

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members  
6 November 2007  
Questions and Responses**

**Question No. 1**

**Councillor Duncan Macdonald**

Has the Council considered placing recycling bins outside the Boroughs rail and tube stations to enable passengers to recycle the large number of free newspapers that are regularly left on the tube?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

Yes – it is one of the items that are being considered for inclusion in the new Recycling Services Contract, which will commence in October 2008.

**Question No. 2**

**Councillor Richard Weider**

Please could the Cabinet Member advise what is being done to ensure McDonalds and other traders assist with the removal of litter generated by their premises in Stonegrove, Edgware?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

Stonegrove, classed as a 'hot-spot', is litter picked each week including weekends. Both Enforcement Officers and the Street Cleansing manager have spoken to managers of McDonalds and Tesco Express to maintain their forecourts litter free. Subsequent inspections have noticed a marked improvement.

**Question No. 3**

**Councillor Alison Moore**

The cost of postage, printing and room hire for the Burnt Oak Leader Listens event was about £1,140. 2230 people were invited but only 9 people showed up, making the cost per attendee £126.66. Does the Leader really believe that this represents good value for money?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council**

Yes.

**Question No. 4**

**Councillor Duncan Macdonald**

Has the Council looked at using environmentally friendly road salt during the winter? I believe that a trial was undertaken in Wales but ran into problems with sheep eating it. Presumably not such a problem in Barnet.

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

We are aware of the trial and at an appropriate time will investigate the potential for its use in Barnet. Existing contractual arrangements are in place where salt is provided through a Consortium of London Boroughs. This arrangement does not expire until 2009. The alternative product is only available in limited quantities and there will be a cost premium, however at the appropriate time an options appraisal will be conducted.

**Question No. 5**

**Councillor Hugh Rayner**

Please could the Cabinet Member confirm how many town keepers we now have in situ?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

Of the 20 town centres in Barnet, there are 19 town keepers in 'situ' and one being trained at present to be in post in Colindale Avenue mid November.

**Question No. 6****Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Why is the Council giving back £570,000 in Sure Start / Children's Centres grant while at the same time moaning it does not receive enough money?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

For 2006-2008, the Council was allocated an indicative sum of £6.4m sure start funding for capital projects to develop the Surestart Children's Centre programme in Barnet. This allocation is a maximum limit within which we must contain our programme and money is drawn down to the Council as we get each scheme agreed and approved by DCSF and incur the building costs. The schemes listed in Appendix H of the Monitoring Report represent the schemes approved to date and the capital spend forecast for the year, which totals some £5.8m. This currently leaves £570,000 of the allocation not earmarked to specific schemes. We are striving to make use of all of this allocation but it is ringfenced for specific use on Children's Centre developments. Since this monitoring report was collated, there has been a request for an additional £200,000 to be allocated to fund further works on the programme. This reduces the residual amount to £370,000.

It is disappointing that the member seems unaware that ring-fenced grants can not be used at will.

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

How has the Borough benefited from the voluntary services provided by Church Way Neighbourhood Watch to remove graffiti free of charge from both Council and private property? What sort of support has the Council given this organisation for its efforts and are there any other organisations in the Borough carrying out such voluntary work?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

Church Way Neighbourhood Watch are one of a number of organisations supporting the drive for a Cleaner, Greener, Safer Barnet. Their contribution has included engaging its members in the cleaning or repainting of surfaces defaced by graffiti in their immediate area. We have supported them in this work by providing free graffiti removal kits and, where available, recycled paint.

In the last four years, the Council has supplied approximately 400 graffiti removal kits free of charge to such groups or individuals.

**Question No. 8****Councillor Julie Johnson**

Will the Lead Member update me on the latest decisions regarding the phasing of the West Hendon Estate regeneration, including the current arrangements as to when and where residents in each road will be decanted?

**Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn**

No decisions have yet been taken regarding the phasing. Barratt Metropolitan has advised the Council that it considers the original phasing to be no longer viable. A new phasing proposal has been put to the Council, which would mean the original decanting promises would need to be changed for many of the residents. Barratt Metropolitan has been asked to undertake a major consultation exercise with all residents. When this has been completed, the Council will be in a position to consider what can be agreed.

**Question No. 9****Councillor John Hart**

Would the Leader please comment on any progress being made in negotiations to resolve the impasse between the Trustees of Avenue House and Finchley Arts Centre Trust over the Bothy?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council**

Council Officers and external specialists have finalised their inspection and compiled a draft report. The Financial evaluation of the business plan underpinning The Bothy project has been held up by a delay in obtaining some financial information. This has now been received and the provisional findings will be presented to the Trustees of FACT shortly.

**Question No. 10**

**Councillor Ross Houston**

Following on from his comment that the Safer Transport Teams were little better than “a sticking plaster” will the Cabinet Member finally recognise the work of these teams in reducing crime by up to 64% in the last 12 weeks, and admit that more transport police are a good thing?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

There are lies, damned lies and TfL statistics. If there were not gangs of youths roaming wild on some of our bus routes due to the unlimited free travel to all under 16s whatever time of the day or night there would not be the crime in the first place.

**Question No. 11**

**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Are we satisfied that the new Resident Forum structure, running on a constituency basis is proving more effective than the previous Area Forum arrangement where smaller areas were covered?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council**

Yes.

**Question No. 12**

**Councillor Alison Moore**

Crossrail will open up access to 200,000 jobs in central and east London, and bring much needed additional transport infrastructure for all users of London Transport, including those many residents traveling to jobs in the centre of London from Barnet. Will the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Crime and Community reconsider their opposition to this vital scheme for the future of the London economy and join the City of London, Canary Wharf and London First in supporting Crossrail?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council**

Councillor Moore is mistaken. I have never opposed Crossrail and indeed have publicly welcomed it. What I have condemned is the shoddy financial deal done with the City of London Corporation and the Government which will, yet again, leave Barnet Tax payers with a huge bill and no prospect for Government funding for transport infrastructure in the North London / Northampton growth corridor.

**Question No. 13**

**Councillor John Hart**

In view of the destruction of much of the hedge fronting the Annington Homes development on Frith Lane, part of the Mill Hill East Redevelopment, would the Cabinet Member for Planning and Development reconsider the need to protect hedges, especially those enclosing the Barracks site?

**Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen**

The removal of the hedge on Frith Lane was required as part of section 278 works to widen the road to enable a right hand turn lane to be provided to provide safe access to the site. The hedge was not protected but following negotiations with Countryside / Annington and the Council's Highway Group the minimum length of hedge necessary to facilitate the works was removed. Furthermore, the landscaping scheme for the site proposes replacement planting of hedgerow along this strip upon completion of the building works.

The emerging Area Action Plan for the site advocates the need to retain the green boundary treatment along Frith Lane and Partingdale Lane. As the Area Action Plan will provide the framework for the consideration of any future planning applications for the site. The need to retain this landscaping will be a material planning consideration.

**Question No. 14**

**Councillor Anne Hutton**

South Friern Library closed on 16 December 2006. In bidding, the contractor gave a construction time of 18 months and anticipated the Library opening in June 2008. However, a sign up at the library now publicises the opening to be Spring 2009. Can the Cabinet Member advise the reason for the delay and how much money the administration has saved in revenue costs by the delay?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

I am pleased to tell the Councillor that I will be laying the Foundation Stone of the new Library on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> November. The local Councillors will be invited to this Ceremony. Although is later than we would have wanted the timescale was determined by our partners Acorn Homes who are building the Library as part of their acquisition of the site. Local residents will be happy to enjoy a new state of the art library which will serve them for many generations.

**Question No. 15**

**Councillor Daniel Webb**

Please could the Cabinet Member for Investment in Learning give a timescale for the rebuilding of Whittings Hill School in my ward?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

I should like to thank Councillor Webb for his continued interest in this important project which is leading the PSCIP programme forward. Potential contractors have produced innovative designs. We hope to obtain planning consent next June/July. That will enable a start to be made almost immediately with the objective of opening the new school in September 2009.

**Question No. 16**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Given that the changes in PSCIP phasing are based on financial considerations rather than educational need, can the Cabinet Member say how many staff and pupils will continue to suffer sub-standard accommodation in schools dropped from the programme as a result of this decision?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

The Councillor would have served the Borough better if his remarks had been addressed to Ed Balls' team who have continued to short change Barnet and his group leader who failed to tackle this issue when she had the ability to do so. The question I had hoped he would ask is: 'how many pupils and staff will soon be benefiting from the Council's innovative and ambitious programme of primary school modernisation'. Councillor Rawlings should also stop scare mongering. The very ambitious time scale has been changed. The schools will still be modernised. We are determined to reverse the awful legacy left us by Councillor Rawlings and his colleagues.

**Question No. 17**

**Councillor Wendy Prentice**

Please could the Cabinet Member give an outline and timescale of the work to upgrade Chipping Barnet Library in my ward?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

I should like to thank the Councillor for her continued interest and that of Councillor Perry in the library. The modernisation of the Library was the subject of a public exhibition in the Library and in the Spires Shopping Centre. Work will start in late January and will last some 2 months.

The mobile library service will be available during this time. I have instructed that work will start only after work has finished at Edgware as we do not want two libraries closed at the same time. The new library will be capable of using RFID. Changes to the Hyde Room being planned by the Resources Service will enable Committee meeting to take place there bringing the Council to the people. Libraries elsewhere also serve the Registrar's service. I hope that Chipping Barnet will do so as well.

**Question No. 18**

**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

Will the Leader welcome the free dial-a-ride concession for disabled and elderly residents recently announced by the Mayor of London, and say what the Council will do to promote this benefit to ensure that disabled and elderly residents with mobility problems in Barnet have equal access to transport?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council**

Yes. Our staff working with the relevant care group will be made aware of the initiative.

**Question No. 19**

**Councillor Joan Scannell**

Please could the Cabinet Member outline the work being done and the timetable thereof to upgrade Edgware Library in my ward?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

I should like to thank the Councillor for her continued interest in the Library. I know that she and Councillor Helena Hart have been campaigning for improvements for some time as has Councillor Weider since his election last year. The work will start in January. The entrance will be refurbished. A new unisex disabled access toilet will be introduced. New carpeting will be provided. RFID will be introduced. I would hope that the saving this will generate might enable the Council to look again at opening hours at this Library.

**Question No. 20**

**Councillor Claire Farrier**

Local Safer Neighbourhood Teams are keen to assist the Council in dealing with enviro-crime and anti-social behaviour by issuing Fixed Penalty Notices. At the last Council meeting, the Cabinet Member for Crime said he would not consider putting in place a formal agreement between the Council and the Metropolitan Police in Barnet to allow PCSO's to issue Fixed Penalty Notice – will he now re-consider his answer and broker this agreement?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

No, unlike the Labour Party I refuse to persecute the citizenry of this Borough.

**Question No. 21**

**Councillor Brian Salinger**

The London Local Authorities Act 2007 received royal assent in July. Which of the new powers in the Act does the Council plan to implement?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council**

The London Local Authorities Act 2007 came into force (in the main) on 19 September 2007. The provisions under the Act are therefore in force, in the main, for the Council to enforce against.

Barnet are working with London Councils who are leading on this matter to enable full implementation. Matters include:

- To develop and approve a Code of Practice on dealing with unauthorised advertising.
- To develop and approve a Code of Practice on the due diligence provisions relating to notices requiring the removal of waste.

- To define the level of bonds required in connection with nuisance and abandoned vehicle.
- To development and approve a scheme of penalty charges and provision for appeals.

Until these actions have been completed sections 11, 12 (railway undertakers, provisions for the purpose of section 11), and 19 (placing of receptacles for household waste) to 25, will have no effect and the powers available under sections 26 (civic, amenity sites) and 28 (designation procedure for enforcement action zones) will be limited. We await the relevant codes of practice from London Councils.

In addition the planning service will use their new powers against illegal advertisements to prosecute repeat offenders.

**Question No. 22**

**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

Can the Leader tell me if Single Status has been implemented fully with regard to bonuses and allowances for men and women carrying out the same work?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council**

The 1997 single status agreement was introduced to harmonise the conditions of service for manual and non manual workers, and reduce the pay gaps between men and women doing primarily similar skilled roles. As a result of single table bargaining an integrated pay spine backed by a new job evaluation scheme (the GLPC scheme) was introduced in 1999. The agreement also included:

- The reduction of the working week to 36 hour week by April 2004.
- A single pay spine for all manual and non manual employees.
- Local determination on a grading structure, allocation of jobs to grade, whether to use incremental scales, the consolidation of the London allowance into a single pay spine and extending the NJC pay spine from a maximum of SCP 49 to SCP 70.
- Barnet has implemented the requirements of Single Status Agreement as reported at General Functions Committee on 25 September. Bonuses and allowances did not form part of the implementation of single status and are related to the subsequent Green Book on National Terms and conditions where Councils were required to locally agree bonuses and allowances and the requirement to undertake pay and grading review which has been completed.

**Question No. 23**

**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Please let us have the latest information on the excellent plans intended for the improvement of facilities at Burnt Oak library.

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

A project manager has been appointed. Our plans are in place for the creation of a co-located Leading Library and Customer Service Centre. This will benefit many local residents. We will of course keep the disruption to a minimum but hope that the new facility will be open by next summer. I am sure that Councillor Gordon will welcome the chance to meet constituents there.

**Question No. 24**

**Councillor Zakia Zubairi**

The Graham Park Youth Centre behind Barnet College has no signage to speak of in the local area, and local young people do not widely know of its existence. Given the administration's stated desire to promote youth activities and better health, will the Cabinet Member agree to install proper signage so people know that it is there and are able to find it more easily?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

The Youth Service has identified the need to improve signage at Grahame Park Youth Centre. The service is consulting the young people who serve on Barnet Youth Bank on developing new signs for the centre.

**Question No. 25**

**Councillor Dean Cohen**

What support does the Children's Service provide for children under five with autistic spectrum conditions?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

Barnet has an excellent record of support for children with autistic spectrum conditions. That support has just been extended with the launch of a pioneering new service, BEAM (Barnet Early Autism Model), launch that provides specialist, intensive support to pre school children. Another scheme, known as Tracker, provides regular input from a pre-school teacher, speech and language therapist and occupational therapist in the family home. Both services are extremely popular with parents and underline the Council's commitment to providing high quality, individual support to disabled children in Barnet.

**Question No. 26**

**Councillor Andrew McNeil**

East Finchley Library's National Lottery bid has not been successful. Will the Cabinet Member confirm that funding for refurbishment and improvements to East Finchley Library will be met by the Council?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

I should like to thank all of those who worked so hard on this bid. It is unfortunate the Big Lottery Fund was not quite big enough. I cannot guarantee that the Council will have large enough capital programme to do what the Big Lottery Fund was unwilling to fund. I would suggest that Councillor McNeil lobbies his Ministerial friends so that the government gives Barnet a realistic settlement.

**Question No. 27**

**Councillor Robert Rams**

Please could the Leader set out the progress LBB has made in reducing back office costs?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council**

Barnet has a strong track record of delivering good services in an efficient manner. In our Direction of Travel Statement the Audit Commission formally recognised that Barnet's Value for money has improved, with savings, efficiencies and clear links between investment in priorities and results.

The 'use of resources' judgment from the Audit Commission, assesses how well local authorities manage their finances and provide value for money. The Council received a 'three' (performing well) which was an improvement on our previous standing.

The Corporate Plan is key in the delivery of the organisational strategy, driving service delivery towards the vision for the future shape of the London Borough of Barnet as one of:

"A smaller entity with a smaller, but more efficient, corporate support function and a greater concentration of resources on outcomes."

The Medium Term Financial Strategy has embedded delivering efficiencies and value for money in our financial, performance and service planning.

Success will result in spend on support services in 2010 being no greater than spend on support services in 2007. In addition to restricting spend levels, customer satisfaction with service delivery will rise significantly from 2007 to 2010.

Investment in core systems has allowed services to think innovatively about streamlining service based back office support functions. Budgeted savings of approximately £5m are recorded for 2006/07 and 2007/08. Total savings projections through investment in core systems amount to £18.5m (cumulative) by 2012/13.

The Audit Commission value for money profiles present Barnet as the London Borough with the lowest cost per head for central services at £39.15. The next lowest cost for a London Council is £53.63 and the highest cost for a London Council is more than £300 per head.

<b>Number of Authorities</b>	<b>Central Services Costs £</b>
1	>300
4	151 – 300
5	101 – 150
21	50 – 100
<b>Barnet London Borough Council</b>	<b>39.15</b>

We are happy that the work being undertaken to reduce back office costs has not resulted in reduced service quality. The corporate assessment of how the Council is run, which considers what the Council, together with its partners, is trying to achieve resulted in a 'three' (performing well).

**Question No. 28**

**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

Will the Cabinet Member tell me why the playground on the Hyde Estate has been closed, why local Councillors and residents were not consulted on the closure, and when it will be re-opening?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

Based on the information provided we believe this is in Brent.

**Question No. 29**

**Councillor Kate Salinger**

Please could the Cabinet Member outline Barnet's schools' performance in the OFSTED inspections carried out over the past year?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

30 % of Barnet schools were judged outstanding in the past academic year compared with 14% nationally. 55% of schools were judged good compared with 47% nationally and 11% judged satisfactory compared with 33% nationally. Two schools (5%) were judged inadequate.

**Question No. 30**

**Councillor Linda McFadyen**

Will the Cabinet Member tell me how the new Supporting People contracts are going to be monitored to ensure that there is equality of service?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

As is the case with all services and contracts, we have a comprehensive and robust Performance Monitoring system in place for all existing and future contracts. The key areas are Access to Services, Quality of Services and Outcome of Services. Performance is measured against national standards and is reported back through the Supporting People Commissioning Board.

**Question No. 31**

**Councillor Dan Thomas**



Please could the Leader outline progress on the Barnet Financing Plan?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council**

Following the successful launch of the Barnet Financing Plan (“Barnet Bond”) proposal in September, we are now working on the next stage of the proposal this will involve a detailed feasibility study of one of the infrastructure schemes in order to show how it can be delivered; how financed; and what the governance arrangements will be.

In order to prepare for this next stage of work, which I have asked senior officers to have a series of paving meetings with key government officials in particular the treasury, CLG and I myself will be meeting with John Healy the minister. We are also having a series of meetings with the GLA family partners to make sure they continue to be supportive of the Barnet Bond proposals.

**Question No. 32**

**Councillor Julie Johnson**

Will the Cabinet Member tell me what plans there are for the installation of CCTV in West Hendon, and whether any impact assessments have been carried out at crime hotspots in the ward?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

There are currently 6 CCTV cameras in the West Hendon Ward – 5 on the A5 between Goldsmith Avenue and Cool Oak Lane and one on Station Road at the junction with A41 Watford Way.

Since April this year, cameras along the A5 in West Hendon Ward have been used in 23 incidents resulting in 10 arrests. Thanks to the actions of this Administration crime continues to fall in West Hendon Ward.

**Question No. 33**

**Councillor Geof Cooke**

The Council’s highways and transport department has received 6,948 complaints since 2004. Will the Cabinet Member give me a breakdown of what these complaints were by issue, and how many were resolved at the first stage without being escalated?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

**Environment & Transport Complaints 2004-2007**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Street Cleansing</b>	723	2	0	<b>725</b>
<b>Waste</b>	3671	2	0	<b>3673</b>
<b>Highways and Street lighting</b>	703	3	0	<b>706</b>
<b>Recycling</b>	219	0	0	<b>219</b>
<b>Parking Design, Road Safety, Developers</b>	44	0	0	<b>44</b>
<b>Greenspaces</b>	110	0	0	<b>110</b>
<b>Parking Enforcement/Control</b>	66	1	0	<b>67</b>
<b>Trees</b>	121	1	0	<b>122</b>
<b>Request for Service not Delivered</b>	24	0	0	<b>24</b>
<b>Street Enforcement</b>	1256	2	0	<b>1258</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6937</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6948</b>

**99.84%    0.16%**

6,937 (99.84%) were resolved without being escalated.

**Question No. 34**

**Councillor Colin Rogers**

There has been a recent proliferation of advertising hoarding boards around East Finchley (one near the junction of East Finchley High Road and the North Circular, and two on the North Circular by Glebelands). Can the Cabinet Member say whether these hoardings have planning consent and if not, what enforcement action is being taken to get them removed?

**Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen**

The planning enforcement team investigate all alleged breaches of planning control and where a breach of planning control has occurred and harm is being caused then planning enforcement action is taken.

The planning enforcement team is currently taking enforcement action against two unauthorised hoardings located outside the Yellow Box Storage at 385-401 East Finchley High Road. These advertisements are also subject to an appeal against the Council’s decision to refuse advertisement consent.

There are no other registered complaints relating to advertising hoardings around the East Finchley part of the North Circular. However, this matter will be investigated and if it is found that unauthorised advertisement hoardings have been erected and they are causing harm, then either prosecution action or direct action will be taken in order to ensure that the offending advertisements are removed.

**Question No. 35**

**Councillor Anita Campbell**

The cost of replacing a Council wheelie rubbish bin is £48, which local residents have to pay if their bin is stolen or vandalized. To what extent is the replacement cost of stolen and vandalised bins subsidised by the Council – particularly for vulnerable residents and those on low incomes?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

The cost of replacement of lost wheeled bins through theft or vandalism is not subsidised by the Council. As to the vulnerable and those on low income, a clean second hand bin is supplied free of charge in these circumstances.

**Question No. 36**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

What percentage of pupils receiving free school meals attained 5 or more, good GCSE results compared with other pupils this year?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

The table below outlines the 5+ A\*-C GCSE grades performance of pupils receiving free school meals (FSM) in 2007 and 2006. There is national data for 2006 but that data is not yet available for 2007.

	5+ A*-C			
	2006		2007	2007-2006
	Barnet	National	Barnet	Improvement
Entitled to FSM	41%	33%	48%	7%
Not entitled to FSM	69%	61%	73%	4%
Gap	28%	28%	25%	-3%

The table below outlines the 5+ A\*-C including English and Maths GCSE grades performance of pupils receiving free school meals (FSM).

	5+ A*-C incl Eng & maths			
	2006		2007	2007-2006
	Barnet	National	Barnet	Improvement
Entitled to FSM	27%	20%	35%	8%
Not entitled to FSM	60%	48%	63%	3%
Gap	33%	28%	28%	-5%

**Question No. 37**

**Councillor Julie Johnson**

Will the Lead Member tell me what free parking facilities there are for users of Hendon Library in the nearby vicinity of the library?

**Answer by Councillor John Marshall**

As the Councillor knows the Hendon Library is situated by the Town Hall and Middlesex University both of which generate considerable demand for parking facilities. In addition it is quite close to Hendon Central Tube Station. Any all day free spaces would in all probability be used by commuters. There is free parking in Egerton Gardens and St Joseph’s Grove after 5pm and on Sundays. The Pay and Display street parking in St Joseph’s Grove means that there is a good turnover of parking spaces. The Library is also served by Public Transport. That is why it is so well used by local residents.

I am always willing to listen to Councillors’ ideas and I look forward to hearing any positive proposals Councillor Johnson has.

**Question No. 38**

**Councillor Colin Rogers**

There are 8 London Plane trees outside the Yellow Box Storage at 385-401 East Finchley High Road – 6 of which have had their tree pits covered with a non-porous material. Can the Cabinet Member advise:

- A) If the Council is responsible for this vandalism?
- B) If so, why have these trees been condemned in this way?
- C) If the Council is not responsible, what action will be taken to protect trees in the Borough against this practice, and apprehend / punish the culprits?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

These works were not carried out by the Council but by the developer as part of the offsite highway works associated with this development. Due to the narrowness of the footpath and in order to prevent the trees having to be removed, the developer applied a proprietary porous resin and stone based material around the base of the trees to provide a level walking surface. The material is specifically designed to allow water to percolate to the tree roots.

Therefore it is not “vandalism” and the trees have not been “condemned”.

However, the material has been applied too close to the trunks of the trees and Council officers are liaising with the developer and our own tree specialists to resolve the problem. In future we will seek that the developer applies the material in accordance with the manufacturer’s guidelines.

**Question No. 39****Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

How many staff in the IT department have been made redundant as a result of so-called modernization?

**Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council**

21 employees left the Council in 2006 as a result of the Resources restructure where modernising our IT infrastructure and systems reduced the requirements for IT staff. Of these 2 were compulsory redundancies.

**Question No. 40****Councillor Barry Rawlings**

What are the procedures to avoid fraud on school admissions to secondary schools and what plans are there to strengthen anti-fraud measures in this area?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

The School Organisation and Admissions Team (SOAT) ensures that school admissions criteria are applied fairly.

Parents applying for a school place must use the address where the child is permanently resident. SOAT check addresses against the addresses held by primary schools. Where a discrepancy is noted, in most cases, SOAT is able to resolve the matter with parents, but where there is a discrepancy that SOAT cannot resolve, cases can be referred to and investigated by the Council's Corporate Anti-Fraud Team (CAFT). CAFT have access to a wide range of publicly available information, such as the electoral roll, which they can check where this is relevant. A range of other measures are in place to prevent fraud, where parents have changed address within the two years leading up to the application for a school place.

This information is set out clearly in the admissions handbook provided for all parents and is in line with the strategies used by other London boroughs involved in the PAN London process for co-ordinated school admissions. The Council is confident that its processes are robust and can identify fraudulent applications but the admissions process is kept under review to ensure that all possible steps are taken to prevent fraud.