

Council Questions to Cabinet Members
17 April 2007
Questions and Responses

Question No. 1**Councillor Marina Yannakoudakis**

Please could the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport outline how many prosecutions the Council enacted in 2006 over abandoned cars?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

The Council undertook 45 cases to a prosecution stage in 2006. All of these were successful and on average offenders were fined £200 and additionally ordered to pay £235 in costs.

Question No. 2**Councillor Wayne Casey**

With reference to my supplementary question (no. 10, 19th December 2006) and the Cabinet Member's answer, could he 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 sentence 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

The Clean Borough Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 15th January 2007, including the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment action plan, and will be implemented throughout 2007.

No on-the-spot fines or prosecutions have as yet been taken forward under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act. However, up-to-date enforcement action taken under existing powers covering April 2006 to February 2007 shows there has been:

- 17 fixed penalty notices issued;
- 8 prosecutions; and
- 138 warnings issued with regard to waste enforcement including fly-tipping and littering.

Question No. 3**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

What has the council done to commemorate the Bicentennial of the Abolition of Slavery?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Many Barnet residents took part in National events that commemorated the crucial role of local resident and Tory William Wilberforce in the abolition of slavery. Additionally the Libraries Department are mounting an exhibition and much work is being done in our Schools.

Question No. 4**Councillor Wendy Prentice**

Please could the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport tell this Council where he was on the evening of 30 January 2007?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

I was attending a planning consultation meeting organised by Enfield Council, to discuss a planning application for traffic works on the A406 North Circular. The meeting included members of the public, Transport for London representatives, Enfield councillors and officers and David Burrowes MP.

Question No. 5**Councillor Duncan Macdonald**

What is the cost to Barnet per annum of software licencing?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

£21,000

Question No. 6

Councillor Andrew McNeil

How much time is allocated on a weekly basis and what tasks are carried out by the park keeping service at Cherry Tree Woods?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

No weekly tasks are allocated to the Park Keepers at Cherry Tree Wood. The work which the Park Keeper undertook will and is being dealt with by the Grounds Maintenance cyclical teams and complemented where necessary by members of the Park Keepers team.

Question No. 7

Councillor Duncan Macdonald

Has Barnet looked at using open source software such as open office in order to cut the cost of software licencing?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The Council does track industry news on open source on an ongoing basis. Comparative cost / benefit assessments between open source and commercial market products show that continuing with the commercial market products gives the best business outcome.

Key barriers to using open source software include the cost of change and the level of business disruption that such a change would cause there are also considerable risks to using unsupported software.

The open source software market remains in its infancy in terms of usage and take-up levels. While this is the case, it would not be sensible for the council to consider a change. The dominant use of 'Office' by businesses means that there are many other risks in using open source software which include:

- software and file compatibility;
- ability to integrate with other council systems;
- levels of support available;
- product availability in the marketplace;
- users and technical staff are skilled to use Office software.

Question No. 8

Councillor Alison Moore

Will Councillor Freer tell Council why he did not publicly condemn Brian Gordon's "blacking-up" immediately when the issue was raised with him?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

I understand the difference between blacking up and dressing up and if the Councillors reflects and embarks on a mature investigation into the history of blacking up she will see there is a huge difference between Councillor Gordon's Purim celebrations and those of others such as the Black & White minstrels.

Question No. 9

Councillor Duncan Macdonald

Can the relevant cabinet member advise me of the progress on the scheme to redevelop East Barnet School on the Chestnut Grove site? Specifically when will a planning application be submitted?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

Currently the scheme to redevelop this school is at the detailed design phase. There will be a report to Cabinet Resources later this month. I believe that a planning application will be submitted next month. East Barnet School has been designated as 'Outstanding' by OFSTED. It will be even better when the new school is built.

Question No. 10

Councillor Alison Moore

Does Councillor Freer agree that "blacking-up" is no longer an acceptable practice?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Yes.

Question No. 11

Councillor Duncan Macdonald

What steps are being taken to ensure that the contractor tasked with locking park gates is doing their job?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

The locking contractor provides a daily record sheet showing the time at which the gates were locked and any problems encountered. This is e-mailed to the Council by 10 am the following day. A photographic record is also kept and provided on request in response to complaints.

Question No. 12

Councillor Colin Rogers

Is Stanley Road playing field in East Finchley closed to the public?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

This land has not been open for many years as it was leased to a local football club who have since ceased using the pitch. The land is fenced and gated and there is no public access.

Question No. 13

Councillor Duncan Macdonald

In November, Councillor Offord announced that the minimum front garden depth for off street parking would be scrapped. Can Councillor Offord please clarify how this decision was reached and whose idea it was?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

A change in the procedures adopted to provide a footway crossover under Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980 was initiated by myself through a delegated powers report. The 'idea', or rather the proposal, came from several residents' requests.

Question No. 14

Councillor Alison Moore

There is now some money identified within the 2007/8 budget for scrutiny. What will this money be spent on?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

There is £19710 in the budget for 2007/08. It is proposed to use the money in a variety of ways to assist Members:

- (i) Member development, including conferences relating to all aspects of the scrutiny function which Members may wish to attend;
- (ii) briefings etc. to assist Members in the scrutiny of the health agenda, which is gaining momentum;
- (iii) scrutiny activities that members may wish to carry out as part of their work, for example experts' fees; travel costs; special event costs; consultation exercises;
- (iv) staff development, as necessary in response to developments in the scrutiny function.

Question No. 15

Councillor Dean Cohen

Please could the Cabinet Member explain why there is no target for reducing graffiti in our Local Area Agreement?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

A graffiti target was submitted as part of our Local Area Agreement submission. Unfortunately the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) would not accept the target as graffiti is a subset of the entire BV199 environmental quality suite of indicators and cannot be considered in isolation. It was not possible to include other environmental targets to support the graffiti measure because our 2005/06 outturns, upon which baselines must be set, were exceptionally good and not suitable for establishing stretch targets from in accordance with Government Office for London guidance. For example BV199a, litter and detritus, could not be included as stretch targets would not be considered on outturns of less than 14% of land having unacceptable levels of litter and detritus. In 2005/06 we achieved 9% overall which represents top quartile performance. In short we appear to be victims of our own success.

Question No. 16

Councillor Jack Cohen

Please provide a schedule of all Section 106 planning gains relating to planning permissions in Childs Hill ward for years 2002/03, 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06 and 2006/07 to date, indicating for each agreement if the money has been paid over by the developer and if so has the money been spent and if so please provide details.

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

To date 17 planning decisions for commercial or residential development were approved for the years 2002/03 to 2006/07 in Childs Hill Ward with associated Section 106 legal agreements and planning contributions. Three of these agreements were Unilateral Undertakings from the developer. Of the S.106 contributions some are direct provision, including education, highways and open space improvements and affordable housing. For those payments in lieu £355,101 were received during the 5-year period.

This comprises the following:

Education:	£ 71,000
Highways Improvements:	£ 62,000
Open Space:	£110,600
Affordable Housing:	£100,000
Other/Monitoring	£ 11,500

The monies are paid at the point of commencement of development where there are 3 or 5 year trigger periods.

The spending of the above sums is planned as part of the specific service areas, for example Housing Services allocate the affordable housing contributions to the borough Housing Capital Programme, as do the Environment and Transport Service in terms of Highways improvements, etc. Details of the capital spend can be found in the capital programme for the specific service areas or in the Council's capital programme. Such expenditure on capital or related community infrastructure projects, have helped to enhance those parts of the borough with associated development.

Reference	Address	Decision	Issue Date	Amount Due	Purpose - agreement
C01593D/02	759-763 Finchley Road London NW118DL	APL	01-Aug-03		
C13638C/04	67 West Heath Road London NW3 7TH	Refused but allowed on appeal	10-Mar-04	-	Unilateral undertaking
C02437Q/99	11-17 Cricklewood Lane London NW2 1ET	APL	01-Apr-04	£11,521	Education
				-	And 15 to be leased to a Housing Association for five years
C00402Q/03	120 & 134 Cricklewood Lane London NW2 2DP	APL	02-Jun-04	-	Property to be limited to B1 use (business)
C04988K/02	10A B and C Wentworth Road London NW110RX	APL	20-Aug-04	£1,000	Promote a car free scheme
C03097G/04	66 - 70 Granville Road London NW2 2LA	Refused but allowed on appeal	11-Oct-04	-	Unilateral undertaking
C02856P/04	779-783 Finchley Road London NW118DN	APL	07-Apr-05	£10,000	Improvements to the junction of The Ridgeway/Hodford Rd/The Vale/Rodborough Rd.
				£85,000	Open space
C04988N/05	21 Ravenscroft Avenue and 12 Wentworth Road London NW11 0SA	APL	15-Jul-05	£19,718	Education facilities (including any feasibility studies) and libraries.
				£21,600	Open space
C13874D/04	50 The Ridgeway London NW118QN	APL	04-Oct-05	-	Undertakings
C13638M/05	67 West Heath Road London NW3 7TH	APL	27-Oct-05	£17,962	Education
C01209AH/05	Tudor Court, R/O Llanvanor Road London NW2 2AN	APL	08-Dec-05	£10,000	Education
C16435B/05	4 Westover Hill London NW3 7UH	APL	14-Feb-06	£9,000	Education
C00975K/06	The Central Hotel, 35 Hoop Lane & 1 Wentworth Road London NW118BS	APC	02-Jun-06	£5,000	A contribution of £5,000 index linked towards monitoring the site travel plan;
C06928S/06	93-95 Golders Green Road London NW118EN	APL	26-Jul-06	£4,000	£4,000 towards improvement & enhancement of recreational public amenity open space located within the Borough.
				£1,000	Traffic orders

Reference	Address	Decision	Issue Date	Amount Due	Purpose - agreement
C10363B/06	St Michael's Court, The Riding London NW118HN	APL	25-Oct-06	£100,000	Affordable housing
C16231B/06	86-88 Hendon Way London NW2 2NG	APL	10-Jan-07	£2,800	Education
C00782J/06	214 - 218 Cricklewood Broadway London NW2 3DR	APL	06-Mar-07	£40,000	Highways
				£10,000	Town centre master planning
				£5,000	Travel plan
				£1,500	Monitoring of planning progress
Total =				£355,101	

By Area of Expenditure		
	Education	£71,001
	Affordable Housing	£100,000
	Highways	£62,000
	Open Space	£110,600
	Other	£11,500

Question No. 17

Councillor Gill Sargeant

Can the cabinet member provide an update on what work is being done to assess the use of and access to community buildings in the immediate proximity of Grahame Park to ensure optimum use for Grahame Park, Beaufort Park and the new development at Colindale Hospital?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn

Community facilities and buildings have been negotiated as part of the regeneration of the Grahame Park Estate and the planning permission for Beaufort Park. These include Section 106 agreements covering a library replacement, health facilities, community facilities and commercial service uses such as new shops and leisure uses. There is also access to the adjoining RAF Hendon Museum. As these developments move forward the community facilities and access will come on stream. At the present time of early phases there is a limited access whilst buildings are under construction.

In addition an Area Action Plan (AAP) is being commissioned for the Colindale area. This will identify the current and future needs within the wider Colindale area to inform the proper planning consideration of development sites as they arise within Colindale. Consultation will be undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders that will include community groups as this AAP develops. Within the Grahame Park development specifically, a number of local community groups currently use the existing Community Centre. Consultation was undertaken with existing community groups at the time the outline planning application was prepared, and the developers, Choices for Grahame Park, have agreed that further consultation will be carried out when the new replacement community facilities are planned.

Question No. 18

Councillor Ricahrd Weider

How did the Council fare in delivering on Gershon savings?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

We performed very well achieving target early and using cashable savings only. Barnet's annual efficiency target is £17.87m by the end of 2007/08. By the end of 2006/7 Barnet is forecasting annual cashable efficiencies of £18.6m which is £0.7m more than the final target, and with a year to spare. The 2007/8 Budget includes further efficiencies of £8.8m.

Question No. 19**Councillor Jack Cohen**

When do you expect the Report of The Inquiry in to the sale of land at Underhill, to be published?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The Council had been advised that provisional findings would be made available on 19 March 2007. However, at the last moment PwC were reminded of a commitment they had given to any parties that may be adversely affected that they could first see any relevant extracts. Having been reminded of this commitment PwC are now unable to give a new timescale for publishing their report, but it is not thought likely that the report could be published before the summer.

Question No. 20**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Can the Leader say why he thinks it's important to consult residents widely on the medium term financial strategy but not the annual budget?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The process of budget consultation has been criticised by the opposition in recent years on the basis that it's not feasible to make major changes so close to the start of the financial year, which is largely down to the government funding settlement timetable. It's more important to take account of long term council tax levels and service decisions, hence the decision to consult on long term budget strategies.

Question No. 21**Councillor Richard Weider**

Why can't the Council achieve a cut in council tax like Hammersmith and Fulham?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

At 31 March 2006, Hammersmith + Fulham had a balances and reserves of approximately £40million. They also receive 150% more per head of population in Government support than Barnet. Most importantly the new Conservative Administration have been able to reverse the years of waste and profligacy inherited from the previous Labour Administration,

Question No. 22**Councillor Jack Cohen**

What plans are there for the future use of the Town Hall and what plans are there for refurbishment of the Town Hall?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Initial plans on the refurbishment of the civic space are being finalised and will be shared with the Political Group Leaders in the next few weeks.

Question No. 23**Councillor Colin Rogers**

Twice in the past four months, East Finchley ward Councillors have not been notified about public house licensing applications. Can the cabinet member say what the council's policy is on notifying ward Councillors of licensing applications, and why this isn't always happening?

Answer by Councillor Brain Coleman

Licensing Officers email ward members about applications in their wards, plus a weekly list goes to all members and applications are published on the web. In this instance one was missed and we apologise.

Question No. 24**Councillor Richard Weider**

Please could the Cabinet Member for Community Safety tell me how many ASBOs have been served on people resident in the Wards within the Hendon Parliamentary Constituency?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

12 of which 10 are still "live".

Question No. 25

Councillor Jack Cohen

What plans have you to relocate Council Services from North London Business when the lease expires?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The Hendon Town Hall complex remains the Civic heart of the Borough and could well be redeveloped in conjunction with the University to create modern office accommodation for the Council. As we continue to become a smaller, more efficient Council with a smaller workforce it is important that the accommodation provides maximum flexibility both operationally and financially.

Question No. 26

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

The Leader uses the Retail Prices Index (currently at 4.6%) to measure inflation for the purposes of setting council tax, but only awarded a 2% increase to the voluntary sector this year. Can he explain why?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The 2% increase reflects the cash increase this Council received from this Government and that is the basis for contractual increases to organisations working with the Council.

RPI is the threshold below which this Administration is striving to ensure Council Taxes remain below.

Question No. 27

Councillor Anne Hutton

More than six years ago a group was set up to devise a play strategy for Barnet. The last Tory administration got rid of this group when it abolished the Early Years & Childcare Partnership. For some time the government has been waiting for Barnet to have a play strategy in order to give it £695,000. We now hear the play strategy will not be ready until September, thus depriving disabled children of facilities and summer provision this year. In addition grants for the voluntary sector to provide play opportunities have been refused because Barnet does not have a play strategy. Why has this happened?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

The development of a play strategy is well underway. We have consulted the Children and Young People Strategic partnership Board (CYSPB) to establish local principles and priorities. We are taking the time to ensure that our strategy responds to the particular needs of children in Barnet. Along with 22 other London boroughs and, on the advice of the CYPSPB, we will submit the Barnet play strategy in September. . It is untrue to suggest that activities for disabled children will not be available this summer. Year round activities continue to be provided very effectively by IPOP. The Council is not aware of any grants being refused because the play strategy is not yet complete.

Question No. 28

Councillor Hugh Rayner

Please could the Cabinet Member for Environment inform this Council when he, the Leader and the London Assembly Member visited Burnt Oak to look at street cleansing issues, as mentioned in both the Budget debate and at the Full Council in January?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Myself, the Leader and Councillor Coleman undertook the visit on the 26 February, to various areas around Burnt Oak Town Centre. This resulted in a wide-range of site clearance and cleaning works being implemented to various land holdings of the Council and other statutory bodies.

The main headline improvements are:-

The Millennium Walk – Extensive bramble, weed growth and litter has been cut back and removed to ease pedestrian access and to make the site safer for residents as a general walk way. Badly damaged and graffiti covered site furniture is also planned for removal. The street lights have been painted, but are unfortunately being subject to graffiti following repeat painting work.

Barnfield Rd Car Park – Extensive cutting back of bramble and other weed growth to the boundary of the car park, removal or large accumulations of fly-tipping and detritus from the car park in conjunction with the removal of fallen trees.

Watling Avenue – General heavy cleansing of litter, removal of large quantities of beer / lager cans and general fly-tipping.

Market Lane / Back Lane – Removal of accumulations of fly-tipped materials, heavy cleaning of all hard surfaces road ways etc.

The identification of other land holders and their responsibilities has taken time but has however been successful and third parties have acted quickly once informed of the need for action. Works have been implemented by other statutory undertakers on their land e.g. Rail Track and by TFL, EDF Energy, Powerline and by other council service areas e.g. Property Services, and Barnet Homes.

Some of the clearance works are ongoing, e.g. the removal of tyres from an area over the stream / supporting Watling Road, is being dealt with by specialist environmental contractors as the works are hazardous to health without specialist equipment and staff protection.

Trade waste officers have also inspected 86 businesses within the locality for Trade Waste Agreements, to ensure legal compliance and proper waste disposal. Officers will continue to ensure that the 15 businesses that could not provide evidence of an agreement become Trade Waste compliant or are prosecuted as appropriate.

Works are still ongoing – The area is being subject to repeat fly-tipping/graffiti and heavy littering. Officers and cleansing staff are visiting regularly to deal with the various environmental issues and if 'enviro-crime' matters are witnessed and/or can be proven, investigation / prosecutions will follow where appropriate.

Question No. 29

Councillor Barry Rawlings

What is the proposed start and completion date for the re-building of South Friern Library?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

Building work is due to start next month. There will be a 'first brick ceremony' to which the Councillor and his TWO Conservative Ward colleagues will be invited. The building work should take 12 months.

Question No. 30**Councillor Dean Cohen**

Please could the Cabinet Member comment on the effectiveness of youth work in the Borough, particularly that of the Rolling Base?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

The Rolling Base bus has been extremely successful since its launch in December 2006 with more than 800 young people using its facilities. It has provided youth activities in areas including Stonegrove, Claremont, Dollis Valley, Broadfields, The Hyde, East Finchley and Oak Leigh Park. It has provided after school activities at seven secondary schools and has worked with partners across the borough including Barnet Action 4 Youth, Iftin, IPOP, Artsdepot, Barnet Homes and Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

The project was recently "Highly Commended" in a national competition for Youth Opportunity Fund projects.

Question No. 31**Councillor Jim Tierney**

What is the council doing to promote the Mayor of London's Greener Homes Programme that subsidises loft and cavity wall insulation?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Barnet is involved in an initiative to promote energy efficiency and thermal comfort measures through work with the North London Housing Sub-Region. At CRC on 21 March it was agreed that on behalf of the sub-region members Barnet would procure a contract for work to identify vulnerable private sector households, promote the uptake of grants, and install appropriate measures.

Grants of up to £700 are payable for energy efficiency works (draught proofing, loft and cavity wall insulation etc). Grants of up to £1,875 are payable for thermal comfort works (central heating, efficient boilers and heating controls). £3.4m has been allocated across the sub-region for this work. In total, the sub-region expects to be able to bring a maximum of 5,785 properties up to the decent homes standard. It would appear that a bulk of those eligible will be in the outer sub-region Boroughs of Barnet, Enfield and Haringey rather than the inner sub-region boroughs of Westminster, Islington and Camden.

There are clearly a range of initiatives coming on stream that will provide assistance and financial incentives for householders to install energy efficiency and thermal comfort measures. It will be important to take stock of all schemes to make sure we promote the most advantageous package in any individual circumstance

Of course we are delighted that the Mayor of London is following Barnet's lead and introducing the insulation incentive in conjunction with British Gas.

Question No. 32**Councillor Robert Rams**

Please could the Cabinet Member for Resources comment on Barnet's Council Tax rise this year versus the latest national picture?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Barnet has for the third year in a row delivered a sub-RPI Council Tax increase at 3.5%, of course had it not been for the £2.2million of expenditure forced on us by NHS cost shunting our increase would have been lower still.

Our increase is well below the national average of 4.6%. Sadly the mayor of London has yet again introduced an inflation busting increase of 5.3% (and yet again well above the capping level and yet he remains uncapped).

Barnet is one of only 7 London Borough to have achieved a sub-RPI increase for three years in a row

Question No. 33

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Road repairs are being delayed in order to offset a further drop in income from the parking account during Christmas. Given that Christmas comes every year, and the fall in income could have been predicted, why wasn't the budget corrected to reflect this?

Answer by Matthew Offord

As part of the parking income budget monitoring, an allowance was made in the December expectation specifically to reflect lower levels of enforcement due to public holidays – as Christmas does not fall on the same day of the week each year.

This, as well as the introduction of the Customer-focused parking policy – opposed by both the Liberal and Labour Groups – produced a reduction in the SPA. Regardless of this, our investment in the maintenance of carriageways and footways will be £6.9M in 2007/8, which compares favourably with the £5.5M in 2006/7.

Question No. 34

Councillor Joanna Tambourides

Would the Cabinet Member for Children join me in congratulating East Barnet School in being judged Outstanding in the latest OFSTED Report?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Yes, the report was a real tribute to the pupils, headteacher and staff of East Barnet School. The school sets the highest standards for itself and its pupils and OFSTED confirmed that East Barnet consistently meets those high standards. It is extremely encouraging to see so many Barnet schools delivering a truly outstanding education for local children.

Question No. 35

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

How many staff redundancies have there been since 2002, and how much money have these redundancies cost the Council?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

2003/04 £1.314m
2004/05 £1.636m
2005/06 £0.878m
2006/07 £1.650m
Total £5.478m

2003/04 110
2004/05 155
2005/06 74
2006/07 164
Total 503

Which on a net spend on approx. £billion over the same period equates to 0.27% of expenditure

Question No. 36**Councillor Julie Johnson**

What is the council's official response time for the removal of reported fly-tipping?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

The official P.I. target is to collect fly-tips within 24 hours of being reported.

Question No. 37**Councillor Alison Moore**

At the January council meeting, the Leader explicitly said he was not scrapping any Area Forums. Can he now say why he has cut them by half?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

I was asked if I had plans to scrap Area Forums and they haven't been scrapped.

Neither has there been a 50% reduction. In 2006/07 there were 30 meetings in this coming year there will be 27.

Question No. 38**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Can the cabinet member tell us exactly which roads have been moved on to the reserve scheme as a result of errors in the parking account?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

No roads have been moved on to the reserve list. The highways maintenance reports that were submitted to the Area Environment Sub-Committees took a different form to previous years. This time Members were asked to agree a full year programme of works which included a reserve list of measures that have not been immediately placed into the main programme. Rather than report quarterly on the changes to the programme and provide substitutions, the current arrangements allow for Members to see the list of schemes that could be substituted due to delays in the main programme and / or savings made when carrying out individual schemes.

The inclusion of the reserve list is to improve transparency and does not relate to any reduced investment levels.

Question No. 39**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Can the cabinet member say how the cuts from libraries since 2002 have improved the library service?

Answer by Councillor John Marshall

I should like to thank Councillor Hutton for offering me the opportunity to point out the many improvements which have already taken place. I need scarcely remind her of this administration's huge investment in the refurbishment and modernisation of Hendon Library. However I should like to make several other points. The number of children attending learning related activities in libraries grew from 14816 in 2002-03 to 29,082 in 2005-06- an increase of 96%. Although the 2006-07 figure is not yet available, I am confident that it will show a further increase enabling me to boast that we have DOUBLED the number of children attending such activities. Thank you Councillor Hutton for letting me publicise this achievement. Our customer satisfaction rating is encouraging. The November 2006 customer satisfaction survey was encouraging. 87.8% described the service as Very Good /Good – higher than in 2003. More importantly over 80% found a book to borrow – compared with 66% in 2003. I have in recent months visited libraries in several other authorities such as Essex, Westminster, Tower Hamlets and Barking & Dagenham. The fruits of these visits will be included in the Strategy Paper which will shortly be presented to Cabinet. I am sure Councillor Hutton has noticed the £1 million capital investment in Libraries, which will also be reiterated in that Paper. Members will also like to know that we have made a bid to the Big Lottery Fund.

Question No. 40**Councillor Gill Sargeant**

Would the cabinet member outline the timetable for the rebuilding of the bridges on Aerodrome Road, and whether road works at the roundabout will be included in the closure of Aerodrome Road?

Answer by Matthew Offord

Tenders were received from four of the six contractors who were invited to tender. The tender evaluation process has just been completed and a Delegated Powers Report (DPR) has been signed to provide the necessary approval for the contract to be awarded to the successful contractor.

The contract is expected to be awarded during the second half of April 2007 but the works on site are not expected to start until August 2007. The early contract award would allow the contractor to place orders and fabricate the steelwork for the bridge decks. The necessary rail possessions to erect the bridges have been booked for late December 2007 and early January 2008. The bridgeworks are due to be completed in June 2008 and the Highway works in December 2008.

The extent of the highway works on Aerodrome Road are confined between Rowan Drive and the junction with the A41 Watford Way. The latter will need to be reconfigured to accommodate the third Aerodrome Road lane and the Council has started the process by liaising with TfL. However, at this stage there is no timescale for the necessary construction works. The highway works are not expected to affect the Graham Park roundabout.