

Council Questions to Cabinet Members
9 September 2008
Questions and Responses

Question 1**Councillor Duncan Macdonald**

Can the relevant Cabinet member please advise whether a town centre strategy is being developed specifically for New Barnet? If yes, when will it be published? If no, then why has the Council been promising such a document since 2002?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

The Council has not been promising a document since 2002. As endorsed by Cabinet in March this year, the Council is developing a Suburban Town Centres Strategy as part of the emerging Local Development Framework to ensure that the social, economic and environmental well being of all of the boroughs centres is maintained and enhanced.

The Council will be bringing forward planning strategies for four of its key town centres at North Finchley, Edgware, New Barnet and Chipping Barnet over the course of the next 6-12 months. A planning strategy will also be produced for Whetstone in the future. Work is progressing at different stages in relation to these and full community consultation will be undertaken as draft documents are prepared. A strategy for New Barnet will be available for initial consultation early in the New Year.

Question 2**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Can the Cabinet Member for Investment in Learning please outline the progress on the Burnt Oak Library refurbishment?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

The redevelopment of Burnt Oak Library is in the final 3 weeks of the programme. The internal and external 'shell' of the build has just about been completed (complete re-wiring, plumbing, new boilers and water pressurisation system). The interior of the building has been remodelled and the new ceilings and walls plastered and decorated. The new entrance ramp has been laid ready for the new wall and entrance and additionally the lift has been installed ahead of schedule.

Over the next three weeks the final 'layers' will be added – these are key pieces and each section of the programme going forward is dependent on the schedule happening on time. These layers include steel fabrication, flooring, furniture, IT and the restocking of the library.

The building is now fresh, light and has the feeling of a brand new structure whilst retaining the original exterior of the building.

Question 3**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

Why have Barnet Homes / the Council stopped cutting back huge trees in Council tenants' back gardens and when was the policy changed to stop pruning them?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Barnet Homes' policy towards trees in tenants back gardens is to deal with dead, dying or dangerous trees only, unless the trees are causing subsidence.

Other than this the trees will be the responsibility of the tenant unless there is a specific hardship or vulnerability. There has been no recent change in this policy. In addition, they have a five year programme of maintenance for trees in the communal areas of housing estates.

Question 4**Councillor Jack Cohen**

You wrote in the Barnet Press “foreign travel does broaden the mind“. If this is the case is your mind any the broader for taking a trip last year to America at the Taxpayers expense?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Yes.

Question 5**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Could you please tell the Council how Barnet is currently ranking regarding customer satisfaction on refuse collections, in comparison with the rest of London?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

I am pleased to report that in the most recent, 2007/08 residents’ survey refuse collection received a high rating of 78% (good to excellent) and was again the highest rated individual service of the Council, as in 2006/07. The service was rated in the 2006/07 MORI survey at 83%, ranking the refuse collection service 7% higher than the London average of 76%.

Question 6**Councillor Julie Johnson**

When will the West Hendon window replacement programme actually be completed?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Due to complete end of June 2009.

Question 7**Councillor Jack Cohen**

A former Barnet Top Tory wrote, in relation to the sale of land at Underhill inquiry, on the Hendon Times website “The reality is that this investigation has cost more than it needed to and dragged out for far too long because the Conservative Administration was useless in the way it handled matters”. What is your reaction to these comments?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

No former Top Tory wrote such comments. My reaction is to ignore the pent up frustrations of others.

Question 8**Councillor Brian Gordon**

What are the criteria applicable as to whether or not residents are given prior information regarding the intention to cut down or remove trees in their streets?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

There is currently no legal requirement for information to be given to residents prior to tree removal. However, our current procedures are as follows:

- No notice is given where a tree is to be removed on the grounds of emergency health and safety works
- Trees removed for health and safety reasons and / or subsidence that will significantly change the streetscape and/or is a mature specimen, are posted with a notice advising of this work detailing the reasons and contact details of the department; properties in the vicinity that may be affected receive the same notice.
- Notices are posted on trees where a requirement to remove large mature trees arises. This was done last week where four mature Horse chestnut trees in Gallants Farm Road were found to be dead and decayed and were removed. We will be replacing all four with residents choice of replacement tree.
- Where young or immature trees are found to be dead or are removed for other reasons, no prior notice is given.

New procedures are proposed for the above in a Tree Strategy for the borough, which is currently in draft form.

Question 9

Councillor Barry Rawlings

How many meals on wheels could be provided for the same price as Councillor Freer's junkets to the States?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

The Vital Vision programme is not a junket and has been paid for out of the training budget. No one who has required a meal has been deprived of one and therefore the issue does not arise.

Question 10

Councillor Jack Cohen

At the last Council Meeting your Cabinet colleague said he held the Cabinet and Overview Scrutiny Committee in contempt. Do you agree with him?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

No.

Question 11

Councillor Brian Gordon

Please could we have an update as the present position regarding the proposed Controlled Parking Zone in the Burnt Oak area, which indirectly affects a number of roads within my Ward?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

A statutory consultation on a proposal for a Controlled Parking Zone in the Burnt Oak Area was carried out in June of this year. The consultation invited comment on a single CPZ that would operate on Mondays to Fridays between 10am and 11am, and 2pm to 3pm.

The consultation period is now over and analysis of all comments received is almost complete. Meetings between Council Officers and interested local residents, including a school are to take place over the next few weeks, and subject to comments made in those meetings it is anticipated that a report on the consultation findings and conclusions will be completed shortly, and consequently I expect a decision on the future of the scheme will be made by the end of September.

Question 12

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Given the merry-go-round at City Hall, when does Councillor Coleman think he will finally get his stint as a Deputy-Mayor or does he agree that Boris Johnson is not really interested in listening to outer-London Boroughs like Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The Mayor of London chooses his own Deputy Mayors and I would not wish to second guess any future appointments.

As for listening to outer-London Boroughs Mayor Johnson has appointed a former Leader of an outer London Borough as one of his senior Deputy Mayors who also represents the Mayor on London Council's City Suburbs Working Group and is establishing an Outer London Commission. In just four months the suburbs have had more influence than in the eight years of Labour's Livingstone.

Question 13**Councillor Jack Cohen**

Please provide the number of Council Employees (excluding school based staff) who at 1 April 2004 earned:

- a) £50,000 – £75,000 per year
- b) £75,000 – £100,00 per year
- c) Over 100,000

Please provide the same information as at 1 April 2008.

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The 2008 salary ranges you enquired about equate to following spinal points:

Salary Range	Spinal Points
£50, 000 – £75,000	Barnet Broad Band (57 – 70) BB4 (205 – 213) BB5 (231 – 238)
£75,000 – £100,000	BB5 (239 – 249)
Over £100,000	BB5 (250 – 253) Directors (All) Executive Directors (All) Chief Executive

Comparing Spinal Points at 1 April 2004 and 1 April 2008 it is revealed that the number of senior managers / senior professionals in Council has only increased by six as detailed in the chart below.

Spinal Points	1 April 2004	1 April 2008
Barnet Broad Band (57 – 70) BB4 (205 – 213) BB5 (231 – 238)	96	95
BB5 (239 – 249)	12	14
BB5 (250 – 253) Directors (All) Executive Directors (All) Chief Executive	8	13

Therefore the change in the number of managers earning >£50K is more due to year on year pay awards rather than a significant increase in the number of senior managers/ professionals.

Another factor that can affect pay is the need to pay market value to recruitment and retain staff. Planning and “Social Services” are two areas where in the past market forces has made it difficult to recruit and retain staff.

Question 14**Councillor Kate Salinger**

Please would the Cabinet Member join me in congratulating Barnet’s Primary School pupils on their SATs results?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Yes, I am delighted to report that Barnet’s provisional Key Stage 2 results are again in the top 10 for all authorities in English, Maths and Science.

83% of pupils achieved level 4+ for Maths, placing Barnet 6th nationally and 78% of pupils achieved level 4+ in both Maths and English, also the 6th best result in the country.

Question 15**Councillor Alison Moore**

Councillor Coleman accused Nicky Gavron of “having blood on her hands” for handling the Olympic torch. Does he also believe that Boris Johnson has “blood on his hands” for handling the Olympic flag and how does he think his original statement affects Barnet's standing locally, in London and internationally given the Mayor of Barnet has also raised an Olympic flag at Cophall Stadium?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Councillor Coleman has a long history of supporting human rights in China and opposing Chinese oppression of religious freedoms amongst entitled to his views on the Olympics. China may have not been an ideal choice as a beacon of democratic freedom but we can be proud that the 2008 Olympics are sandwiched between Athens and London – representing the cradle of democracy and the Mother of Parliaments. Councillor Coleman's views will have no impact on Barnet locally or internationally as they are personal to him and he was not speaking on behalf of the Council.

Question 16**Councillor Jack Cohen**

How many unfilled vacancies are there and what sums do they amount to in the current financial year?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

There were 570 vacancies in Council as of 15 July 2008 with salaries amounting to £13,420,685 (based on minimum spinal point).

Of the 570 vacancies, 160 can be directly matched as being covered by agency staff.

One hundred and forty seven (147) posts are either advertised or at the later stage of recruitment. However, recruitment to some vacancies are on hold pending local restructures.

Question 17**Councillor Maureen Braun**

What action is the Cabinet Member taking to ensure the users of the Sunningfields Road Surgery, within the Hendon CPZ in my Ward can park more easily for their appointments?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

In response to representations by the health centre, the Council will be reducing the hours of three pay and display bays outside the premises. The proposal is to reduce the hours to 11.30am to 2.30pm which will make free parking available in the earlier part of the morning. The Council cannot guarantee that only health centre visitors will use the facility so the use of these bays will be monitored to assess whether the objective is met. The necessary amendments to the existing traffic management order are being made and subject to all statutory requirements being met will be effected in October.

Question 18**Councillor Andrew McNeil**

What is the Cabinet Member doing to ensure the safety of pedestrians during the major gas main works at the Bald Faced Stag junction and along East End Road?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Responsibility for the management of traffic and pedestrian movements around street works is the responsibility of the utility company carrying out work on the public highway. As with all such operations, the Council's Street Works Inspectors are visiting this particular site regularly and any deficiencies in the signing and guarding of the works are being brought to the attention of the utility company for rectification and/or improvement.

Prior to commencement of this project, Officers met with National Grid Gas to agree the scope and timing of the work. The work being carried out is to upgrade the gas services that have been prone to numerous leaks over recent times. The most disruptive element at the A1000 junction has been carried out during the school holiday period when peak traffic flows are lighter.

It has been necessary for TfL to make some changes to the routing of buses servicing the area. Following local representation, Officers arranged with TfL for an additional temporary bus stop to be positioned on the High Road near the junction with Fortis Green to improve bus access for local users. As is the nature of this type of work, Officers are in continuous dialogue with the utility company to address future working arrangements and adjustments / enhancements to movement and safety of all traveling modes.

Question 19

Councillor Jack Cohen

How many Officers and others attended the away day at the Hendon Hall Hotel. What was the cost of putting on this event?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

I assume Councillor Cohen is referring to an event held on Friday 4 July. It was organised at my request, on assuming the Environment and Transport portfolio, to meet with the Director of Environment and Transport, his management team and other Senior Officers to discuss forthcoming budget and other policy matters. Councillor Rams, Assistant Cabinet Member, was also in attendance.

The cost of the day was £408 inc. vat, which included coffee, lunch for nine and the usual meeting room facilities.

Question 20

Councillor Dean Cohen

Please would the Cabinet member join me in paying tribute to Barnet's students for their excellent GCSE and A-Level results?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Yes, I congratulate pupils and their teachers on another outstanding set of results.

Provisional figures show there was a 3.3% rise in the number of pupils gaining 5 or more higher grade GCSE passes. This gives Barnet a 74% success rate compared with 66% nationally. The percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A* – C including English and Maths improved by 3.9% up to 63%.

Provisional results at 'A' level show a slight improvement on last year and again puts Barnet's overall performance above the national average.

Question 21

Councillor Alison Moore

Has the Mayor of London agreed to fund any safety improvements at Henlys Corner yet?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Transport for London are in the process of developing a pedestrian crossing and safety scheme for Henlys Corner. Representatives from Barnet met with Senior TfL Officers on 12 August to discuss this scheme. Further development work is required and the Council requested that TfL provide further technical information about the scheme and also the potential impact it may have on a larger scale scheme in the future. If money were not likely to be available, I don't think TfL would be in a position to discuss any proposals with us. However, at the present time, the scheme is not yet fully drawn, is not formally approved and has not been subject to public consultation.

Question 22**Councillor Wayne Casey**

Will the Leader confirm that an investigation is taking place in to the increases in the projected final costs for the Aerodrome Bridge Replacement scheme and will the leader tell me when he expects the investigation to be completed?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Leader has asked me to reply. Yes, an investigation is taking place; completion is expected by the end of this month.

Question 23**Councillor Ross Houston**

At the last Council meeting the Cabinet Member said that Barnet was one of three boroughs that collectively delivered 2,258 affordable homes in 2006/7 and that if every London Borough achieved these levels London would deliver over 24,000 affordable homes a year. Given that Barnet's contribution to those 2,258 affordable homes was only 59 how will Barnet achieve its London Plan target, and how will Barnet re-house the 16,000 families who are currently on the housing waiting list?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

With regard to the London Plan, the new Mayor set out recently in July his direction of travel in 'Planning for a Better London'. The Mayor highlighted the need to deliver 50,000 new homes between 2008 and 2011 by working in partnership with the boroughs rather than by setting a prescriptive target. The Mayor is currently progressing an alteration to the London Plan to remove the 50% affordable housing target. It is estimated that the London Plan alterations and the Mayor's new Housing Strategy will be published in the next 6 months.

The Barnet Unitary Development Plan sets out a broad target of half of new homes to be affordable either through shared ownership/intermediate or social rent. Barnet however is not immune to the credit crunch and the serious downturn in the housing market for which most housing associations (RSL's) are also affected is having a major impact on the financing and delivery of new homes. Barnet along with every part of the country is closely monitoring the global financial and housing market situation and where necessary London-wide housing targets may require reviewing.

The waiting list at 30 June 2008 in Barnet comprised 14600 households. Of these, 2424 are homeless and in some form of temporary accommodation, and another 2547 are Council and Housing Association tenants who have registered for a transfer. The remaining 9600 or so are waiting list applicants, who will have varying degrees of priority for housing.

Essentially not everyone on the waiting list is necessarily in urgent housing need. The list includes those who consider affordable housing as their preferred or one of a number of housing options, and those who decide to get onto the waiting list ladder before they need or want to move, particularly as the priority system is heavily based on waiting time.

Clearly, there is not enough affordable housing to meet this current demand in the Borough, and we have and are working to develop a range of options to prevent homelessness and to assist households access the private rented sector as an alternative to affordable housing.

Our approach currently includes:

- A rent deposit scheme to help people access the private rented sector
- Private landlords forum
- Housing Options and advice service
- Sanctuary scheme to help victims of domestic violence remain in their home

The challenge presented is not of course unique to Barnet. All Boroughs face, to varying degrees given the affordability gap a difficulty in managing and reducing their waiting lists. Barnet's waiting list remains average in relation to London as a whole with figures for other authorities ranging for example from approximately 5700 in Richmond, 7000 in Enfield and 12000 in Hounslow to 15000 in Ealing and 29000 in Newham.

The strategic approach the Council is adopting to housing supply through the preparation of actions plans and other planning strategies has the benefit of creating certainty and the conditions necessary for speedy delivery in any market upturn.

Question 24

Councillor Wayne Casey

In all its catering arrangements, what effort is made by the Council to ensure suppliers supply and use only free range products (i.e. where animal welfare is of paramount importance, where the routine use of antibiotics, steroids, hormones and growth promoters is avoided and where animals are fed with full traceability) and to what extent does the Council encourage schools etc to do the same?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Free range products are not generally purchased by in house managed school kitchens due to the substantial additional costs of these products. Sourcing sufficiently large quantities of free range products would also be a major problem, particularly for poultry.

Schools that arrange their own catering make their purchasing decisions according to their own priorities.

Question 25

Councillor Julie Johnson

Has Barnet Homes concluded its negotiations with its contractors to finalise a price for the window replacement programme on the West Hendon estate, and if so what will the final cost be, and what will the final average bill to leaseholders be?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Costs have been finalised with a total scheme cost of £900,000. The average leasehold bill for window replacements will be £940 after the discount has been applied.

Question 26

Councillor Wayne Casey

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that Crown Group Services (or Crown Protection Services) have a contract with the London Borough of Barnet to both deal with dangerous dogs and rescue and re-home other dogs?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Council currently employs a private company called The Crown Protection Service (CPS), to deal with stray dogs throughout the Borough on its behalf, under Section 149 of the Environment Protection Act 1990. The CPS operate a 24-hour, 7-day a week service, providing collection, receiving, kennelling, care and re-homing of dogs. The arrangement with the Council has been in operation since May 2004 following the decision to cease the in-house Dog Warden Service. Previous legal advice confirmed that the requirements of the law were being adequately met in discharging the Council's animal warden function to the CPS.

The CPS are not employed to deal with dangerous dogs. Dangerous dog-related complaints may be passed to the police direct for them to deal with, while those that are logged at the Council on its Customer Care Unit system are sent through to the police and RSPCA to deal with. The police have launched BARK – a multi agency group including the RSPCA, and a number of departments from the Council, to manage and deal with dangerous dog issues.

Question 27**Councillor Anita Campbell**

What works are being done on the Dollis Valley estate as part of the window replacement programme announced by the Cabinet Member in her budget speech?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Houses which form part of the retained housing on the Dollis Valley are currently having their windows replaced by United House. This work is following on from the internal works that are also being carried out to these homes. 90 homes are included within these works. These are located in Meadow Close and Crocus Field.

Question 28**Councillor Wayne Casey**

To what extent do the current systems of public finance (including conventions such as the Barnett Formula) disadvantage local authorities in London and the South East and has any attempt been made to calculate how much this system actually costs Council Tax-payers (across the various bandings) in the London Borough of Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

It is widely accepted that current systems disadvantage London and South East councils. They are designed in such a way that enables Ministers to influence the balance of funding between regions. For example, Government grants to individual local authorities take account of Government determined relative spending needs and the resources that can be raised locally, a system known as equalisation. Councils with higher 'needs' receive more grant than councils with relatively lower needs or a larger taxable property base. This system is quite sophisticated but open to manipulation by changing the proportion of grant and / or the method of allocation targeted at need.

During the life of the present Government, ever more grant is being allocated according to their measures of need. In addition, their measures of need have been changed to take account of factors much less favourable to London and the South East, despite wide-spread concern that these factors are at best flawed and at worst deliberately chosen to target areas outside of the South East. It is probably not a coincidence that the present Cabinet membership represents poorer urban areas mainly outside of the South East.

Looking beyond Local Government Finance, for several years the Government's regional regeneration programmes have targeted billions of pounds on declining former industrial areas, especially in the north. Questions are now being raised as to how effective these programmes have been, especially now when much of the planned housing growth is in or around the South East. Failure in the North may be contrasted with the success of London Docklands.

The Barnett Formula is interesting in that it enables Scotland and Wales to receive financial benefits from England in the same way that the rest of England gains from London and the South East. At the same time, fear of losing votes in the 'less well off' areas has stopped Ministers making changes to address weaknesses in the Barnett Formula and local government finance.

The complexity of public finance makes it very difficult, perhaps impossible, to calculate definitive figures of how much London and Barnet have been disadvantaged financially. A big part of the problem is that only the Government has the necessary data to attempt such a calculation.

Despite this lack of information, a September 2007 report by the South East Counties Leaders attempted to match tax paid by individuals and business to Government expenditure by regions. The results for 2005/06 showed London making a net contribution to public finances of around £9bn based on location of residence (table below). This equates to a net contribution of £1,200 per head.

The above figures include business rates but looking at them in isolation, in 2008/9 Barnet contributes £95m to the national pool and gets back £79m, a loss of £16m. Indeed, Barnet's contribution to the pool exceeds its total Formula Grant by £5m (or £38 per band D property). If Barnet was able to exchange this year's local business receipts for Formula Grant it could reduce the council tax to just below the 2007/08 tax (i.e. a reduction of over 3.5%).

Finally, we have specific examples of how Barnet has been disadvantaged by micro changes to the system:

- In 2006/07, Government changed the way money was allocated for adult social services, which would have lost the capital £150m straight away if it were not for the transitional floor protection system (in itself an indication of how fragile the workings of Formula Grant are). We estimate that Barnet will lose over £1m grant per annum once transitional protection runs out (equivalent to a 0.7% increase on Barnet's 2008/9 council tax).
- Beginning in 2008/9, Government started to reduce the level of floor protection. This will speed up the drain of resources away from London and Barnet.
- As outlined at the beginning, the increased allocation of grant to need hits Barnet in particular as it is regarded as a relatively low need, property rich council. However, quantification would only be possible by government due to the complexities of the grant system.

It is clear that Government intends to continue taking resources away from London and the South East. This will become increasingly apparent through pressure to increase London's Council Taxes to pay for the regions.

Regional contributions to UK public finances 2005/06			
	Residence (£bn)	Workplace (£bn)	Mid-point (£bn)
North East	-8	-7.9	-8
North West	-11.8	-11.2	-11.5
Yorkshire & the Humber	-8.4	-8.1	-8.2
East Midlands	-0.8	-2.1	-1.4
West Midlands	-5	-5.3	-5.1
Eastern	5.1	3.2	4.2
Greater London	9.2	16.1	12.6
South East	15.1	12.1	13.6
South West	-5.1	-5	-5
Wales	-8.9	-9.1	-9
Scotland	-0.2	-0.9	-0.6
Northern Ireland	-7.3	-7.1	-7.2
UK	-26.1	-26.1	-26.1

Notes: Contributions include income tax, business rates, VAT, corporation tax, stamp duty, council tax etc.

Question 29

Councillor Jim Tierney

Are homes that will be delivered on the major regeneration estates included in the Council's housing trajectory report?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Yes, the regeneration schemes are included in the housing trajectory.

Question 30**Councillor Claire Farrier**

Why doesn't the Cabinet Member reduce the cost, or remove the cost altogether, of parking in the Watling car-park in order to encourage shoppers to park there rather than in residential streets?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Council reduced the tariff last year in the Watling Avenue Car Park in order to encourage improved usage. Previously motorists paid £1.50 for parking up to one hour with £3 over 90 minutes. This changed to £1 for up to one hour and £1.50 after 90 minutes. As a result of the reduction in charge, patronage of the car park has increased significantly with usage levels commensurate with earlier years when charges were first applied.

Removing charges in the car park will not address the parking issues of the area. Free parking close to the tube station will most likely attract more traffic in from surrounding areas. A charge regime helps to manage the availability of spaces and optimise usage both for regular parkers and occasional visitors to the area, which in turn leads to increased vitality in the area generally. Given the current investigations into deterring non-residential parking in the area, the car park is integral in dealing with the displacement of non-resident, long term parking from the wider Burnt Oak area.

Question 31**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

When will the Freedom Pass be extended to operate 24 hours a day?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

I am pleased to report that as part of his newly-announced fair and affordable fares package for 2009, Mayor Johnson has said that the Freedom Pass will be extended to 24-hours-a-day.

Question 32**Councillor Alison Moore**

At the last meeting of the Cabinet Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet Member said she hadn't decided whether grant-funded organisations that would lose their funding as a result of moving to the new third sector commissioning strategy would have their grant tapered to give them more time to find alternative funding. When will she make up her mind?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

It is not my intention to rush into ill-considered decisions on grants and I will consider service requirements on a market by market basis in line with our priorities. Where we intend to de-commission or re-commission a service, we will be open and say so. This has been agreed with the third sector. The Barnet Change-Up Group will be the forum for discussing detailed implementation of the changes and identifying best practice, but we will consult more widely where necessary.

Question 33**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

The Council has made a series of cock-ups in the procurement of contracts and contractors over the last few years including meals on wheels, re-cycling, and the Aerodrome Road bridge replacement. The Council has also failed to make the savings it budgeted for from procurement. Is the Council capable of wholesale outsourcing as envisaged by the Future Shape of the Organisation project, and what protection will local people and services have if things go wrong?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The Councillor exposes his ignorance of contract procurement and risk management by his question. This Administration has an enviable record in financial management reflected in:

- the rebuilding of reserves from the perilous situation his party left the Council;
- from the vastly improved CPA; score and
- the robust judgements on the Council's use of resources assessment by independent inspectors.

Question 34**Councillor Julie Johnson**

There has been about a 300% increase in investment in sailing as a sport in this country since the Sydney Olympics. In Barnet there has been an increase of about 3 second-hand dinghies. What more is Barnet Council intending to do to encourage sailing amongst young people in the Borough given the wonderful local resource of the Welsh Harp?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer / Councillor Richard Cornelius

Young people in Barnet also have access to sailing opportunities as part of the London Youth Games, through a partnership with a local voluntary organisation. The Youth Service also supports a wide range of sporting activities and broader recreational opportunities and further activities are provided by the voluntary and private sectors. Those opportunities were further enhanced this summer with the range of activities provided by the Summer University programme.

Question 35**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Is the Administration going to sell off or outsource the management of any of our parks to a private contractor?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

A number of parks, parts of parks, nature reserves etc are currently leased to various organisations and trusts who manage these sites, for example Avenue House. There are proposals in the Brent Cross regeneration plan that the management of the current and the new parks that fall within this area may be managed by a management company; these will still remain the property of the Council.

Question 36**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

As discussed at the last Council meeting, the half-price travel concession for people on income support ended in August which means that those 2307 residents in Barnet who benefitted from this scheme will now be experiencing a 50% bus fare hike. When will the new replacement concession be introduced, and how will these residents be assisted in the meantime?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

I am pleased to report that as part of his newly-announced fair and affordable fares package for 2009, Mayor Johnson has said that there will be a new, half-price travel scheme for Londoners on income support, to be funded by the Mayor and Transport for London rather than by the people of Venezuela.

Question 37**Councillor Alison Moore**

Exactly how many people in Barnet are in receipt of direct payments and what is the breakdown between older adults and younger adults?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

There are 293 younger Adults in receipt of direct payments and 207 Older Adults. The following table shows the numbers of people in receipt of direct payments by service area. The total number of adults in receipt of direct payments is 500 and there are a further 57 parents of Disabled Children. *(These figures do not include Carers direct payments).*

Service Area	Number (July 2008)
Physical and Sensory Impairment	167
Learning Disabilities	72
Mental Health	51
Older Adults Mental Health	3
Total Younger Adults	293

Service Area	Number (July 2008)
Physical and Sensory Impairment	167
Learning Disabilities	72
Mental Health	51
Older Adults Mental Health	3
Total Younger Adults	293

Older Adults	207
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Total Adults	500
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Parents of Disabled Children	57
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Question 38

Councillor Kath McGuirk

The Council has rightly ruled out reducing the number of bin collections, have they ruled out reducing the size of bins?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Council currently has no plans to reduce the size of container offered to residents either for domestic refuse or for green garden / kitchen waste collections.

For operational reasons, we take a one size approach to refuse containers and supply a 240 litre container to all residents who do not have communal waste collection arrangements.

Question 39

Councillor Barry Rawlings

What is more important: providing vulnerable residents with much needed adaptations in their homes or providing Directors with 40+ inch flat screen televisions in their offices?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

The issue of Presentation screens to Senior Management and major adaptations are completely different. The screens are a sensible saving as Senior Management no longer have to hire audio visual equipment. Major adaptations are provided by Barnet Homes and the annual funding has been increased from £500,000 to £1,300,000.