particular achievement of Coppetts Wood and I congratulate them. There are two other schools who are worthy of

particular congratulation. Matilda Marks Kennedy had phenomenal results, every child attained Level 4 in English, Maths and Science, and Goldbeaters were amongst the hundred most improved schools in the whole country, and are receiving a letter of recognition from Lord Adonis. They will also receive a letter from me as well and I'll be happy to congratulate all the schools on that achievement, and what we're doing to help them continue to improve that is the investment in primary schools, which my colleague Councillor Marshall is pursuing with vigour, continuing to appoint and support good heads and good teachers and supporting the schools throughout the borough, and I think we can all be immensely proud of what they do and encourage them on to do even better next year.

Councillor Jim Tierney commented

Madam Mayor, on the Liberal Democrat motion on solar systems to Councillors in the Council Chamber this evening, Councillor Yannakoudakis and Councillor Rogers referred to the draft supplementary planning document, Sustainable Design and Construction, which is out to consultation at the moment, and went out on the 23 November, and is due, the consultation which ends on the 10 January.

I just wanted to draw the Cabinet Member's attention to the fact that this is too short a planning consultation period for this document with the holiday intervening.

When we went to the planning forum on this sustainable development forum on December 12 last, several members of that gathering mentioned to us that, really, with the Christmas holidays and the like, they won't be able to respond to this by January 10.

Now it's a very important document this Sustainable Design and Construction, it's a very important supplementary planning document, so I'd ask if the Cabinet Member could, at all, actually consider accepting responses to this consultation for a week or two beyond January 10 because people have said to me that they will definitely be writing in. It's just that the holiday intervened. The consultation started quite correctly on the 23 November and it is a six-week consultation, a few days more actually, but because it's such an important document and because there's such an emphasis on sustainable development now, I would ask that the Cabinet Member, Councillor Marshall I think this evening, could ask the officers to consider responses that come in up to a week after.

Thank you.

Councillor Mike Freer responded

I'll pass on that request to Councillor Cohen.

The meeting finished at 10. 15pm

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members
19 December 2006
Supplementary Questions and Responses**

Question No. 1**Councillor Susette Palmer**

Could Cabinet Member advise which libraries are likely to be moved and where?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

There are currently no plans to realign libraries. However, the Library Service will clearly react to the Council's Regeneration Policies and will almost certainly want to relocate the Grahame Park Library. Obviously any decisions will be subject to the usual democratic controls in which I am sure Councillor Palmer will play a full role.

Supplementary Question No. 1**Councillor Susette Palmer**

Thank you, Councillor Marshall, for that answer. What I would just like to say is, with regards to Grahame Park Library, this is a Library which has an awful lot going on with the people of the Estate, both together with Barnet College, and with things like homework clubs and family learning. Can you assure us that the new Library which you are planning [and we would be very pleased to know where you are going to put that] is going to have the same room so that all these things can still go on there, because it is actually quite a large Library?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

Madam Mayor, Councillor Palmer is well aware that the Grahame Park Estate is being regenerated and obviously as part of the regeneration the location of the Library has to be looked at. Clearly as the Estate is part of our Regeneration Programme we want to ensure that it gets a good Library, whether it will have exactly the same square meterage, heaven alone knows, that would be an irresponsible comment for me to make. I must say that on my visits to the Library, as I occasionally make spot checks, it doesn't seem to be quite as busy as Councillor Palmer seems to claim.

Question No. 2**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Can the Lead Member for Housing please list all the shared ownership schemes that have been offered for sale in the last year, and those that are approved and in the pipeline. In respect of each scheme can the lead member state for those already completed:

- The number of units (by size....number of bedrooms)
- The average cost of each size of unit.
- The dates on which each development was completed.
- The dates on which each development was advertised for sale.
- The dates on which each sale was completed.
- The arrangements for advertising the availability of each development.
- The arrangements for interested parties to view each development.
- The number of successful applicants who were 'key workers' broken down by employment (teachers, NHS staff, housing, planning staff etc).

In respect of those in the pipeline can the lead member indicate

- 1) The numbers and sizes of the units expected.
- 2) The anticipated date on which they will be completed.
- 3) The arrangements that are in hand to market those properties?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Shared Ownership completions for the last year

The total shared ownership properties delivered in the last year amount to 28. 4 one bedroom properties and 24 two bedroom properties. The incomes required to acquire these properties range from £20,700 to £25,000. The shared ownership properties are on the following schemes:

Connections House, N3 (formerly known as the TA Centre) – 6 x 2 beds. Completed in December 2005. All but 1 sale was completed by April 2006. Remaining unit was sold November 2006. Minimum salary was between £20,700 and £21,700.

Chevil, Brunswick Park, N11 – 6 x 2 bedroom flats, completed February 2006. All but one property was sold by November 2006 and the remaining property is under offer. Minimum salary £21,500.

Montclair Court, Holden Road, N12 – 4 x 1 bedroom properties and 6 x 2 bedroom properties. Completed in March 2006. All but one sale completed by 31 October. Remaining sale due to exchange shortly. Minimum salary £22,465 for 1 bedroom properties and £25,000 for two bedroom properties.

Cheviot Court, Oakleigh Road North, N20 – 6 x 2 bedroom properties. Completed April 2006. All but 1 properties sold in November 2006. Remaining property under offer. Minimum salary £25,000.

In the future Housing Corporation funded schemes will also be marketed through the zone agent, Metropolitan Home Ownership, as well as the existing arrangements. The Council will continue to prioritise those interested in purchasing.

All the Housing Associations marketing these shared ownership developments advised the Housing Development team of the dates for viewing and these were duly advertised in both the Barnet Press and the website. Viewings for these properties were all held after handover of the properties took place and with the exception of Connections House they were small developments that did not have a show flat.

All these schemes were developed specifically for applicants from Barnet Council's housing register and as such the occupation of the purchasers is not available.

Shared Ownership properties in the pipeline

There are 324 shared ownership units with planning permission at this point in time. As more schemes come forward and receive planning we expect this figure to increase. The 324 units excludes any shared ownership on the regeneration estates. Shared Ownership schemes with planning permission are listed below:

Osidge Park (Former Barnet College site), N20 – 15 x 2 bedroom flats and 14 x 1 bedroom flats – available in two phases of December 2006 and April 2007.

Greyhound Hill, NW4 – 3 x 2 bedroom keyworker flats available February 2007.

16 High Street, Barnet, EN5 – 10 x 2 bedroom flats and 8 x 1 bedroom flats available February 2007.

Site at Tarling Road, N2 – 6 x 2 bedroom flats available August 2007.

Barnet Trading Estate, EN5 – 4 x 2 bedroom flats and 6 x 1 bedroom flats available from Summer 2008.

Lankaster Gardens, N2 – 2 x 2 bedroom flats and 1 x 1 bedroom flat available from Summer 2008.

Wellhouse Hospital Site – 6 x 1 bedroom flats available from Summer 2008.

Beaufort Park, NW9 – 50 x 3 bedroom flats, 100 x 2 bedroom flats and 50 x 1 bedroom flats available from Summer 2008 onwards.

New Fieldways, Barnet, EN5 – 12 x 2 bedroom flats and 10 x 1 bedroom flats available from Summer 2008.

Broadfields, Edgware, HA8 – 24 x 1 and 2 bedroom flats available from Summer 2009.

Hendon Football Club, NW2 – 24 x 2 bedroom flats, completion expected Summer 2008. There will be both shared ownership and shared equity available on our regeneration sites. Actual numbers have yet to be agreed.

Other low cost home ownership products

Other low cost home ownership schemes that will be available are as follows:

Discount Market Sale properties at Beaufort Park – approximately 240 units.

First Time Buyers Initiative at Beaufort Park – approximately 50 units.

Open Market Homebuy approximately 23 units per annum and is available to keyworkers, existing public sector tenants and applicants in temporary accommodation whom Barnet has a duty to house.

Further details can be obtained from the Housing Development Team.

Supplementary Question No. 2 Councillor Brian Salinger

Thank you, Madam Mayor. Can I first of all, wish you and everyone else seasons greetings and all the best for the coming year. Can I thank the Cabinet Member and the Officers for the very comprehensive response to this question. It does underline, Madam Mayor, the importance of this intermediate market to the future of housing in this Borough. Whilst things have improved over the last 4 years, will the Cabinet Member agree with me, that, having properties available but not occupied, for periods of up to 6 months after completion, whilst they are awaiting sale to people in this intermediate market of shared ownership, is unacceptable and it is something that we have to tackle, and have to tackle quickly, not least given the substantially increased numbers of properties that will become available over the next few years?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Yes, absolutely.

Question No. 3 Councillor Julie Johnson

What was the overall cost was of the Brent / Barnet court injunction regarding previous raves on the Welsh Harp / Brent Reservoir and how much did Barnet Council contribute to those costs?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Apart from in-house legal and officer time, there was not any direct cost to the Council.

Question No. 4**Councillor Duncan Macdonald**

At present the Council insists that the creation of crossovers (linking a resident's drive to the road) is undertaken by its own contractor. This can lead to inflated costs to the resident as there is no opportunity to choose a contractor and a prolonged wait for the work to be done (8 weeks in a recent case reported to me by a resident). The work also has to be paid for in advance. Would it not be fairer to adopt a system similar to that used in building control where such works are subject to an approvals system with the work inspected upon completion to ensure that the work is up to the required standard?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

The Council has appointed two Term Maintenance Contractors for constructing crossovers. Both contractors have been appointed following a Competitive Tendering process to ensure residents get value for money.

The crossover service is provided to the residents on a strictly rechargeable basis and, in order to avoid exposing the Council to unnecessary risks, residents are required to pay in advance.

Following a system similar to Building Control would mean that the residents would need the Council to approve their proposed specification and their contractor or select their preferred contractor from a list of approved contractors. In fact this system was used some time ago and the Council found that this created the following problems:

- Supervising various contractors working at different parts of the Borough;
- Controlling the quality of work carried out by different contractors;
- Co-ordination of works on the highway to ensure minimum disruption, as required by the Traffic Management Act 2004.

The additional supervisory costs which will be required to address the above problems, and are payable by the resident, will more than offset any savings that can be achieved by using other contractors. It must be emphasised that even though the initial construction cost for a crossover is payable by the resident the Council is responsible for their future maintenance and is therefore in our interest that all crossovers are constructed to a consistently high standard.

Supplementary Question No. 4**Councillor Duncan Macdonald**

Thank you, Madam Mayor. Thank you, Councillor Offord, for your reply but don't you think that the operation of a free market in this situation, or at least the choice of more than two contractors from an approved list, would benefit residents by providing some competition?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Madam Mayor, for the answer I have put down, no I don't.

Question No. 5**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Lead member please tell the Council how many units of housing have been offered to the Council by each of the almshouse or other charitable housing organisations in Barnet in the last two years and can the Lead member assure the Council that all vacancies to which the Council have nomination rights have been taken up by people referred by Barnet Homeseekers?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

In Barnet there are approximately forty housing associations and almshouses which are registered with the Housing Corporation and referred to as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).

The standard nomination agreement for RSLs requires that 50% of one bedroom and 75% of family sized properties which are true void should be offered to council nominees. `True voids' are newly built properties or relet vacancies that are the result of the death of the tenant, eviction, or the household moving out of the borough.

In addition, all schemes which are funded by the Council or are built on Council land require 100% nominations for a minimum of 10 years. Schemes subject to S106 require 100% nominations in perpetuity.

Not all almshouses are RSLs and the Council is only entitled to formal nominations to RSL units. The Housing Corporation Regulatory Code requires that all RSLs offer a minimum of 50% of true voids to the Council.

Lettings are monitored monthly using lettings returns provided by the associations and the council's own lettings data. Annual information is available from the Housing Corporation and this is checked against other data.

The table below shows the total numbers of units due to the Council from housing associations and almshouses from 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2006, the total numbers offered to the council and the total numbers taken up by the council.

Size	Number of units due to the Council	Number of Units offered	Number of successful nominations
Studio & 1 bedroom including sheltered	158	158	134
Family sized ie 2 bedrooms +	441	445	445
TOTALS	599	603	579

Overall therefore the Council was offered the correct number of units and for family sized units was offered slightly more than the amount due. Sometimes however some associations may offer more than the requirement and others offer less than the requirement. Where an association does not meet the requirement, officers will meet with the association to arrange that the debt is repaid.

The 24 units to which the Council could not nominate successfully were all units of sheltered housing:

Fifteen of these units were at schemes where applicants should be of Jewish faith and insufficient bids were received. Four were at a scheme which has recently been more difficult to let. Two were almshouses which restrict eligibility to applicants living in specific postcodes. One was a sheltered unit with shared facilities. One was a studio flat which is hard to let. One was in a scheme which is usually popular but on this occasion there were insufficient bids.

Further details can be obtained from the Housing Development Team.

Supplementary Question No. 5**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Thank you, Madam Mayor, and again can I thank the comprehensiveness of the reply again underlining the importance of the provision that comes from both the charitable, the RSL and indeed from Almshouses to the housing contribution of this Borough. Does she share with me, the concern that there are as many as 15 units which we were unable to take up for one reason or another and indeed that there are still units being offered to us which are not of a standard that we would expect people to accept today? Will she assure me that that is being addressed as a priority in our investments with these organisations?

(note: RSL = Registered Social Landlord)

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

It is certainly being addressed, Madam Mayor.

Question No. 6**Councillor Geof Cooke**

How does the final version of the Safety Scheme for High Road, North Finchley differ from the version notified to ward Councillors and what safety justification is there for the differences?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

There is currently no kerb build-out and the existing zebra crossing covers the three lanes of the southbound A1000. There was an initial suggestion to make some small kerb alignment changes that extended the footway on the east side of the High Road and immediately south of the Friern Watch Avenue junction. The cost of making this change including the necessary alterations to street furniture and drainage was costed to be in the region of £10,000.

Supplementary Question No. 6**Councillor Geof Cooke**

The work is fully funded by The Mayor of London via Transport for London and you have offered no safety justification for the change to the scheme. Is it not the case that because of a dogmatic aversion to kerb build outs, a feature designed to improve the future safety of North Finchley residents has been vetoed by Senior Conservatives, including Councillor Coleman who represents the area on the GLA, and Councillor Freer who aspires to represent the area in Parliament?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Madam Mayor, to answer the question no it is not. Measures are being proposed as a local safety scheme that seeks to achieve accident savings whilst ensuring safe progressive movement on the Borough's major road network. This is in line with the Council's 2002 Traffic Management Policy. This is the same answer I gave at the last full Council meeting on the comments of the work of the Cabinet. You'll have to forgive the Member because he wasn't elected at the previous Election because he actually lost his seat so he wouldn't have been aware of the Traffic Management Report which I have just referred to but that is the policy of the Council, a successful policy of this Council, which has done us well and which we are very keen to stick with.

I also quote what was said by Councillor Cooke at the 2002 Election when he lost his seat; and he actually said that now he was no longer the Cabinet Member for Environment he didn't really want to be on the Council anyway. So I'll have to ask myself, what are you still doing sitting there now. But secondly, I would say that I do understand he is quite frustrated about his current role. I realise that he wants to be my shadow in the Labour Group and he has to shadow Councillor McGuirk and I know for him that role must be a bit like being O J Simpson's lawyer, and for that I feel very sorry for him.

Question No. 7**Councillor Monroe Palmer**

Would the Leader explain how Barnet Council can even consider granting alcohol licenses to establishments apparently in breach of planning permission. If the answer is that planning enforcement is a separate issue, wouldn't it be a matter of urgency to deal with the matter of enforcement before the granting of a license is considered?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

Licensing and planning are two separate legal frameworks, each with its own legislation and guidance. In the case of licensing, there are four objectives:

- Prevention of crime and disorder
- Protection of children from harm
- Public safety
- Prevention of nuisance.

These are the only matters that may be taken into account in determining a licence application.

The planning service is a responsible authority under the Licensing Act and receives copies of applications. It has the right to object to a licence application, but may only do so on the grounds of one or more of the stated objectives.

When an application is received, the licence must be granted unless there is an objection, when there will be a hearing. At a licensing committee hearing, representations relevant to the objectives are taken into account, including any from Planning.

The Council's own licensing policy makes it clear that a licence may be granted where planning permission has not been obtained. A licence is only one of the permissions that may be necessary for lawful operation of a business. The expectation is that the applicant will seek planning permission to regularise the position before trading. The licence does not give the right to trade without planning consent, or prevent planning enforcement action from being taken if necessary.

In practice, it may be that planning restrictions on opening hours were applied some time ago, without taking individual circumstances into account. For example, there may be restrictions on opening hours that were intended to minimise nuisance. Where there has been a recent licensing hearing at which nuisance issues were properly considered, it might not be appropriate for Planning to enforce a purely technical contravention of planning consent. If however Planning believed that there was a nuisance arising from licensed premises, they could enforce a planning restriction or ask for the licence to be reviewed.

It has been suggested that it would be an offence for a business to operate without planning permission, or in breach of a planning condition. An offence can only occur if Planning Enforcement have served a breach of condition notice and the condition is not complied with after the time period given. Such a notice would only be served if there was sufficient evidence of an actual problem, such as nuisance.

Supplementary Question No. 7**Councillor Monroe Palmer**

Thank you, Madam Mayor. Madam Mayor, as a Chairman of Planning I am sure you'll be interested in this answer which, unfortunately I suppose, must be coming from the Leader as Councillor Melvin Cohen is not here.

Councillor Freer, is Councillor Cohen actually saying that a planning permission to a commercial premises which has breached conditions which were decided by Councillors at a meeting at these premises can be breached if the Officers decide not to pursue that breach rather than coming back to Councillors? To compound this unauthorised inertia an alcohol licence can be granted to those premises when they are in breach of planning permission? Councillor Freer, if there is a condition imposed by Members on this Council cross party that that breach of those conditions when some commercial premises is applying for a Licence, can be just ignored because the Officers decide there hasn't been a complaint? That seems to be wrong.

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Thank you, Madam Mayor. I think Councillor Cohen has made it quite clear that Licensing and Planning are two separate processes and it's not that never the twain shall meet but they do have to be run independently or I think the Lawyers would have a field day. Just because a premises has an alcohol licence does not mean that it can trade unless planning conditions are adhered to. If there is a breach of planning conditions on a current licensed premises then I'd share the frustration with Councillor Palmer and that's why I am very pleased that we are creating a multi-disciplinary enforcement team so that when we do enter premises we know the full picture of their breaches and can ensure that we have a co-ordinated response to bring to bear on the operator of the premises.

Question No. 8

Councillor Richard Weider

At the last Council meeting the Cabinet Member for Environment mentioned work being conducted to improve street cleansing in the borough. Could he please outline these plans?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

This Administration is now in the process of developing a Borough wide Signature Street Cleansing Service. To this end, myself and officers of Environment and Transport have reviewed how the current service arrangements can be improved.

Briefly, it is proposed to increase the number of town centres served by Town Keepers from 13 to 20 and to develop residential cleansing teams, supported by rapid response crews to deal with non-routine cleansing. The improvements will be supported by hotspot teams dealing with transport hubs and stations.

The proposed changes will be highly visible to residents, as staff undertake these duties. The proposals will be complimented by the Clean Borough Strategy which will be considered by Cabinet in January 2007. An implementation date for the proposals has yet to be determined but is likely to commence progressively over the coming year.

Supplementary Question No. 8

Councillor Richard Weider

Thank you, Madam Mayor. I would like to thank Councillor Offord for the answer that he has given and I would like to welcome the announcement of improved street cleaning for town centres, specifically in town centres such as Edgware. But does he agree with me that while the Council can do lots to keep the streets clean, residents and businesses within the Borough and specifically in town centres need to also play their part in helping to keep the Borough clean and tidy?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Councillor Weider is entirely correct, this is a partnership approach between ourselves, residents of the Borough and local businesses.

Question No. 9**Councillor Linda McFadyen**

How does the Cabinet Member propose that the Council responds to the “dignity challenge” set by the Care Services Minister Ivan Lewis?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

The Council welcomes this initiative and is fully committed to promoting the dignity of the people we serve. This includes respecting the people who come to us for help, recognising their need for privacy, autonomy and respect in the way the Council assess their needs and the way care is delivered.

Adult Social Services already operate a person centred care approach and has a multi-agency Adult Protection Committee.

Supplementary Question No. 9**Councillor Linda McFadyen**

Thank you, Madam Mayor. It’s somewhat of a tradition to thank the Cabinet Member for the answer, but in this case it doesn’t actually address the question and doesn’t add to our knowledge in any way, shape or form. What I would like to know is that, given the Dignity Challenge, we should have knowledge of what happens to the clients when we deliver care through partner organisations. How are we going to audit that care and ensure that we do meet that challenge?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Thank you. We do have a multi-agency adult protection Committee which meets quarterly and is chaired by the Adult Social Services and we actively promote the residents’ right to respect, dignity, privacy and autonomy. We take very seriously any complaints where dignity is compromised. We actively promote the complaints procedure and all our staff are trained and much of the training will continue and will focus on the dignity issues.

Question No. 10**Councillor Wayne Casey**

Could the Cabinet Member confirm, under the powers gained by Local Authorities under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act, since the Act came into force, how many maximum fines and custodial sentences have been issued for fly tipping and how many spot fines have been issued to those dropping chewing gum and cigarette butts?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Between April and October 2006 the Council has:

- Issued 13 Fixed Penalty Notices;
- Taken forward 7 prosecutions; and
- Issued 85 warnings with regard to waste enforcement including fly tipping and littering.

Supplementary Question No. 10**Councillor Wayne Casey**

Thank you very much. Madam Mayor, I am sure it’s an oversight but the question was very specific. I did refer back to a particular point in time which is when the Act came into force, which was, I believe June 2005, rather than the start of the year. I don’t expect Councillor Offord to be able to give me that information this evening but will he undertake to circulate it to Members?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Madam Mayor, I will.

Question No. 11**Councillor Brian Gordon**

A recent study by the Youth Justice Board revealed that many young people regard anti-social behaviour orders (Asbos) as “a badge of honour”. The study suggested that Asbos should only be used as a “last resort”. What is our view of this in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The Council will use them as appropriate where the Council think they will solve the problems of anti social behaviour, street drinking, drug dealing, prostitution or other matters.

Supplementary Question No. 11**Councillor Brian Gordon**

I do appreciate the fact that the Council will only use ASBO's when appropriate but my question really is this. Are we really working closely enough with the Police to ensure that there really is a stigma attached to ASBOs, that they are not regarded, hopefully, as some kind of joke or something to play games with, but they are seen, in my view anyway, as being just one step removed from a criminal conviction. I think that's what we've got to try and put across and I wonder if you can comment on that.

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Thank you, Madam Mayor. As Councillor Gordon will know, if a resident breaches an ASBO then indeed you can go straight to prison for doing so. Madam Mayor, Members will be assured to know that we are working closely with the Police and indeed with the Magistrates in this Borough to ensure that we take a concerted and joined up approach to the issues around anti-social behaviour particularly in the issuing of ASBOs, and ABCs as well, because we are careful in this Borough in the issuing of ASBOs but we are not holding back where they are going to achieve the desired end.

(ABC: Anti-Social Behaviour Contract)

Question No. 12**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What is the Council doing to ensure that Barnet can benefit from the London 2012 Olympics?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The Council are working with London Councils and interested local MPs to ensure Barnet's voice is heard in the provision of a lasting legacy (apart from the debt).

Supplementary Question No. 12**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Thank you, Madam Mayor. I thank Councillor Freer for his answer, but what I actually wanted to know is what practical steps he has taken to ensure that Barnet will benefit. Perhaps Councillor Coleman was thinking of synchronised road hump removals, but on a serious note, can I ask Councillor Freer whether the Council has registered interest in the pre-games training camp scheme in order to maximise Barnet's fair share of London's 2012 sports investment and if he hasn't, why not?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The Chief Executive is already doing that.

Question No. 13**Councillor Wayne Casey**

Will the Cabinet Member examine the possibility of instituting an alternative system to the one now enforced at Summers Lane Civic Amenity Centre where householders with small vans – e.g. the Renault Kangoo – are currently obliged to make an appointment before they visit the site even though they are only disposing of domestic recyclables, not commercial or business waste?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

This practise is used to prevent traders from using the site as well as keep the traffic flowing. In the majority of cases, traders turn up at the site in vans wanting to use the site. The Summers Lane site is not licensed to accept trade waste and therefore the Council can not accept it.

The system of residents making an appointment works well and there are no plans to change it. The appointment system ensures that for the majority of the time there is free following traffic into the site, particularly at the weekend and limits the abuse to staff.

Question No. 14**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Peterborough City Council is using its CCTV cameras to catch people unlawfully dropping litter? Would this be a viable or acceptable idea in Barnet, or would it be considered too great an intrusion into people's personal lives?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

It is not top of the list of my priorities for using CCTV.

Supplementary Question No. 14**Councillor Brian Gordon**

I must tell you that whereas litter dropping is highly anti-social and even unlawful I do agree with you that it wouldn't be a top priority to use CCTV cameras for that purpose, but I must tell you something interesting. At the Area Forum that I was chairing in Hendon, just the other night, somebody brought up quite seriously, and there was a long discussion which ensued, the matter of spitting. Spitting in public. One or two of my colleagues were actually there and heard this discussion, and there was concern about whether or not there should be stronger action taken against people who spit, this could be a very anti-social activity. I just wonder what you think about that, perhaps you could sort of spit out your answer for us now, Councillor.

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Madam Mayor, spitting is a particularly unpleasant habit, those of us who have been spat at in the course of our public career, I can think of one particular occasion where I was spat at by striking fire-fighters, it's not a very pleasant experience. However, we have invested many millions, Madam Mayor, as you will know in CCTV roll out and a top priority for using our CCTV is community safety and protection and the detection and prevention of crime. While spitting, litter dropping and all the rest of it, is unpleasant, is anti-social behaviour, the top priority will remain the prevention and detection of crime.

Question No. 15**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Will the Cabinet Member tell me what the policy of the Council is on damaged and lost bins?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

If the question relates to domestic wheelie bins, the answer is that wheelie bins that are damaged through fair wear and tear are replaced by the Council at no cost to borough residents, as are bins that are lost in the vehicle. Wheelie bins which are vandalised or lost through no fault of the Council or refuse collection crews are replaced by the Council at cost to borough residents.

Supplementary Question No. 15**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Thank you, Madam Mayor. Does the Cabinet Member believe it is fair that innocent Barnet residents bear the cost of vandalised Council property and can he relay the policy to the CCU as numerous of us have picked up casework whereby bins have been damaged by wear and tear or lost in the refuse vehicle, members of the public have been told quite categorically that they should pay the full cost. Maybe you should talk to the staff more rather than television crews in the future.

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Madam Mayor, it's always very unfair when there are victims of crime such as graffiti, vandalism, for example, but this Administration has promoted that as one of its priorities and we will continue to do that, and also work with members of the public and businesses through our graffiti strategy and also through the Clean Neighbourhoods Act as well. If Councillor McGuirk has any particular examples of bins being damaged and she feels that's unfair, perhaps she would like to forward them to me.

Question No. 16**Councillor Brian Gordon**

A debate is taking place among MP's concerning the Governments proposed Planning Gain Supplement, as to whether it should be collected centrally and then re-distributed to local authorities, as opposed to all revenue raised being retained locally. Does the Cabinet Member have a view on this?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

The Chancellors plans for a new land development tax would be a stealth tax (not unknown to this government) on new homes and urban renewal. Collected by HM Revenue and Customs the Treasury will pocket much of the cash rather than the money being spent on local communities. You only have to look at the Business Rate where the local authorities act as unpaid tax collectors and forward it to the Treasury. The Government proposes that 70% of the tax collected will be distributed to local authorities but 30% will be retained by central government.

My personal view (and I stress that this is my personal view and not part of formal Council policy) is that the tax is intrinsically iniquitous but if it is to be, then it should not be collected centrally but collected locally and retained locally.

I note however that the Chancellor in his pre budget Statement last week appears to have temporarily shelved his plans for Planning Gain Supplement. Could there be elections on the horizon?

Supplementary Question No. 16**Councillor Brian Gordon**

This, I assume, Madam Mayor is to the Leader again because unfortunately Councillor Melvin Cohen is unable to be here. Councillor Freer, does not the excellent answer given by Councillor Melvin Cohen indicate one thing above all, that under this Government and under this Greater London Authority, taxes are far too high, and decent Local Authorities like ours are being unnecessarily penalised? Do we not think that taxes will be collected and monies will be spent far more wisely and responsibly if we had a good right wing Conservative Government?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Yes I do. I support that a good Council should be able to raise income to compensate for infrastructure needs through developments in the Borough. We are better guardians of our own purse than Gordon Brown could ever be, and I agree with your sentiments in the need for a change of Government.

Question No. 17**Councillor Alison Moore**

Will the Cabinet Member tell me how many Council employed staff earn below £7.05 per hour?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

None.

Supplementary Question No. 17**Councillor Alison Moore**

Thank you, very much. Will the Leader of the Council, given that there are not direct implications, therefore, for the Council Budget, confirm that he is happy to sign up to the London living wage as proposed by The Mayor of London, ensure that all contractors pay their staff at least £7.05 per hour and encourage all our Partners to do the same.

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The answer to that is no, Madam Mayor. This Council will support the National minimum wage because that is Government Legislation which we will follow, and it is certainly our party's policy to support the National minimum wage and that is as far as we will go.

Question No. 18**Councillor Sachin Rajput**

Please could the Cabinet Member comment on Royal Mail's commitment to the Clean Neighbourhood Act?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

As Royal Mail has not been directly asked, the best I can say is what is contained on their website. This explains "*We're committed to building our businesses. But we also recognise that, as one of the largest employers in Europe and because of the nature of the services we provide, we have an impact on the environment. As our businesses grow, it's our responsibility to take into account the environmental effects of what we do*".

I presume this means they will be eager partners in our Clean Borough Strategy.

Supplementary Question No. 18**Councillor Sachin Rajput**

Thank you, Madam Mayor. Can the Cabinet Member just refer to two points for me please. The first point is having written to Royal Mail and having not received a response can the Cabinet Member assist in ensuring Royal Mail do not permit their staff to lock up what can only be described as postal carts to street lamp posts and other such structures which result in reduced pavement access for constituents who are wheelchair users and those with buggies and others? Secondly, can the Cabinet Member confirm that this would be contrary to our clean borough strategy.

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Madam Mayor, I am not entirely sure it is against the clean borough strategy but I think it's a hindrance to people that you describe such as various groups such as the handicapped, elderly and also people with young children. I think what would be a good idea, perhaps if we write a letter to Royal Mail asking them to set out the reasons why they do this and asking them if they feel they have to continue in such a fashion to look at the locations where they do, to make sure that people don't have problems.

Question No. 19

Councillor Colin Rogers

Planning Officers are asking their customers for feedback concerning LBB's handling of the planning process. Will the Cabinet Member tell me why they aren't asking local residents and objectors as well?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

The current customer satisfaction survey that has recently been undertaken by Barnet Council Planning services is a statutory 3-yearly survey required by Central Government and limited by government parameters to applicants and agents only. This is a national best value performance indicator (BVPI 111) which local planning authorities are measured and compared in terms of the customer's satisfaction rates. Barnet's recent BVPI 111 customer satisfaction survey results produced a 10% improvement in the satisfaction level with some two thirds of applicants and agents satisfied with the service. Barnet Planning service is keen also to find out what as many customers think of the service and not be constrained by the Government's methodology in the BVPI. It therefore undertakes additional customer satisfaction surveys for all customers using the Planning Reception or on line services on an ongoing basis. The results to date show a healthier satisfaction rate than the more limited measurement of applicants and agents. Saying that Barnet is keen to listen and improve its services continuously for the benefit of all its customers, applicants, agents, objectors and local residents/businesses.

Supplementary Question No. 19

Councillor Colin Rogers

Thank you, Madam Mayor I'd like to thank Councillor Melvin Cohen for saying that Barnet is keen to listen and improve its services to all objectors and local residents in planning applications. I can only assume that Councillor Cohen is aspiring to becoming a psychic because no one has seen a survey other than to its customers or applicants, certainly not of its objectors. I can only assume he is guessing again. Why is it necessary, therefore, if he is so keen on listening to objectors, that they have to be waiting, have to be threatened with a judicial review, after giving planning permission at 1-5 Lincoln Parade before they will consider readdressing it at central P&E? Thank you.

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Thank you, Madam Mayor. Barnet's Planning Service is the second busiest planning service outside of Westminster. To use one example in the Councillor's Ward as a litmus test for the whole service is highly irresponsible and wholly unjust. If the Councillor wants to see the survey data then I am sure that can be provided but this is independently gathered, and is robust, and one Ward issue does not mean the service is failing.

Question No. 20

Councillor John Hart

Please could the Cabinet Member provide an update of the situation regarding tube services between Mill Hill East and Finchley Central?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

London Underground has introduced a new Northern Line timetable which includes the removal of 'through' trains serving Mill Hill East off-peak. The through trains have been replaced by a shuttle train service operating on a 15 minute frequency between Finchley Central and Mill Hill East.

As the Mill Hill East branch is only single track for much of its length, with a single platform at Mill Hill East station, the branch line has resulted in operational difficulties for some years. The service to and from Mill Hill East also means a reduction in the number of trains running to and from High Barnet.

The removal of the through train service, along with changes at the southern end of the route, significantly reduces the complexity of the operation of the Northern Line. This means the line can be restored to normal operation much more rapidly after disruption, as there are fewer timetable and train location factors to take into account.

The disadvantage is that Mill Hill East passengers are required to change trains at Finchley Central, which in the southbound direction requires passengers to cross from platform 3 to platform 1 via the footbridge.

Supplementary Question No. 20

Councillor John Hart

I am grateful for your reply. As a supplementary question I would like to ask why is it that the 15 minute shuttle has been instituted before a lift has been placed in Finchley Central station to transport passengers from Mill Hill East, especially those who are elderly or disabled, who have to go over the bridge to the other platform. And secondly, would he bear in mind that the service will be inadequate when the Inglis Barracks site comes into use in the near future.

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Madam Mayor, the issue of the lift is something that we have brought to the attention of TfL, and when representatives of that organisation have visited the borough we've brought that to their attention. They have acknowledged the difficulties that the lack of the lift provision causes passengers and I understand they have been working towards the implementation of the passenger lift and work is currently starting on that particular site. TfL have also reassured us that the significance of the Mill Hill East Station is something they have taken on board, and the vitality of that service for the Regeneration Scheme in the Mill Hill area. They have given us assurances, which we will hold them to, that they have no plans to cease the service between Mill Hill and Finchley Central.

(TfL = Transport for London)

Question No. 21

Councillor Anne Hutton

Will the Cabinet Member tell me what the total cost of the recent extension and refurbishment of the Compton School was and give me a detailed breakdown of the funding sources and amounts used to pay for the works?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

The total projected cost of the extension was £5,320,000.

The funding sources were:

Barnet Council capital	£1,980,000
Barnet Council revenue funding	£64,000

DfES Targeted capital Funding (supported borrowing through Supplementary credit approvals) after a bid from Barnet Council:	£2,670,000
Schools Access Initiative 03/04	£80,000
Schools Access Initiative 05/06	£60,270
Schools Devolved Formula capital contribution	£100,000
Fire Officer works	£173,000
New Deal for Schools Secondary Modernisation 06/07	£120,000
New Deal for Schools Secondary Modernisation 06/07 contingency	£72,730

The school also borrowed £354,000 against their devolved formula capital grant.

All figures are subject to confirmation on acceptance of the final account.

Supplementary Question No. 21

Councillor Anne Hutton

Thank you, Madam Mayor, and I thank the Cabinet Member for his response. Will the Cabinet Member now acknowledge that the lion's share of the refurbishment of this flag ship comprehensive actually came from the Labour Government?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

No. That's just nonsense, this Council has put in a huge investment in the school and I just fail to understand why the Labour Party don't acknowledge that, and praise us, and congratulate us for that investment in schools, which we wouldn't be able to do if we were relying on the Government.

Question No. 22

Councillor John Hart

Please would the Cabinet member give assurances that all future developments in the Borough will include requirements relating to rainwater conservation and sunlight entrapment?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

No. I cannot and will not bind myself or this Council in such prescriptive fashion. My policies will be flexible and as far as possible based on empirical evidence and not dogma. To do otherwise, in my opinion, would be contrary to planning law and practice.

However, I refer the member to the draft supplementary planning document on sustainable design and construction which contains pioneering and innovative policies which I am quite sure will make most eclectic Yuletide reading and I look forward to receiving the members observations thereon early in the new year.

Question No. 23

Councillor Agnes Slocombe

Will the Cabinet Member tell me what the criteria are for the placement of hired skips on the kerb side of the public highways? Is there a time limit by which skips should be removed? Are skip users advised that they must not drop rubbish on the pavements? Who is responsible for ensuring the skips are lit after dark and how is this monitored?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Skip Licences are issued in accordance with section 139 of the Highways Act 1980 and the responsibility for complying with the conditions of the Licence rest with the skip company. This includes ensuring that the skip is adequately lit and is not used in a manner that allows its contents to fall on to the highway.

Their use is monitored by complaints which are received by the Council.

Supplementary Question No. 23**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

Thank you, Councillor Offord, but I have a supplementary question. How are the conditions of the licence enforced and what penalties are charged for those who do not comply? If the Cabinet Member does not know the answer he can reply later.

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Madam Mayor, in my original answer I do refer to how we monitor the scheme. If people are found or organisations are found to be non-compliant with the Highways Act, they could be, the company responsible could be charged up to £100 per skip.

Question No. 24**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Reports in the local papers suggest that the Government is back-tracking on its promise to finance the 'decent homes programme' with the possible result that the Council will not meet the 2010 target. Will the Lead Member please spell out what the implications for this change in funding might be, both for residents and Barnet Homes and what steps she, the Directors the Board and officers of Barnet Homes are taking to address this issue?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

It is correct to say that the Government is back-tracking on its commitment to achieve the decent homes standard by 2010. Their rhetorical position is that they would encourage authorities to consider extending the programme if this enables them to take into account the wider neighbourhood renewal objectives to which Ruth Kelly is committed, rather than taking a narrow view of new kitchens and windows. The reality is that more authorities have applied for ALMOs than anticipated and the costs of achieving the standard have escalated. They therefore need authorities to take longer, so that the spending can be spread out over a longer period. They have called in ALMOs to discuss the way forward.

Officers of Barnet Homes and the Council went to a meeting at DCLG on 2nd November. They made it quite clear that refusing to take longer was not an option. The Council equally made it clear that we were well advanced with the regeneration agenda, a point they acknowledged, and that we had no authority to negotiate backtracking on the commitments made to tenants. We took one of our construction partners with us who very eloquently made the case about the supply chain and contractual costs that would result from varying the agreed term of the programme. However it is apparent that, behind the rhetoric, it is simply the case that the funding will be stretched out, probably to 2013/14. The Council already have funding confirmed for 2007/08. While not agreeing to anything the Council did indicate that if it were to be reduced after that, the Council would need at minimum a steady level of funding for 08/09 (rather than the increase currently projected in the programme profile), with any reduction coming in subsequent years, to avoid significant additional costs.

At present this is a consultation and review exercise. A ministerial announcement is expected before Christmas but no announcement of revised funding will be made until after the CSR next year.

Supplementary Question No. 24**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Thank you, Madam Mayor. The news that the Government is backtracking on its commitments for the "decent homes" is one that I'm sure all Members will regret. Can the Cabinet Member tell me if there is any update since the meeting on the 2nd November, and if I have missed the ministerial announcement expected before Christmas, that she refers to? If we are going to miss the 2010 deadline, will she ensure that Council tenants know and understand that the fault lies fairly and squarely with the Government and not with this Council or with Barnet Homes?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Thank you. We are still chasing the Government for a decision. Obviously they are backtracking. This is affecting us and many other boroughs and, of course, some of the boroughs that haven't even started the "decent homes" programmes. We will indeed, as soon as we have got some news, we will be informing all of the residents. All I can say is that although "decent homes" I think is at least helping to improve kitchens and bathrooms, as I go round the estates I think its only one thing amongst all the things that need improving, such as the green spaces, the roads, the lighting and that's why we have progressed the modernisation of many of our estates, Stonegrove, Grahame Park, West Hendon, Dollis Valley, some of which we have actually started on. So I think again, it's a good job we are not just relying on the Government to provide all these improvements on our behalf.

Question No. 25

Councillor Julie Johnson

The out of hours noise nuisance service is not providing the level of service that the Barnet residents have a right to expect. I understand that the equipment used is now outdated. Will the Cabinet Member tell me when or this will be replaced and what the staffing levels for this service are on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

On Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings the staffing level for the Out of Hours Noise Service is two Officers. In Summer months during peak demand this rises to four Officers. This level of staffing has remained unchanged since the Out of Hours service was established.

The Council have sufficient noise equipment that is fit for purpose.

It should be noted that instruments such as sound level meters are used to assist with investigations, a vast majority of cases do not require the use of equipment as the evaluation of Statutory Nuisance is a professional decision based on subjective criteria.

This is the third non specific "complaint" about the noise service, all of which have been generated in the Hendon and West Hendon area, questions have been responded to at the relevant Area Forum and Overview and Scrutiny. If there are specific complaints it would be useful if they were raised with the Environmental Health managers so that they can be addressed, and enable us to continually improve. Complaints by innuendo will not assist this process.

If there was a wholesale failure of the noise service, as implied, the Council would expect complaints from other parts of the Borough.

The Council are advised that as part of the roll out of the Council-wide modernised "CISCO IP" phone system, that the emergency telephone service (ETS) will be upgraded in the early part of 2007. This system will enable calls to be routed directly to the noise officers rather than be handled by an operator and then passed to a noise officer. It should be noted that if officers are out on site dealing with a complaint, calls will go to their mobile phone voice mail. This system should assist with call handling, but will not completely cure the problem of call queuing during very busy times.

This system will have the advantage of being able to record the number of calls abandoned by the caller, and will also record the number of out of hours service requests that occur out side the hours that the noise service operates.

Gary Davies is the manager for ETS, he can be contacted on 020 8359 5590, should any further information be required regarding the new telephony.

Question No. 26

Councillor Robert Rams

Please could the Cabinet Member outline his proposals for the future of Barnet's Allotments?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

A review of alternative management arrangements has been undertaken to determine what proven models exist. From the models available and considering those that are working successfully, the favoured option is to transfer the entire service to a single body, as demonstrated by a number of Councils across the country. This action will create the simplest management structure without unnecessary complications created by alternative structures running in parallel.

This action will allow a more efficient and responsive management arrangement to be created and it is proposed to devolve the management to a trust or equivalent organisation formed from the current Federation of Allotment Associations. Given the Federation's long and successful history of allotment site management and service improvement it is considered perfectly placed to become the new devolved allotment management body and to provide the allotment services direction.

Devolving the management of the allotment service will bring decision-making closer to the allotment plot holders. It will enable the managing body to determine its own priorities for the benefit of all tenants. The proposal will take the service and tenants outside the routine budgetary pressure of the Council and provide the service with a greater degree of financial independence. This action will give the Federation and its tenants the decision-making power to make things happen, creating an impetus for increased voluntary support by allotment plot holders, which will lead to a more flexible and allotment plot holder driven service.

Supplementary Question No. 26

Councillor Robert Rams

Thank you, Madam Mayor, and I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his answer. Will this ensure the protection and enhancement of our existing allotments as well?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Yes it will.

Question No. 27

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Will the Cabinet Member tell me how many telephone calls were taken by customer services teams (on the Council's four main numbers) during the first and second quarters of 2006/07 and how many of these calls were missed or lost?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Calls answered and calls missed in first and second quarters of 2006/7:

1.1 Switchboard

Quarters 1 & 2, year 2006/07

Source: Realtis Telephone system

Description	Apr 06	May 06	Jun 06	Jul 06	Aug 06	Sept 06	Total
Calls Answered	34540	433860	44416	45558	33266	40233	195841
Calls Abandoned	Data on calls abandoned was not able to be produced from the old switchboard system. The team moved to new technology as a result of the MOI project on Oct 14 th 2006 and therefore the first full month available for data on abandoned calls will be November 2006, however this will be heavily impacted by the BT problems that the Council experienced during this period.						

1.2 Customer Care Unit

Quarters 1 & 2, year 2006/07

Source: Store a call

Description	Apr 06	May 06	Jun 06	Jul 06	Aug 06	Sept 06	Total
Calls Answered	5214	6721	5968	2824	7887	5749	26153
Calls Abandoned	285	609	379	473	348	3394	5488
Commentary	During the month of Sept the team moved to a new location and started to use the new call centre technology, much system testing was carried out in the live system and therefore the stats presented for Sept should be treated with caution. Statistics for the third quarter will see a much more stable set of figures for the number of calls abandoned. The abandoned call figures for this period also include those customers that chose to leave the queue and leave a message on the answer phone.						

1.3 First Contact and CRM Team

Quarters 1 & 2, year 2006/07

Source: Realtis Telephone System

Description	Apr 06	May 06	Jun 06	Jul 06	Aug 06	Sept 06	Total
Calls Answered	1383	1796	1723	1806	2180	2741	11629
Calls Abandoned	1140	1562	1222	1162	1274	1273	7643
Commentary	The abandoned call figures for this period also include those customers that chose to leave the queue and leave a message on the answer phone.						

It should be stressed that this data was being captured by a number of different systems, resulting in inconsistencies in results recorded. The 'Modernising our Infrastructure' project have tackled inconsistencies in data recording and the performance of the contact centres is now managed and monitored on a daily basis using consistent methods.

Whilst the Council recognises that the response record for telephone calls has not been exemplary, the Council are currently implementing plans to improve customer service through an overarching, single and coherent approach to better customer care through the Customer Access Delivery Plan.

Supplementary Question No. 27

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

I thank Councillor Harper for his very detailed reply. I do acknowledge the ongoing work that's going on in this area, but would he agree that nearly 40% of calls being abandoned, and a rate which has continued since 2005/06, is unacceptable, as is the recent huge increase? What is his target to reduce this to when the third quarter statistics come out?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

I am not aware, Madam Mayor, that we have a specific target for this, but as Councillor Schneiderman well knows, we have agreed now a customer access strategy. A delivery plan is rolling out, a lot of work is going into that over the coming years and I am very happy to engage with Councillor Schneiderman and indeed with all Members as we progress that plan.

Question No. 28

Councillor Bridget Perry

Please could the Cabinet Member tell us if he has a solution to the issue of parking on crossovers in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

The Council does not currently enforce against parking over crossovers. To date our approach has been that it is a matter for the Police to deal with as being an obstruction, as they are the enforcement authority.

The Council does not use short stretches of waiting restriction to protect dropped kerbs. While the Council will consider the provision of white lines markings across crossovers at various locations, they are advisory and do not represent an enforceable restriction.

Legislation contained within the London Local Authorities & Transport for London Act 2003 provides that a penalty may be issued by the local authority in respect of this type of obstructive parking. The Council do intend to develop a strategy for enforcement using this legislation. This will require a request for enforcement to first be made by an occupier of the property with the dropped kerb, will need to be robust enough to cover household and neighbour disputes and malicious requests for enforcement.

Supplementary Question No. 28

Councillor Bridget Perry

Madam Mayor, I thank the Cabinet member for his answer. To what extent does he think this policy will make parking easier for our residents?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Madam Mayor, the intention is to make parking much easier for residents of the borough, to enable them to park off-street, to enable them to come home late at night and park safely where they don't have to walk over long distances and can walk straight in their front door.

Question No. 29

Councillor Kath McGuirk

What impact does the Cabinet Member believe a 440% increase on charging for use of Council land will have on community groups across the borough?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The impact will depend on the % of overheads the charge represents in the overall overheads of organisations and on the sources of income organisations have for meeting such expenditure.

Supplementary Question No. 29

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Thank you, Madam Mayor. All I can say to the answer is “bah humbug”. This answer typifies Councillor Freer’s attitude to the local community. Market forces and fending for yourself. Capitalism at its worst. Can he give me assurances that the Council will continue to support existing community events that use our public parks, and he will work with any new community groups who wish to hold events on Barnet’s open spaces?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Madam Mayor, many organisations seem to use our public parks and rent them perfectly satisfactorily without any support from this Council. Certainly I think, the Friern Barnet summer show has gone from strength to strength, despite its grant being cut by a previous Labour Administration.

If Local Authorities want to support voluntary groups then it is best through a no hidden subsidy policy and by giving any group free access to Council resources is not transparent. If voluntary groups or any community groups wish to hire Council premises and they are struggling to do so then they should do what most voluntary groups do and that is apply through the Grants Unit and then that application can be properly assessed.

Question No. 30

Councillor Alison Moore

The Council recently failed to prevent the installation of a number of phone masts across Barnet because the lawyers acting for the telecom company concerned took advantage of a loophole in the wording of the notice served by the Council to prevent them doing so. Will the Cabinet Member tell Members what action he has taken to ensure that this doesn’t happen again?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

In my opinion the best thing to do to solve the problem is to abolish the “Prior Approval” System. Government has set its face against that having extracted hundred and millions of pounds from the phone companies in Licensing Fees.

The problem is that phone companies do not have to use any particular form for prior approval applications provided they quote the relevant part of the regulation, a simple letter will do. Hundreds of letters come in everyday to the Council and it is easy to miss a letter which in fact is prior approval application.

We are considering other procedures to ensure correspondence is routed correctly and handled in good time.

Question No. 31

Councillor Julie Johnson

Barnet Council’s target for CCTV installations in wards across the Borough is one per year. This target is obviously easily met as three have already been installed this year. Can the Cabinet Member raise this target so that wards such as West Hendon are at least confident of receiving their CCTV in the near future?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The Council will install as many CCTV schemes as possible with the appalling grant settlement the Council are given by this Labour Government.

Question No. 32**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Will the Cabinet Member tell me what the average response time to letters received by the Council from residents is?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

There is currently no corporate responsibility to monitor the timescale that letters are responded to. However, some services have provided data on correspondence and they are as follows:

Environment and Transport

Number of letters received – 1st Quarter 795, 2nd Quarter 809.

Number of letters responded to – 1st Quarter 790, 2nd Quarter 803.

Number Outstanding – 1st Quarter 5, 2nd Quarter 6.

% responded to within 10 day target – 1st Quarter 67.92%, 2nd Quarter 62.92%.

Council Tax (only record volumes of letters not the turn around time)

- Local Tax and Income around 7,000 per month average (collection and recovery teams).
- Student Finance around 800 per month average.

Housing

Only record their complaints and can provide information if required.

Education (only record complaints)

10 for the 1st quarter.

13 for the 2nd quarter.

Whilst the Council recognises that the response record for written correspondence has not been exemplary, the Council are currently implementing plans to improve customer service through an overarching, single and coherent approach to better customer care through the Customer Access Delivery Plan.

Supplementary Question No. 32**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Thank you, Madam Mayor. I thank Councillor Harper again for his answer and also recognition that the handling of letters by the Council has not been exemplary which is certainly the case. He does refer to the customer access plan which, on page 3, says how important it is to be able to choose to access the Council by e-mail, telephone, the internet or face-to-face and there is no mention of letters and indeed only one brief mention of it in the whole plan. It was something I did mention at the recent Scrutiny meeting, I wonder whether he would agree to revise the plan to ensure that it covers correspondence, which is still an important method of communication for many residents in the borough.

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Madam Mayor, I certainly accept that the lack of reference, if you will, to letters was an oversight. I have no reason to think that I or indeed any of the officers or anybody else wants to cut down specifically on letters, although we hope that over time we won't be getting quite so many complaints, but nevertheless I think we are hoping that it will be easier for residents to access the Council in all sorts of ways and we want to keep the choice as wide as possible.

Question No. 33**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Earlier this year the Council declared HUGE investment in Golders Green Road. Can the Cabinet Member provide me with a breakdown of the money spent and what impact this has had on the regeneration of one of our many town centres?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

The cost of the footway reconstruction works on Golders Green Road from the Finchley Road junction to Ravenscroft Avenue junction is £340,000 – I think that is a significant investment.

The works involve laying of 63mm thicker paving slabs. This is a specific enhanced specification that was used at North Finchley and allows for mechanical sweeping of the footway. Whilst the works are being carried out, a decluttering exercise is also taking place which includes re-locating sign plates on to lighting columns and removal of redundant posts, and removal of unnecessary guard rail. The works started in August 2006 and are due to be completed in January 2007.

Supplementary Question No. 33**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Thank you, Madam Mayor. It's figures, figures and more figures. What I wanted to know, and the question is quite clear, what economic benefits have there been in Golders Green Town Centre bearing in mind that many shops are still vacant. Is it really, as it was so called "declared", when Councillor Chris Harris I believe, and Councillor Melvin Cohen, "declared" that this would either be the new Bond Street, the new Kensington & Chelsea or the new Knightsbridge. Is this really happening in Golders Green?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Madam Mayor, I have to say I haven't undertaken an economic development survey of Golders Green, and I would also have to say, it's probably not one of my priorities for the next year. I think that Councillor McGuirk only needs to know one figure and that was the figure from the last Local Elections.

Question No. 34**Councillor Julie Johnson**

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that Barnet Council is no longer paying British Waterways to lease the car park of the former West Hendon sailing base as the sailing base closed three years ago? Can the Cabinet Member also tell me precisely when payments ceased?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The Council does not hold a lease specifically for the car park from British Waterways. The car park is part of much larger areas of land bordering the Welsh Harp which the Council has held on long lease from British Waterways for many years. It comprises not only land used for the former Sailing Base but also for local nature conservation and public recreation, and includes land at the rear of Woolmead Avenue and Dehar Crescent which some residents licence from the Council as extensions to their back gardens.

The car park site is identified in the West Hendon regeneration scheme as the location for the new sailing base building which the Council is securing from the developers, Metropolitan West Hendon, through a Section 106 Agreement.

The car park also falls within the boundaries of those parts of the West Hendon regeneration scheme which the Cabinet Resources Committee, at its meeting on 28 November, agreed to include in a compulsory purchase order if necessary.

Metropolitan West Hendon and Council officers have jointly been in discussions with British Waterways over a period of time with a view to securing a sufficient renewed leasehold interest in the car park site and other lands sufficient to facilitate the provision of the new sailing base building by the developers.

Question No. 35

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

A resident recently bought a parking ticket using a machine in a Barnet car park only to find that while the ticket showed the correct payment, it displayed a shorter time than that advertised on the information board by the ticket machine and on the machine itself. The resident essentially failed to get the parking period they had paid for. Can the Cabinet Member give details of how many times incidents such as this have been reported to the Council, how much money has been inappropriately charged to residents and whether there are any cases when residents in receipt of such tickets have received penalty charge notices for parking longer than their ticket stated but not longer than they had paid for?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

I have no reports of this type of incident happening and have no records of tickets being issued for the problem you describe. If a pay and display machine is found to be not working correctly, for whatever reason, there is a number on the machine for people to phone. I suggest this course of action for any future problems.

Supplementary Question No. 35

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Thank you. Rather than just say about referring to ringing up if there's problems, this does seem to suggest a wider policy issue, which is why it was raised as a question. Can you actually look into this rather than ignore the question?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

I can look into it.