

Council Questions to Cabinet Members
15 July 2008
Questions and Responses

Question 1**Councillor Jack Cohen**

When will the report of the inquiry into the sale of land at Underhill be published?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

This remains entirely in the hands of PwC.

Question 2**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Please could you indicate some of the benefits that are accruing, or you anticipate to accrue to the residents of Barnet as a consequence of Boris Johnson being elected London Mayor in place of Ken Livingstone.

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Early indications are that Mayor Johnson is seeking to ensure all of London has a voice at City Hall and not just Zone 1. Furthermore we are seeing a clear drive to reduce the costs of operating City Hall which can only benefit the Council Tax payers of Barnet.

Question 3**Councillor Ross Houston**

Does the Cabinet Member agree with Boris Johnson's affordable housing policy that he will "negotiate a higher unit target with those Boroughs with the longest waiting lists"?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

I do not know if the member is being deliberately mischievous but the very next line in the Mayor's Housing Manifesto also said:

"We believe it is pragmatic to aim resources where need is greatest. We will allow Borough Councils complete freedom other how they deliver on the unit agreement."

I whole heartedly agree.

Question 4**Councillor Jack Cohen**

What is the cost to date to the Council of all the investigations in to the sale of Land at Underhill, including our own officer time?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

£950,827.

Question 5**Councillor Brian Gordon**

No doubt many are highly concerned about the recent police figures revealing that almost two thirds of all muggings committed on Barnet's streets between April 2007 and March 2008 were carried out by youngsters aged between 12 and 17. What influence is being exercised by the Council (in co-operation with the Police) within schools to counter the potential to criminality that exists, especially when it comes to the carrying of knives and other dangerous weapons?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Barnet schools do a very good job in ensuring children demonstrate the highest standards of behaviour both in and out of school. However, there are a small number of young people who do break the law and the Council is working very closely with schools and the police to reduce these numbers.

The Children and Young People's Partnership Board, attended by the Borough Commander, discussed this issue at its meeting in June and a wide range of actions are in place including targeted youth work support to schools and the allocation of police resources specifically to schools.

Question 6

Councillor Julie Johnson

Does the Cabinet Member think it is fair to charge leaseholders for collecting dumped rubbish and goods on council estates given that residents who do not live on council estates are not charged for the removal of dumped rubbish / goods from their streets?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

The Lease defines the area which forms the Estate. The leaseholder is therefore liable to contribute a percentage towards the estate costs, which is also stipulated in the Lease. It is unfortunate that rubbish is dumped on Council estates. However this is recoverable through the service charge as an estate cost. Council tenants will also meet these costs through their rents. As will owner occupiers who find rubbish dumped in alleyways.

Question 7

Councillor Jack Cohen

What was the Council Business that prevented the Leader of the Council from attending the Cabinet and Overview Committee on 12 May?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

I attended a presentation by Drugsline followed by a meeting with the principals to discuss their work on combating drug abuse and the extension of their work into Barnet.

Question 8

Councillor Brian Gordon

There have been a number of complaints about the Governments failure to abolish mixed-sex wards in hospitals, which they promised to do several years ago. Could the Council play a role, if only by way of pressure and lobbying, to ensure that only single sex wards operate in NHS hospitals and clinics throughout the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

This Council has put the total patient experience, of which dignity, privacy and quality of care are integral components, at the very top of its health agenda. This stance has been discussed at length and is well recognized and supported by Barnet Primary Care Trust, our main commissioners of health services, and is a pivotal part of all our joint agreements. We will continue to pressure both the Royal Free (through our position on the Members' Council) and Barnet & Chase Farm Hospitals (where the position from patients' complaints appears to be rather worse) to rigourously adhere to their single sex accommodation commitments.

The following information on the current situation has been provided by the Trusts themselves.

Position of Barnet PCT

The PCT has confirmed that all three of its current in patient sites – Edgware Community Hospital, the Marie Foster Centre and Finchley Memorial Hospital comply with single sex accommodation requirements and states "The PCT does not support mixed sex accommodation and as such the single sex accommodation bays are never mixed. The PCT actively promotes privacy and dignity through adherence to its policy on Privacy & Dignity, undertaking audits using Essence of Care benchmarking, undertaking and reviewing PEAT and Healthcare Commission assessments and analyzing complaints to ensure action and learning as required. The PCT does not support mixed sex accommodation and ensure that robust working practices are in place in wards to ensure single sex accommodation is adhered to and that the privacy and dignity of patients is respected at all times."

Position of Royal Free Hospital

There are 35 areas in Royal Free Hospital NHS Trust where patients stay overnight; 4 of these areas the single sex accommodation does not apply to, (Delivery Suite, Special Care Baby Unit, Gynaecology and ante/post natal). With regard to Paediatrics, a previous review indicated that parents and children preferred to be in mixed sex accommodation. There are a large number of cubicles for those children who express a preference. The Royal Free is aware that there are 2 areas where occasionally clients may be in a mixed sex situation. These are the Medical Admission Assessment Unit and the SAU. Where this may occur it is expected that the client is moved or discharged within 48 hours. However mixed sex management is unavoidable in the Intensive care unit and theater recovery area and this is recognized as a national position. The Royal Free has a single sex accommodation policy and developed an action plan to ensure all aspects of single sex accommodation are implemented.

Position of Barnet Hospital

There are 24 areas in Barnet and Chase Farm Hospital Trust where patients stay over night. It does not apply to, gynaecology and obstetric areas or Paediatrics, 7 other areas are also exempt on the grounds of emergency admissions (CDU, ITU, Melbourne, A&E observation unit, Canterbury, PCU, Stroke beds). Barnet and Chase Farm are aware that occasionally a client may be placed into mixed accommodation. Where this happens it is expected the client will be transferred or discharged within 48 hours. If in exceptional circumstances a client is found to stay longer than 48 hours this will be 'tracked' and information reviewed. Barnet and Chase Farm monitor the ongoing patient experience through Exemplar Ward Project and Patient Experience Strategy. As well as implementing a Privacy and Dignity Policy, Barnet General Hospital report they are in compliance with the requirements of single sex wards and plan to reduce their Mixed Sex Accommodation scores by a minimum of 1% during 2008 / 09. Barnet General Hospital Trust has a single sex accommodation policy and developed an action plan to ensure all aspects of single sex accommodation are implemented.

Question 9

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

Will the Cabinet Member advise regarding the West Hendon estate the number of properties which will have windows replaced, how many of these are tenants and how many are leaseholders, what the overall cost is, how many leaseholders will be charged and what the average bill will be?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

There are 368 properties which will have windows renewed, predominantly on the rear elevation of the blocks. There are 91 which are leaseholders of which 16 have Deeds of Variation's (DOV) because they have already replaced their own windows, and 277 are tenanted or void.

It has been agreed that leaseholders will benefit from a two thirds discount on the full cost of the work provided that they pay their contribution within 12 months of being invoiced. Barnet Homes are in the process of negotiating a price with their contractor, and as a consequence formal consultations with leaseholders over their contributions is not due to start until the end of July. Because of this, it would not be advisable at this stage to state publicly the amount that leaseholders will be expected to pay, although details of this are set out below.

The estimated overall cost of the project is expected to be approximately £1m, which would mean that the average leaseholder payment would be about £900 after discount. Leaseholders with a DOV would not be liable to contribute towards the work.

One further point to note is that whilst the scaffolding is up it will be utilized to upgrade the existing TV aerials to digital which will mean some additional costs for all leaseholders at WH (over at above window costs). These costs are not yet known but are currently being worked up and will be included in the forthcoming consultation.

Question 10**Councillor Jack Cohen**

The Leader of the Council's report (Future Organisation of the Council) to Cabinet on 6 May refers to shrinking the organisation. Will this mean the closure or reduction in hours of any of Barnet's Libraries?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

There are no service implications from this report.

Question 11**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Andrew Dismore MP has been giving the impression, according to a newspaper report, that the Council is being unhelpful with regard to the allocation of funds for extra security needs at some of the Borough's schools? Would you please comment on this?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Mr Dismore's claims are entirely inaccurate. Funding for schools is allocated through a nationally imposed formula. That formula does not make any provision for extra funding for schools which, for whatever reason, require higher security. Equally there is no grant to Local authorities for school security.

The Council will continue to allocate the maximum resources possible to schools and to urge the Government to make provision for the special security needs of some of Barnet's local schools.

Question 12**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

At Cabinet on 18 June it was reported that some individual leaseholders are likely to face as yet unbilled works and repairs bills up to a value of £18k. Why are such large amounts still unbilled, why are the unbilled amounts so large and how many leaseholders are affected?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

The £18k bills would seem to relate to consultation estimates for Hermitage Court. This project has not as yet commenced on site. Bills will be sent out within the agreed target period of 40 working days from the works being completed on site. These bills reflect the extent of the work being carried out which includes re-roofing, works to tank rooms, new windows and external repairs and redecorations. There are 32 leaseholders at Hermitage Court. The 40 working day target period for billing applies to all completed blocks. Barnet Homes are up to date with their billing. They are shortly intending to undertake a pilot project where they will be billing prior to works commencing and will evaluate the results of this for possible future introduction on all works.

Question 13**Councillor Jack Cohen**

I refer the Cabinet Member for Planning and Environmental Protection to planning application C00896Y/08 713 Finchley Road NW11 (sic) why if each planning application is supposed to be decided on its merits, why was this application reported to Committee as a joint application with a totally different site in Whetstone?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

Two separate applications were submitted for two separate sites at:

- 1412-1420 High Road, Whetstone N20
- 713 Finchley Road, Childs Hill NW11

The developer proposed to provide private units only at the Whetstone Site with the majority of the units on the Finchley Road development being affordable housing comprising Social Rent and Shared Ownership flats. Paragraph 8.2 of the Councils Adopted Affordable Housing SPD (2007) states that in exceptional circumstances the council may consider the affordable housing requirement for a development being provided on an alternative site. The two development sites at Finchley Road and Whetstone are very constrained and therefore this off-site approach affordable housing provision was considered acceptable by officers on the basis that it enabled more affordable units to be provided overall as opposed to providing affordable housing on each individual site. In addition this approach allowed more of the larger 3-bed affordable flats to be provided which are the units most needed by the Council to meet housing need.

Two separate planning applications, one for each site, were submitted and were considered in parallel. In planning legal terms, Section 106 Agreements allow the local planning authority to link developments on separate sites together in order to meet other council policy objectives, for example affordable housing. Therefore whilst separate applications, the proposals for 713 Finchley Road and 1412-1420 High Road were only considered acceptable as a package linked together by a Section 106 agreement.

Question 14

Councillor Brian Salinger

The Cabinet Member for Housing will be aware of the fire that destroyed Marston Court in Upper Norwood at Christmas last year. Can the Cabinet Member assure the Council that checks have been made to ascertain if there are any blocks in Barnet that were built to the same basic design? Can the Cabinet Member advise Members of the outcome of that research and if any such structures were found to exist in Barnet. Can she tell Members what actions have been taken and when to improve fire safety in those buildings to ensure that a similar fire does not happen in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

The fire referred to in the above question occurred on Christmas day 2007 in a residential block (a four storey block of flats) in Marsten Way, Croydon. There were no fatalities but the building was completely destroyed by fire and 30 people made homeless. It is suspected that the fire was caused by a tenant's incense stick.

The fire was able to spread and cause so much damage because the cavity spaces within the walls were not fire-stopped thereby allowing the fire to travel within the cavities to the roof space. The timber frame construction of the block did not meet the current fire safety standards of the Building Regulations 2000.

Specialist fire safety surveys of other residential blocks in Marsten Way were undertaken by Croydon Council that identified a number of improvements to bring them up to a higher level of safety. This included capping off of wall cavities at the top within the roof space, fire separation walls within the roof space and fire proofing of all services penetrating external walls.

Implications for Barnet Council Housing Stock

There are no residential blocks in Barnet Council stock managed by Barnet Homes that are of a similar timber frame design. However, the Council stock condition survey identifies 68 houses with timber frame walls and the locations are listed below:

Watling Estate

Colchester Road, Edgware
Gervase Road, Edgware
Silkstream Road, Burnt Oak

Orange Hill, Edgware
Montrose Avenue, Edgware
Thirleby Road, Edgware

Other Locations

Newton Walk, Edgware

Cheviott Gardens

Rosemead

Knightswood Close, Edgware

Roscoff Close, Edgware

Prospect Place, Childs Hill

Marriot close

Burrell Close, Edgware

Possibly also some houses in:

Prayle Grove

Wallcote Avenue

As the above are all houses rather than residential blocks a fire on the scale that happened at Marsten Way is unlikely to occur.

The Council's Building Control has advised Barnet Homes that the party walls at Watling Estate properties are fire resistant. However, this has not been confirmed for properties in the other locations listed above.

Proposed Action Plan for Barnet Homes

Barnet Homes will ensure that specialist fire safety surveys are carried out for all affected properties. Consultants Scott, White and Hookins have been engaged to undertake the surveys.

Any properties that do not meet the Building Regulations 2000 Part B will be improved to meet required fire safety standards.

Question 15

Councillor Alison Moore

Will the Cabinet Member tell me how long the administration intend to delay the implementation of the current proposed TfL scheme to improve junction safety at Henlys Corner, while they argue for a larger completely unaffordable scheme that is unlikely to be funded?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Transport for London presented Barnet Council with a number of interim solutions to the traffic problems at Henly's Corner prior to the Mayoral Elections in May 2008, none of which is either complete or fully costed, or indeed has funding allocated. The Council is not blocking anything – nothing has been ruled out. Discussions with TfL are constructive and ongoing. Our uppermost considerations are the needs of Barnet residents, now and into the future – those who use the junction as either motorists or pedestrians, having in mind their ease of movement and safety, as well as the interests of people living close to this increasingly busy interchange, who may be suffering related congestion and rat-running.

Question 16

Councillor Jeremy Davies

Will the Cabinet Member for Environment please confirm how many consultations have been undertaken regarding the re-installation of traffic measures, in the last 2 financial years up to 31 March 2008, and what has been the outcome?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

There have been seven surveys of residents, emergency services and ward Councillors carried out following the removal of traffic management features as part of resurfacing works in the previous two financial years.

None of the pre-existing traffic management measures for any of these schemes have subsequently been re-installed, but alternative measures are introduced where considered appropriate; for example, four Vehicle Activated Signs are shortly to be installed along Uphill Road, Mill Hill and monitoring and review of schemes is ongoing. The consultation process is part of the delivery of the Council's annual highways maintenance programme, as approved most recently by the March meetings of the Area Environment Sub Committees.

Question 17

Councillor Brian Salinger

How many individuals or families for whom the Council have accepted responsibility are currently being housed in temporary accommodation? Of that number how many are on temporary tenancies in each of the 4 regeneration estates?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

At 31 March 2008, 2,489 households were housed in temporary accommodation. Of that number, 871 households held temporary tenancies on 4 regeneration estates distributed as follows:

Dollis Valley – 96

West Hendon – 107

Grahame Park – 534

Stonegrove / Spur Road – 134.

Question 18

Councillor Andrew McNeil

Will the Cabinet Member please confirm how much of the £400k that was set aside from the investment windfall last year for highways repairs was spent and which schemes benefited?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

During the last financial year (2007/08), we received £900,000 additional funding for highway improvements in two phases. The first phase of funding was for £400,000 and the following schemes were implemented:

Chipping Barnet Area

Meadway between A1000 & Meadway Close – Carriageway Resurfacing

The Vale – Carriageway Resurfacing

Wilmington Fold – Carriageway Resurfacing

Finchley and Golders Green Area

Deansway between A504 to Brim Hill – Carriageway Resurfacing

Asmunds Hill – Carriageway resurfacing

Elm Park Road – Carriageway Resurfacing

Ossulton Way – Carriageway Resurfacing

Hendon Area

Raymead – Carriageway resurfacing

Abercorn Road – Carriageway Resurfacing

Colchester Road – Carriageway Resurfacing

Byron Road – Footway Relay

The second phase of funding was for £500,000 and the following schemes were implemented:

Chipping Barnet Area

Lullington Garth – Footway Relay

Oakleigh Road North – Footway Relay

Hatley Close – Carriageway Resurfacing

Finchley and Golders Green Area

Windermere Avenue – Footway Relay

Grass Park – Footway Relay

Elmfield Road – Carriageway Resurfacing

Hendon Area

Parkside (*) – Footway Relay

Tenterden Drive – Footway Relay

Egerton Gardens – Carriageway Resurfacing

Parkside is programmed to implemented shortly.

Question 19

Councillor Jeremy Davies

To ask the Leader of the Council to comment on the most recent accident in Partingdale Lane (in May 2008).

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

All accidents in the Borough are regrettable.

Question 20

Councillor Brian Salinger

Will the Cabinet Member for the Environment list all those areas in the Borough where Japanese Knot Weed was treated in 2007? Will the Cabinet Member tell the Council at which of those locations was the treatment successful to the point that there has been no recurrence of the weed this year? Will the Cabinet Member list those locations that have to date been identified for treatment in 2008?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

A list of locations where Japanese knotweed is present that is reviewed and updated. A selection of sites is treated each year on a rolling programme by the grounds maintenance responsive teams. In addition to the in-house works a contractor has been employed to undertake a three year eradication programme at the Welsh Harp, Coppett's Wood and Glebelands where substantial areas of growth are present. A list of sites is attached.

JAPANESE KNOTWEED LOCATIONS – 2008

LOCATIONS	WARD	INFORMATION	CLIENT
Brunswick Park	Brunswick	along brook and boundary with cemetery	Greenspaces
Field Mead	Burnt Oak	near bridge	Housing
Watling Park	Burnt Oak	Rear of Colchester. Near stream. E.A. controlled stream.	Greenspaces
Basing Hill Park	Childs Hill	in local gardens abutting the park	Greenspaces
Grahame Park Open Space	Colindale	appears to be eradicated	Greenspaces
Rushgrove Park	Colindale	E.A. controlled stream	Greenspaces
Atlas Road	Coppetts	entrance to Bounds Green OS	Greenspaces
Coppetts Wood	Coppetts	large area many locations	Greenspaces
Friary Park	Coppetts	near stream	Greenspaces
Poplar Grove / Hornbeams	Coppetts		Housing
Arundel Road	East Barnet	near footpath	Highways

Baring Road	East Barnet	part done only	Greenspaces
Brookside, rear of shops E.Barnet village	East Barnet	near Pymmes Brook	Greenspaces
Crescent Road allotments	East Barnet		Greenspaces
Games Road	East Barnet	near footpath	Highways
Oakhill Park	East Barnet	near bowling green	Greenspaces
Oakhill Park	East Barnet	rear of white pavilion, near Pymmes Brook bank	Greenspaces
Adamson Court	East Finchley	rear garden	Housing
Grange Estate	East Finchley	all sites	Housing
Leopold Road	East Finchley	near footway	Highways
Tarling Road	East Finchley	near High Road – cleared but some regrowth	Housing
Basing Way Estate	Finchley Church End	boundary abutting St. Theresa's school	Housing
Winsdor Open Space	Finchley Church End	Near stream. E.A. controlled.	Greenspaces
Brookside Walk, Addison Way	Garden Suburb	E.A. controlled stream	Greenspaces
Lyttelton P/F	Garden Suburb	E.A. controlled stream	Greenspaces
Northway Extension	Garden Suburb	E.A. controlled stream	Greenspaces
Brookside Walk, N.C.R Henleys	Hendon	E.A. controlled stream	Greenspaces
Brookside Walk. Bridge lane Hendon	Hendon	E.A. controlled stream	Greenspaces
Sunnyhill Park	Hendon	Near A1 large area, in private gardens	Greenspaces
Tempelhof Ave	Hendon	Near Cailfield park	Highways
Brent Park	Hendon	E.A. controlled stream	Greenspaces
Barnet Road	High Barnet	near Brickfield Lane	Highways
Clifford Road	High Barnet	Near Cromer School	Highways
Hadley Green	High Barnet	small amount of re-growth	Greenspaces
Stapylton Rd	High Barnet	opposite car park	Highways
Ashley Lane / Devonshire Road	Mill Hill	Near golf course entrance	Greenspaces
Devonshire Road	Mill Hill	entrance to golf course	Highways
Dame Alice Owens	Oakleigh	Rear of Athenaeum Road	Greenspaces
Brook Farm Open Space	Totteridge	access Great Bushey Drive	Greenspaces
Ridgeview Road	Totteridge	Near Swan Lane open space	Housing
Jubilee Gardens	Underhill	Barnet Road near hospital in shrub bed	Greenspaces
Old Courthouse Rec	Underhill	fenceline near car park	Greenspaces
Montrose Crescent	West Finchley	Near drying area	Housing

Priestley Way	West Hendon	S.S.S.I site / E.A. controlled	Highways
West Hendon boundary	West Hendon	Silkstream bridge	Highways

Question 21

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Given that the administration are always bragging about how much money they are spending on road and pavement repairs, can the Cabinet Member explain why the direction of travel of key road and pavement condition performance measures for this year are worse rather than better?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

I don't agree that the direction of travel is worse. The confirmed Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) since 2001 are listed below:

	Footways	Principal Roads	Classified Non Principal Roads	Unclassified Roads
	BVPI 187	BVPI 223	BVPI 224a	BVPI 224b
2001/02	n/a	71%	n/a	n/a
2002/03	n/a	84%	49%	81%
2003/04	81%	87%	77%	79%
2004/05	70%	93%	87%	89%
2005/06	84%	92%	85%	92%
2006/07	84%	91%	90%	91%

BV 187 – 168 km – Approx. 12% of total footway network

BV 223 – 74 km – Approx. 10.8% of total carriageway network

BV 224a – 21 km – Approx. 3.1% of total carriageway network

BV 224b – 589 km – Approx. 86.1% of total carriageway network

The projected BV figures for 2007-08 are listed below:

BV223	97%
BV224a	94%
BV224b	90%
BV187	64%

There are marked improvements to BV 223 & 224a. BV 224b is slightly less than last year.

(I don't think the prediction of 64% is correct but this is the best information that we have today. Last year we were predicted mid sixties and the final confirmed figure was 84%. We need to treat this figure with caution.)

BV 187 measures 50% of the condition of high and medium use footways (categories 1 & 2). These constitute only about 12% of the footway network as a whole but are the most heavily used including shopping areas; routes to transport hubs; main employment areas and other busy footways. These are the only footways that are considered when BV187 (condition of footways) is calculated.

The low use footways (categories 3 & 4) that comprise majority of the network do not feature in the BVPI calculations. Over the last few years, we have increased our investment in low use footways as well as Town Centre footways.

During this financial year, an additional investment of £1m will be invested on BV 187 footways. We are currently in the process of selecting and identifying high usage footways for implementation later this year and this is likely to show a marked improvement to conditions of high usage footways in 2008/09.

Question 22

Councillor Jeremy Davies

To ask the Cabinet Member for Planning to comment on the Mill Hill East Planning Brief.

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

An Area Action Plan or AAP, rather than a planning brief, has been prepared for the Mill Hill East Area as stated in Barnet's published Local Development Scheme. The purpose of an AAP is to provide a spatial planning framework to guide sustainable redevelopment of the area. The objective of an AAP is to establish the capacity for the development in an area and to ensure that a comprehensive approach is adopted for future development and associated infrastructure provision. In the case of Mill Hill East this includes the need to provide a new primary school at the site, shopping facilities, healthcare provision, improvements to public transport and the road infrastructure. How this is then provided on site (including detailed site layout) will be the subject of a detailed planning application on which there will be further public consultation.

Work commenced on the AAP in June 2006 and has been the subject of detailed public consultation at three separate stages. On 12 May 2008 the Council formally submitted the Mill Hill East Area Action Plan for independent examination by a Planning Inspector, prior to its adoption.

The Area Action Plan's final proposals, which have been endorsed by Cabinet January 2008, include plans for 2,000 new homes and 500 jobs, built to high environmental standards, a new community hub to provide retail, commercial and community facilities and public transport and highways improvements. Our overall aim is to create a truly sustainable and well designed new community.

The Secretary of State has now appointed Inspector to undertake an independent examination of the plan to test its 'soundness' and make any changes prior to adoption. As part of this process an Examination in Public (EiP) to consider any representations made on the plan will be held on **13, 16 and 17 October 2008**. The Inspector will consider all comments at the inquiry, after which they will issue a report which may recommend changes to the plan. Those recommendations will be *binding* on the Council. The Council will amend the Area Action Plan accordingly and then formally adopt it as part of its Local Development Framework.

Below is a brief summary of the proposals for the future of Mill Hill East:

- Designation of around 31 hectares of land within the site for residential development during the plan period to enable the delivery of the 2,000 new units required by the London Plan (published February 2004). With provision of affordable housing across the site.
- Space for new employment uses to create a minimum of 500 jobs.
- Creation of a new local high street and community hub with around 1,000sqm of retail floor space; a 2 form entry primary school; and provision of community and health facilities.
- Retention and conversion of the Officers Mess for community, commercial, residential and other suitable uses including the retention or sensitive relocation of the War Memorial.
- A new east-west road across the site linking Bittacy Hill and Frith Lane, enhancements to public transport provision and infrastructure and improvements to the Frith Lane / Bittacy Hill and Holders Hill Circus junctions which are outside the AAP boundary.
- Creation of a high quality development which is exemplary in sustainable design and construction across all aspects including energy use, water and drainage, building materials, waste, ecology and transport.

Question 23**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Cabinet Member for Resources make a statement on the future of the so called Stanley Road playing fields in East Finchley?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Stanley Road playing fields are held by the Stanley Road Playing fields Association, under a lease which expired on 31/3/96, at a peppercorn rent. Officers have recently met with members of the Association and previously with the East Finchley Development Trust to discuss their intentions for the site. Issues regarding the funding of any schemes have still to be considered together with the opportunities for the adjoining land at the Herbert Wilmot Centre. I am keen to see some local sports facility retained and I have met with EFDT to pursue this.

Question 24**Councillor Jim Tierney**

Will the Cabinet Member confirm that Barnet Homes will never be the subject of a stock transfer?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Under the current subsidy system, Barnet's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) will contribute £10.4m to the National HRA Subsidy System in 2008/9 with this figure set to increase to £15 million a year by 2019. By 2014 it is estimated that Barnet's HRA will be in deficit. There is a statutory duty to maintain a balanced HRA. If the system is not changed there will not be enough money to maintain and manage the stock.

The Government is currently reviewing the housing subsidy system, and the Council will be joining other authorities in arguing that what is effectively a tax on tenants should be made available to ensure that adequate funds are made available to continue to invest in Council homes.

Currently, other options that are available to Councils to raise money to invest in council homes are Stock Transfer and Private Finance Initiatives. A stock transfer could only proceed if a majority of tenants voted for it through a secret ballot.

The irony for Barnet tenants is that were it not for the National HRA Subsidy System, their rents generate enough resources to meet the Decent Homes programme beyond 2010 and to manage and maintain the stock well.

Question 25**Councillor Jeremy Davies**

To ask the Cabinet Member what proposals they have for the Library Service in the current financial year and how these compare to the service plan agreed as part of the annual budget set in March of this year (2008)?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Plans for the Library Service in the current financial year will reflect those set out in the service plan. This includes continuing the modernisation programme for libraries, (through the installation of new technology such as the RFID self-service and WiFi) and the procurement of a state-of-the-art library management system.

Question 26**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Cabinet Member for Planning please list all the applications that have been approved in the last two years by each of the planning sub-committees where the decision was taken against the recommendation of the officers?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

Whilst the Planning IT system does not provide an automatic breakdown of such information the data that has been retrieved shows in the 24 month period up to 31 March 2008, that 6 cases of planning applications recommended for refusal by officers were subsequently approved by the area planning sub-committee, and include:

Chipping Barnet

1. Longwood House, Arkely Lane (Ref: N00717T/07) dated 24 April 2007
2. 5 Horseshoe Lane (Ref: N00861M/06) dated 25 April 2006
3. 5 Horseshoe Lane (Ref: N00861N/06) dated 25 April 2006

Finchley & Golders Green

4. Central Hotel, 1 Hoop Lane, NW11 (Ref: C00975K/06) dated 25 May 2006
5. 9 Heathfield Gardens, NW11 (Ref: C14663C/07) dated 25 July 2007

Hendon

6. Mill Hill Synagogue, Brockenhurst Gardens, NW7 (Ref: W01923AE/07) dated 14 November 2007.

Question 27**Councillor Colin Rogers**

Does the Cabinet Member agree with Boris Johnson that motorbikes should be allowed to use bus lanes?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

We are aware that Transport for London have carried out a number of studies into the use of bus lanes by motorcycles. The main objection is from pedestrian and cycle lobby groups who have concerns that motorcycles in bus lanes would increase the risk to pedestrians and cyclists. TfL's studies appear to suggest that allowing motorcycles to use bus lanes at the pilot sites has led to a reduction in road accidents.

In locations where the number of pedestrians and cyclists is relatively low, allowing motorcycles to use bus lanes is less likely to be a problem than in busier areas with high levels of pedestrian and cyclist activity.

There is an argument that there should be a consistent approach to allowing different road users to use bus lanes. Therefore, if TfL consider it appropriate to make this change, we should certainly give it consideration.

Question 28**Councillor Monroe Palmer**

Can the Cabinet Member give details as to how the changes to the Council's Telephone switchboard has affected services to those seeking to contact Council Officers and what further changes are contemplated?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

There have been no changes to the way the switchboard service is provided, the switchboard was upgraded almost two years ago and there are no plans to change or upgrade the switchboard technology within the next six months. The switchboard operates a service handling 131072 calls in the first quarter of this year alone.

Whilst we are not changing the technology, we are working hard to improve the quality of service provided by the switchboard team so customers get through to the right person first time. Through the Employee Self Service Project (ESS), a new “who's who” for the council, will be compiled enabling switchboard operators to see alternate contacts for people, and up to date telephone numbers. Finding these currently, can present difficulties as information is held on a number of different systems which may not give accurate information quickly.

Implementation of ESS will also help reduce the number of internal calls that go through the switchboard. Everyone in the council will be able to access the “who's who” and dial directly. We estimate that between 30 and 50% of calls received through the switchboard are internal calls. If we reduce these, the switchboard operators will be able to give priority to external callers and provide them with better service.

Question 29

Councillor John Hart

Please would the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment assure me that the Council is not about to convert Sanders Lane, Mill Hill, into a major thoroughfare between Bittacy Hill and Devonshire Road?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Taking the bigger picture first, investigations are carried out regularly as part of the on-going assessments the Council makes, as the Highway Authority for the borough, to ensure that all our transport networks are able to meet the current and future demands of the community. The Borough's population is expected to grow significantly over the next fifteen years and meeting the community's future movement needs is a key challenge for the Council to address. We'll be focusing on and giving priority to encouraging the more sustainable forms of transport. But there will need to be additional highway capacity to deal with increased bus and goods demands as well as the residue of movements that will be primarily car borne.

Any measures to return Sanders Lane into the public highway network are independent of the proposals to redevelop the Mill Hill East (ex. Inglis Barracks) site. We are currently carrying out a feasibility study into re-establishing this link from Devonshire Road to Bittacy Hill as part of a strategic investigation into improving east – west movement across the Borough. The Council has not agreed any scheme and there is no funding allocated. Any future proposals will be subject to public scrutiny and comment.

Question 30

Councillor Barry Rawlings

The Best Value Performance Plan outturn that went to Cabinet on 18 June showed that the average stay in hostels for households with children / pregnant women who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need (BVPI183b), shot up from 0 weeks in 2006/7 to 18 weeks in 2007/8. What is the reason for this sharp increase, and why, given that we had a performance of 0 weeks the year before were the Administration planning for a worse performance in 2007/8 by setting a target of 4 weeks that year, and each year for the next three years?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

This performance indicator includes any time spent in hostel accommodation with shared facilities for households where homelessness duty has been discharged during the year, covering the whole period of homelessness which in some cases will span several years. This did not apply to any of the households where homelessness duty was discharged during 2006/7. Two cases were identified during 2007/8, and these related to periods spent in hostels with shared facilities during 2003 and 2004, which between them spent a total of 36 weeks in hostel accommodation, subsequent to which both households were moved to more suitable self contained temporary accommodation. The Council no longer places households with children or pregnant women in shared hostel accommodation.

The target of 4 weeks in the Council's BVPP reflects the maximum time that we would expect a household to remain in shared hostel accommodation where a single person household experienced a change in circumstances, i.e. became responsible for a dependant child or became pregnant.

Question 31

Councillor Monroe Palmer

What has been the take up of the Religious / Faith Parking Permits?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The religious / faith permits scheme, the first of its kind in the country so far as we're aware, was launched on 30 June. Therefore, it is too soon to make any definitive comment regarding take up. However, on the launch evening attended by religious representatives, 25 application forms were taken.

Question 32

Councillor Brian Gordon

I have received complaints concerning the fact that a significant number of motor vehicles with non-UK registration plates belonging to overseas citizens now resident here receive parking tickets but get away without paying them and there is no enforcement procedure. Can something be done about this at Council level?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

It is frustrating, but non UK registered vehicles are an issue across the UK, especially within the insurance industry and for parking management. Because the legislation surrounding parking only allows for the registered keeper of the vehicle to be pursued for a penalty – and the DVLA do not hold keeper details for non UK vehicles, the Council is usually unable to pursue any penalties issued to such vehicles.

All London Boroughs have been lobbying with London Councils for some years now requesting a change to the legislation so that non UK registered vehicle details may be obtained and penalties pursued.

London Councils have recently advised that the London Local Authorities and Transport for London Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent by or around the end of July. London Councils will be leading a pilot project on persistent evader enforcement with Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster and Transport for London, once this approval has been received. The new legislation will allow for any vehicle with three or more PCNs, which have passed the appeals stage or are unregistered to be clamped / removed regardless of whether the vehicle is in contravention at the time it is seen.

This would partly address the non-UK registered vehicle problem as the owner would be required to provide verified address details in order to recover the vehicle.

These are new powers for all London Boroughs, as currently it is not possible to clamp / remove a vehicle unless it is seen in contravention and a fresh penalty has been issued. With the new powers, all outstanding penalties must be paid in order for a removed vehicle to be released. Barnet Council does not currently clamp or remove any vehicles, including persistent evaders and we would need to consider whether it would be appropriate to adopt the new powers when the Bill is enacted.

Question 33**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

Cyclists currently ride the pavement along West Hendon Broadway, which is a hazard for pedestrians. Will the Cabinet Member agree to provide a cycle route from West Hendon Broadway through to Staples Corner linking in with the one currently provided at Staples Corner through to Cricklewood?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Certainly, the Council is also concerned about the danger for pedestrians, particularly the elderly and partially sighted, which results from cycling on the pavement. The volume of traffic using the A5 through West Hendon with a high proportion of buses and lorries, means that cycling on the carriageway poses potential risks.

Transport for London's cycle maps show Park Road / Dallas Road as a route recommended by cyclists, using quieter roads, which is a good way of avoiding the A5 between West Hendon and Staples Corner. The Council believes this alternative route provides a better solution than cyclists using the pavement along West Hendon Broadway.

Question 34**Councillor Daniel Webb**

Please will the Cabinet Member for Children comment on the Government's handling of news of the performance of Ravenscroft and Whitefield Schools?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Yet again the Government chose to attack Barnet schools in a disgraceful manner. Ravenscroft and Whitefield schools have both been judged outstanding by Ofsted and the Government's recent actions, far from helping to raise standards, have undermined the morale of staff and caused huge concern amongst parents.

Question 35**Councillor Geof Cooke**

Every year, there are complaints from leaseholders who live in Barnet Homes properties about the prices of work carried out by Barnet Homes contractors relative to non-Barnet Homes contractors. Will the Cabinet Member explain how Barnet Homes contractors arrive at their price structure for repairs etc?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Following a rigorous tendering process completed in 2005 Barnet Homes appointed three contractors to work on the Decent Homes programme. The tenders were assessed on basis of quality and cost. Quality was assessed re method statements submitted for issues that included Partnering Experience, Customer Care, Quality Control, Health and Safety, and overall system and management capabilities.

Prior to any major works taking place, Barnet Homes Constructor Partners carry out a survey of each block to identify what works are required and to gather information for pricing.

Their Partners then package elements of works together for pricing by their supply chain members. Supply chain members are also chosen by Constructor Partners on the basis of quality and cost. The constructor Partners also add on their price for services that they provide such as management, plant hire, site supervision and access equipment including provision for meeting all relevant Health and Safety legislation including Construction Design and Management Regulations.

On top of these costs constructor's overheads and profit are added to arrive at a final price. It may well be the case that smaller local contractors can carry out certain items of work for individual households because they do not work to the same exacting Health and Safety requirements that Barnet Homes Partners have to meet. It may also be the case that they are not providing exactly the same product.

Question 36

Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

Will the Cabinet Member advise me what the Council's total annual spending is for a) Postage and b) Printing?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Postage and printing

The cost of postage for 2007/8 was £791,549

The cost of printing for 2007/8 was £463,461

Print volumes have been reduced year on year but the main print run each year will be for Council Tax bills and reminders.

Question 37

Councillor Alison Moore

Will the Cabinet Member confirm what the risks are to the ongoing viability of the pension fund should the full ramifications of the "Future of the Organisation" paper be realised?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

As the Future Shape of the Council project has only just begun it is far too early to identify what "ramifications" may arise, the biggest risk to any pension fund is the performance of the underlying investments.

Question 38

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Will the Cabinet Member explain why sickness absence in the Council is increasing, and what he is doing about it?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The principal reason for a recent increase in sickness absence is that we now have robust data from the schools which we did not previously have. The core element i.e. sickness of staff under our direct controls remains significantly down.

Question 39

Councillor Jim Tierney

Will the Cabinet Member tell me in detail what actions have been taken to deliver the Administration's policy item entitled Barnet's Carbon Footprint agreed in September last year?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

A number of actions are in train, set out under the following headings:

Carbon Reduction Action Plan

The council signed up to the Key Account Management programme run by the Energy Saving Trust (EST) in September 2007, to develop and implement a carbon emissions reduction plan across the Council's influence, from its own services to its role in providing community leadership. This supports Barnet's Environmental Policy and work towards the council's corporate priority of a Clean, Green and Safe Barnet.

The Council completed an extensive baseline questionnaire which was audited by EST, and this was followed by a workshop for staff to prioritise potential actions. A draft Action Plan was produced by EST and is being considered. Once the Action Plan is approved, work can begin on planning and prioritising the actions to be implemented first. EST will continue to assist with this implementation work and also carry out a review one year on, to look at progress on the action plan and the carbon savings achieved.

In addition, funding has recently become available for councils that have signed off an Action Plan with EST to carry out projects to reduce carbon emissions or build capacity to do so. Funding is up to the value of £25,000. Officers will work up proposals for this funding.

Carbon Footprint

The Council will be reporting its 2008 baseline CO2 emissions for its relevant buildings and transport usage next year, as part of the national suite of indicators (NI 185, CO2 reduction from local authority operations). The aim of this particular indicator is to establish baseline positions and measure progress of local authorities to reduce CO2 emissions in delivering its functions.

Green Electricity

It is proposed to begin the implementation of the 3% price premium policy to secure additional "greener" electricity supplies on the next contract renewal starting October 2008. The under 100kW electricity supply contract covers smaller council sites and the majority of the schools.

Sustainable Procurement Strategy

The development of an appropriate strategy is being actively progressed to ensure that environmental considerations are included in procurement contracts and decisions.

Question 40

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Will the Cabinet Member please advise in detail what the current policy is vis-à-vis re-surfacing roads and the removal of road humps?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The current policy is that roads with humps that are being resurfaced have the features removed as part of the initial work, otherwise the machinery cannot do the job properly. A review of the effectiveness of the humps is then carried out. This comprises speed surveys before and after the hump removal, an analysis of the history of recorded personal injury accidents and a survey of residents to seek views on whether they would wish to see the humps put back or not. The emergency services and ward councillors are similarly written to. The results of the above work are then incorporated into a Technical Report which is included as part of a delegated powers letter of intention, sent by the Director of Environment & Transport to the Cabinet Member and Chairman of the appropriate Area Environment Sub Committee. If the stated intention is to re-install the humps then this is actioned. If the intention is not to replace the humps then normally alternative measures are implemented, such as vehicle activated signs, and the situation is monitored.

Question 41

Councillor Claire Farrier

Will the Cabinet Member tell me what the Council is doing to ensure our residents are aware of the number to ring to have graffiti removed?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Council's web site, Barnet Online contains a wide range of information on both how the council is tackling graffiti and how members of the public can contact the council to report graffiti problems. The site also contains a range of phone numbers for members of the public which allows them to contact third parties directly, e.g. Virgin, if graffiti is found on private property.

Members of the public can also contact the Council from the web site via the email reporting facility and additionally through the Council's Customer Contact Centre (020 8359 4600), which then provides the details to the respective service and ensures follow up and resolution of reported issues.

Question 42

Councillor Julie Johnson

Following on from the rather disappointing Barnet Homes inspection, can the Cabinet Member advise whether or not the intention is to operate a "zero tolerance" policy for tenants involved in anti social behaviour?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Barnet Council's conditions of tenancy, which were revised in 2007, make it absolutely clear that anti social behaviour is unacceptable. From the point of signing up new tenants onwards, this message is emphasised by Barnet Homes' staff. When ASB is reported to Barnet Homes an action plan is agreed with the victims which outlines how Barnet Homes' staff will work with them to take action to solve the problem. When the evidence is available legal action will be pursued through the courts and every opportunity is taken to publicise successful cases so that our approach is clear to all residents.

During 2008/9 Barnet Homes will be working with the Council to establish introductory tenancies for all new tenants. This will mean that only tenants who comply with their tenancy conditions will become secure tenants after the first year of their tenancy.

Question 43

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

Will the Cabinet Member confirm what criteria are used to select the flags of particular countries that have been put up at Copthall Leisure Centre?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The flags are representative of those countries that have competed internationally at Copthall.

Question 44

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Will the Cabinet Member advise precisely how many park keepers the Council currently employs, how many are dedicated to one park full-time, how many divide their time between more than one park, and what is the average number of parks per park-keeper in terms of their direct responsibilities?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Council currently employs nine full time park keepers, eight of whom are dedicated to one park full time, while the ninth is between two parks full time. So the average number of parks under the responsibility of each park keeper is one. During the summer months the park keepers are employed to cover a number of parks on a rotational basis at the weekends to ensure that litter is collected from all premier parks and problematic locations in the absence of operational staff / park keepers due to rest days / work rotas.

Question 45

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Do our managers and social workers have proper, appropriately accessible, up-to-date computer records available to them, with information accessible from our Council computers of how many cases each social worker has and the individual details of each case, and a facility for browsing through records?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Adult Social Services' managers and social workers have an electronic case management system, Swift. This is one of two commonly used national systems. Swift holds the key details of all Adult Social Services' cases. Swift also records the key worker for each case. A wide range of reports can be extracted from Swift including how many cases each social worker has.

Adult Social Services is currently rolling out the corporate Electronic Document and Record Management System, Wisdom. This will hold electronic copies of all documents received and generated about each case and can be easily browsed.

Question 46**Councillor Julie Johnson**

Will the Cabinet Member tell me how many neighbourhood watches there are currently in operation in the Borough by constituency?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Chipping Barnet	144
Finchley and Golders Green	183
Hendon	119

Question 47**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

In Barnet 2307 people are beneficiaries of the half price bus fares for those in receipt of income support. Given that Boris Johnson will not be renewing the scheme, what will the Council do to assist these low income residents with their travel costs?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Mayor Johnson has said he is committed to honouring the existing concession until the end of the scheme, in August. He has noted that the total number of cardholders represents less than 20% of all those claiming income support in London, therefore he considers this to be an inefficient way of assisting low income Londoners with their travel costs. He has asked TfL to investigate more suitable forms of fares concessions for such people, for consideration at the next fares revision, and we await the outcome of that. Given that the current scheme, put in place by the previous Mayor, was funded by Venezuelan oil, in effect an ethically questionable subsidy from a country with some of the world's poorest people, it seems right that London should find its own way of supporting its low income citizens.

Question 48**Councillor Colin Rogers**

In an earlier answer to my question regarding damage to trees by the Yellowbox development in East Finchley, the previous Cabinet Member, Councillor Offord, informed Council that these trees had been subjected to an unfortunate experimental surrounding surface, which had been partially ripped out. Since then, nothing has been done to remediate these trees, despite the obvious damage to the trunks caused by Yellow Box's 'experimental' work, and the stunted growth they have displayed relative to the trees not subjected to the experiment. When will these trees be replaced with healthy specimens of the same age?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The trees are healthy enough and do not need replacing.

Question 49**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

Will the Cabinet Member confirm how many accidents have occurred at school patrol crossings across the Borough in the last 5 years?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

There have been no reports to the Council's Road Safety Officers of accidents at our School Crossing Patrol (SCP) locations over the past five years whilst they were on duty. However, it should be noted that on 11 October 2005 there was an accident involving a child in a pushchair being hit by a car as they were crossing the pelican crossing outside St Vincents School, NW7. The green man phase was in operation at the time. This happened 5 minutes before the SCP Officer was due to come on duty. As a consequence of this, the working hours of this SCP were extended in the afternoon to start 15 minutes earlier.

Question 50**Councillor Colin Rogers**

Additionally, Yellow Box in East Finchley have installed a yellow neon highlight at the eaves of their premises, along all four walls. The premises are bathed in floodlights which are illuminating the sides of the building, not merely providing security illumination, and this lighting was not part of their approved plans, and needs removing. Will the Cabinet Member confirm that enforcement action is in hand to have the lights de-intensified and the angle of elevation lowered, so that they conform with the existing regulations – and if not can he ask officers to investigate enforcement action with immediate affect?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

This matter will be investigated by the planning enforcement team and once the investigations have been concluded you will be updated on the course of action to be taken.

The Planning Enforcement Team is located at North London Business Park and can be contacted on 020 8359 4620.

Question 51**Councillor Alison Moore**

Does Barnet calculate the value of its trees and if so how?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

Barnet Council owned / maintained trees are valued using the CAVAT system (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees) as set out in the London Tree Officers Association Risk Limitation Strategy for Tree Root Claims. Again, Andy Tipping can provide more detailed information.

However, at present the CAVAT system is not considered sensitive enough for valuing individual TPO trees (for example, there is insufficient allowance for context). Nor is it the only amenity valuation system in current use.

For trees on private land these are valued in terms of their “amenity value” to the suburban environment. The Council's expert Trees Officers undertake detailed assessments of the quality, health and prominence of private trees in the streetscene and local environment in determining their protection, extent of tree works, felling or removal.

Question 52**Councillor Alison Moore**

Can the Cabinet Member explain why, given the focus on direct payments and social care, the number of older people helped to stay at home is considerably below target and has actually declined. What will the Cabinet member be doing to ensure that this vulnerable group are fully supported?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

The Council is strongly committed to supporting vulnerable people and our aim is to help people stay in control of their lives by maximising the independence of those requiring care or support, and promoting choice.

We invest £43m a year on older adults services and we are implementing the Older People's Commissioning Strategy Action Plan by 2010. The number of older people receiving Direct Payments is continuing to rise as more people take advantage of direct control over their care. Available resources are targeted at the most vulnerable and we have been successful in reducing the rate of admissions of older people to residential care as we support more of the most vulnerable people at home. Besides direct payments, we support people with a range of resources such as home care, respite, residential and nursing home care, meals at home, equipment and day care. We also contribute to the provision of rehabilitation provided by the PCT. Two new state of the art extra care housing schemes are opening this month which will provide 91 tenancies for older people who will have access to 24 hour support on site.

In the last financial year 2007/08 4800 older people received some sort of help from social services, we supported 3757 people with care packages in the community and 1220 people in care homes. 996 carers of older people received a service which is a substantial increase on last year. The Council invests approximately £1.4m in services in the voluntary sector for older people and recipients of these services are not all counted in the methodology used by CSCI, our inspectors. Last year 1317 people were helped through these services. Our policy is also to redirect older people to resources in the community where their health and well being might be promoted by other services.

We have improved our performance in a range of nationally reported indicators including Services for Carers, Admissions of Older Adults to Residential Care, Waiting times for Assessments, and Waiting times for Care Packages. In all of these measures we are in the top performance band.

Question 53

Councillor Colin Rogers

What is the Council's policy on licensing un-authorised hoardings?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

If the Council's planning enforcement team are made of aware of illegal advertising hoardings, then action would be taken to regulate them through the submission of an advertisement application (if they are considered acceptable on highway safety and amenity grounds) or legal action would be taken to ensure their removal.