

Council Questions to Cabinet Members
27 January 2009
Questions and Responses

Question 1

Councillor Monroe Palmer

In the latest edition of Barnet First it says: that money deposited with Icelandic banks, and other financial institutions 'is made up from money collected from council tax payments, housing rents, Business Rates, government grants, capital receipts and other income paid to the Council'. Why doesn't it mention the Millions of pounds borrowed from Public works loans board and not spent?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The Barnet First article was giving a flavour of the different sources of cash that make up our cash deposits and was not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Question 2

Councillor Brian Gordon

I recently received a representation by the Hale Association who were concerned about the hasty removal of trees by Council contractors in various roads within the Hale Ward. It does seem that trees are sometimes being removed for reasons that are not clearly explained. Could you please comment on the methods that are employed to ensure that trees are only removed when they are defective, dangerous or problematic or for some other acceptable reason and that the Council will ensure that all proper notices and explanations are given to residents?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

All street trees in Barnet are inspected every three years prior to their cyclical maintenance by Tree Officers employed by the Council. The contractors employed by the Council only implement works on instruction from the Council's Tree Officers. Trees on the highway are only removed when found to be in one or more of the various conditions described in the question. The current policy requires Officers to inform Members when healthy trees are removed as a result of building subsidence or for vehicle crossovers. It does not require officers to advise Members when trees need felling if they are found in a potentially dangerous condition as the notification process may prolong what could be a potentially dangerous situation placing the Council at risk and others in harm's way. Officers will however always advise Members of the need for felling works if there are large numbers of trees being felled, as for example in the case of West Heath Avenue, where a large number of horse chestnuts were felled and the stations replanted.

Question 3

Councillor Barry Rawlings

What role has the Future Shape of the Council played in the budget setting process for 2009/10?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The budget has a provision for costs that may be incurred in assessing the options for the Future Shape of the Council.

Question 4

Councillor Monroe Palmer

In the latest edition of Barnet First it states about getting early repayment of the £27.4 million in Icelandic Banks that 'the deposits could not have been recovered or at least without very substantial early redemption penalties'. Could the Leader inform us as to when we requested terms for early repayment, in particular in January, February, March and April 2008 (or at any other time) and what redemption penalties were quoted / offered by Glitnir and Landsbanki?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

No formal requests were made for the early repayment of deposits from the Icelandic banks. The Council did not receive indication from the Council's treasury advisors of significant concerns that would have led officers to seek such terms. The point is that had we been advised to withdraw our deposits by our advisers this could only have been done by incurring penalties.

Question 5

Councillor Brian Gordon

There are still many streets within Barnet that have road humps. Many people would like these humps to be removed altogether. Is there any programme in existence the continued removal of humps?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

There is no budget specifically for the removal of road humps. The Council takes the opportunity, in roads where we are carrying out resurfacing works, to review the effectiveness of existing traffic management measures that include road humps, speed tables and cushions. As part of the resurfacing activity it has always been the case that the existing surface is removed, which includes any features in the road. To assist in the decision whether to replace, a comprehensive consultation exercise is carried out that considers responses from residents / occupiers, emergency services (police, ambulance and fire brigade) and ward councillors supported by a technical assessment of whether the measures are meeting the original objectives and are still appropriate for modern day traffic demands. This is a continuing process and to date there have been no instances of roads being resurfaced followed by reinstatement of road humps.

Question 6

Councillor Julie Johnson

Will the Cabinet Member for Crime and Community Safety be pressing to ensure that if the Mayor of London proceeds with the policy to place PCSOs rather than conductors on open platform buses that there will be no reduction in PCSOs in terms of hours or personnel in Barnet to support this policy, and no reduction in Barnet's proportion of the Met's budget as a result?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

I know of no such plans.

Question 7

Councillor Monroe Palmer

In the latest edition of Barnet First it says 'the Icelandic deposits were made, up to two years ago'. Would the Leader confirm that a truer and fuller statement would have been that £15 million was invested 15 months ago and is not due to mature until September 2010; that £5.4million was invested in January / February 2007, maturing in February / March 2009; that £7mil was invested in November 2006 and should have matured in November 2008?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The article in Barnet First was intended to give residents an overview in that the first monies were deposited with an Icelandic bank in September 2006 and this deposit was subsequently rolled over in September 2007, though the interest on that initial deposit was paid to the Council. As is noted in the question, other deposits were made in November January, February and November 2007. A comprehensive and more technical report is in the public domain for any resident or Councillor seeking the facts.

Question 8

Councillor Brian Gordon

Can we please have an update on the progress and effectiveness of the new street lights around the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The new street lighting programme includes the removal and replacement of 16,754 columns which equates to around 69% of the existing lighting columns lighting the Borough's roads. The programme has now been running for 2.5 years including January 2009 and to date 9,375 new lighting columns have been installed and 6,395 existing columns have been removed. Of the new columns installed 7,468 are fully operational. The remaining newly installed columns are in the process of having the electricity supplies connected or are going through the inspection and certification process. All lighting columns which could be deemed as life-expired have been removed and hence any risk in the structural integrity of life-expired equipment has been removed. Where new lighting columns have been installed, the levels of lighting has been greatly improved. Each road now meets the lighting levels recommended in the British Standard Code of Practice for lighting roads and footpaths. This Code of Practice requires the full width of the road and footpath to be lit to designated levels, whereas the lighting which existed previously would have been designed solely to provide a specific lighting level on the road with no consideration given to the footway. Therefore not only has the lighting been improved on the roads but the adjacent footway has now been lit to a desirable standard to ensure safe passage for road users and pedestrians.

Where new lighting has been installed in Town Centre locations the light source has been changed to a pure white light output and this provides benefits in improving the images of the CCTV cameras operating in these locations.

Once installed there is an ongoing requirement under the PFI contract for the lighting levels to be continually checked to ensure that the improved lighting is maintained for the duration of the contract term. To date these checks have confirmed full compliance with the designed and approved lighting levels in all those streets where the new lighting has been installed.

Question 9

Councillor Claire Farrier

Residents in Burnt Oak and neighbouring wards are as upset about the possibility of a road round the perimeter of Montrose Park as they are about a road through the middle of the park – will the Cabinet Member assure me that there will not be a road over, under, through or around Montrose Park as part of the regeneration plans for the area?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The recent Colindale Area Action Plan Preferred Options paper has identified a number of potential routes that could provide the necessary additional movement capacity to meet the predicted travel needs of the new community. There are no firm proposals at this time and further work is being carried out to identify travel flows and desire lines to assist in the planning of transport services. Future proposals will be fully consulted with the local community.

Question 10

Councillor Monroe Palmer

At the last Council Meeting, I queried why the funds held by Barnet's Pension Fund had, despite external Auditor's recommendation, been pooled with funds held by the Council, resulting in potential losses from balances held in Icelandic banks. I was promised a meeting with The Leader and the Director of Resources to clarify the situation. The meeting did not take place nor had it been arranged by 1 January 2009. Can I now have an answer in public as to why the Auditors recommendation had not been adhered to?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The Councillor is, I believe, confused. The Auditor did not require the deposits and investments to be separate for investment purposes but that the accounting of the returns to be in separate bank accounts.

After an investigation of the alternative options for holding the cash of the Barnet Pension Fund, officers have begun work to enable the creation of a separate bank account. This involves a number of process and system changes that require implementation. The creation of a separate account would not, however, have changed the process for pooling the cash of the Barnet Pension Fund with that of the Council.

The Councillor was entirely at liberty to arrange a meeting with the relevant officers had he so wished. I understand that the meeting has been arranged.

Question 11

Councillor Brian Gordon

There have been press reports about a possible Government directive to impose an extra levy on residents for the collection of surplus “uncyclable” rubbish. What would be the Council’s response to this?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

In the Climate Change Act 2008 power has been given for local authorities to pilot incentives for household waste minimisation and recycling. This power allows local authorities to recognise the efforts of those who reduce, reuse or recycle their waste, and to incentivise others to change their behaviour such as by charging for waste collection. A maximum of five local authorities will be able to run pilot schemes.

Barnet Council will not be participating in this pilot as the pilots have to be revenue neutral and we believe that this will be impossible to achieve as they will be cumbersome to administer. In addition the council already has an effective scheme to encourage participating in the recycling services, i.e. our Compulsory Recycling. So, the benefits of participating in such a pilot would be less than for other authorities who do not have a Compulsory Recycling scheme.

Question 12

Councillor Alison Moore

What consultation with the voluntary sector – particularly the Borough’s advice agencies – did the Council undertake prior to publishing the proposal to cut the Welfare Rights Unit?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Consultation takes place after the Budget headlines are published.

Question 13

Councillor Monroe Palmer

In this time of financial pressure does The Leader feel that regard should be taken of London Councils October 2006 Report of the Independent panel to review the remuneration scheme for Councillors in London which whilst accepting Special Responsibility Allowances, states “We reiterate that not more than 50% of Councillors should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) and that only one SRA should be paid to a Councillor in respect of duties with the same authority”.

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The report to which the Councillor refers came out in October 2006. I am unclear as to why Cllr Monroe Palmer would want to suggest the selective implementation of recommendation number 8 but not the other 13. If we are to be guided by the Report from the Independent Panel on the Remuneration of Councillors in London, then we should take account of the whole range of its findings.

This Council's basic allowance figure is just under the level the London Councils report suggested at the time. But the suggested remuneration for Council Leaders (Band 4 in the LC report) was £51,191, which compares very favourably, at least from the taxpayer’s point of view at least, to the Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the Leader of Barnet, just over £34,000 in 2008/09.

Question 14**Councillor Hugh Rayner**

Please could the Leader outline the likely impact of the planned increase in National Insurance in 2011 will have on future Council Budgets?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

£500,000.

Question 15**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Will the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport be pressing to ensure that there will be no reduction in TfLs spending in the outer-London Boroughs, including Barnet, as a result of the extra expenditure required for the proposed new open platform buses that will replace articulated buses on a number of London bus routes?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

There is no information available regarding the cost of future bus provision. Meanwhile, Barnet Council takes every opportunity to obtain funding from TfL and other external sources, to invest in the borough's transport network.

Question 16**Councillor Wayne Casey**

Would the Leader of the Council confirm what, to the best of his knowledge, are the Nolan Committee's Seven Principles of Public Life?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Question 17**Councillor Joan Scannell**

Please could the Cabinet Member tell us where our recycled materials end up?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Over 95 percent of the materials that are collected for recycling, both at the Civic Amenity and Recycling Centre and through the kerbside black and blue recycling box scheme are reprocessed in the UK.

Information on the outlets for all our materials is published on our website (barnet.gov.uk). Outlets for materials collected as part of the black and blue box recycling scheme include:

- Paper – this is taken to the Aylesford Newsprint paper mill in Kent, where it is made back into newspapers again.
- Glass – as we collect the three colours of glass separately our glass is able to go back into the container industry. Our glass is taken to O-I Manufacturing (UK) Ltd in Harlow, where it is made back into glass bottles and jars.
- Cardboard – this is taken to Edwards Recycling in Barking, for onward transport to Smurfit Kappa in Kent, where it is made into "Kraft" which is the thick, brown packaging paper that normally lines the inside of cardboard boxes.
- Plastic bottles – these are taken to JayPlas Leicestershire where the plastic bottles are sorted into the different polymer types. They are then granulated and turned into new plastic products such as pipes, in Leicestershire.
- Cans, aerosols and foil – these are taken to South Wales where the steel and aluminium cans are sorted. The steel cans are put into the steel industry to make items such as car parts, and the aluminium cans are taken to Warrington, where they are made back into aluminium cans again.

Question 18**Councillor Gill Sargeant**

What is the new date for the completion of Aerodrome Bridge Road?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

There have been delays recently due to the scale of the works undertaken by the statutory undertakers, particularly EDF. The completion date within the current agreed programme is early May.

Question 19**Councillor Wayne Casey**

Would the Leader of the Council confirm the pay range of the Directors, Executive Directors and Chief Executive's salaries before the General Functions Committee Meeting on 8 December 2008 and after as a result of the decisions taken in relation to the item on the Directors, Executive Directors and Chief Executive's grading structure?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the CouncilCurrent Grading Band For Directors

Directors	
Pay Spine	Salary 1/4/07
308	115113
309	117987
310	120939
311	124056
312	127065
313	130155
314	133437
315	136461

Revised Grading Band For Directors (Including The Pending Pay Award)

Directors	
Pay Spine	
308	120000
309	123000
310	126084
311	129240
312	132480
313	135792
314	139200
315	142680
316	146256
317	149916
318	153672
319	157524
320	161460
321	165504
322	169644
323	175000

Current Grading Band For Executive Directors

Executive Directors	
Pay Spine	Salary 1/4/07
401	143703
402	147225
403	150888
404	154569
405	158340
406	162204
407	166161
408	170217

Revised Grading Band For Executive Directors Including The Pending Pay Award)

Executive Directors	
Pay Spine	Salary 1/4/07
404	170026
405	174174
406	178424
407	182777
408	187239

Question 20

Councillor Kate Salinger

How many schools in Barnet were graded outstanding by Ofsted in the academic year 2007/8?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

13 schools were graded outstanding last year, more than in any other London Borough. They were; Courtland Primary School, Deansbrook Infant School, Hasmorean Primary School, Independent Jewish day School, Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School, Queen Elizabeth's School, St Margaret's Nursery School, St Michael's Catholic Grammar School, St Vincent's RC School, The Annunciation RC Junior School, The Henrietta Barnett School, The Ravenscroft School and Whitefield School.

Question 21

Councillor Geof Cooke

Is the Council drying wet cardboard from re-cycling collections before weighing it?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The council does not dry the cardboard before it is reprocessed. Cardboard is collected from the blue recycling boxes, and taken to the depot in Mill Hill. The collection vehicles are weighed as they enter the site. The cardboard is stored outside before being passed through the baling machine. The bales of cardboard are then stored outside. This is standard industry practise for loose and baled cardboard to be stored outside.

When there is a vehicle load of baled cardboard, approximately once a week, it is sent to a bulking depot in Barking. Before the vehicle leaves the depot it is weighed, and when it arrives at the bulking depot it is weighed again.

At the bulking depot the cardboard is stored outside, before being transported to Kent, where the reprocessing company turn it into 'Kraft', a form of cardboard. There is no harm done to the cardboard in storing it outside and it getting wet, and again, this is standard industry practise.

Question 22**Councillor Jack Cohen**

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that, as stated in the Action Sheet of the Finchley and Golders Green Residents Forum, a private company by the name of Crown Protection Services (CPS) is carrying out, on behalf of the Council, the functions of section 149 of the relevant Act relating to stray dogs? If so, can he supply details of the company providing such services for the Council under the Act, and its activities, including: the names of principal directors or proprietors; location of kennels and the name under which they are registered; the date the kennels were last inspected; the amounts paid to the Company, and the number of dogs dealt with including those returned to owners and those put down.

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Yes.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 Section 149 requires that every Local Authority should appoint an officer to deal with stray dogs; the functions of Section 149, however, may be discharged to another person by a Local Authority. The Council currently employs a private company, (the Crown Protection Service) to deal with stray dogs throughout the borough on its behalf under Section 149 of the EPA 1990.

CPS is located at: The Pound, Cool Oak Lane, London NW9 7NB and is registered as Crown Protection Services Limited, which is part of Crown Group Services. The principal Operations Director is Mr Paul Barnes.

The CPS operate a 24-hour 7-day a week service, providing collection, receiving, kennelling, care and re-homing of dogs. This arrangement 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. CPS also provides canine solutions for various industrial needs such as search and detection dogs.

CPS premises are an animal boarding establishment as they look after dogs on the Council's behalf. This requires a licence which has now been confirmed and issued. Before a licence is granted, animal welfare checks are made on the Council's behalf by the Corporation of London. Once a licence is granted, periodic checks are made to ensure that licence conditions are complied with. The premises were last inspected on 13 January 2009.

From April to December 2008 CPS received 1260 calls, an average 140 calls each month, on various dog management issues. They reunited 207 dogs with owners and re-homed 72 in centres such as Battersea Dog Home.

Question 23**Councillor Tom Davey**

Please could the Cabinet Member inform us how successful the Cashless Parking Pilot has been?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The cashless parking scheme trial was implemented in September 2008. To date, it has been very well received. Our initial assessment expected us to reach a 15 percent take up of cashless parking in off street car parks. So far, almost 10 percent of the weekly revenue taken in car parks is received via the cashless systems. With two and a half months left in the trial, we're confident that the 15 percent expected take up will be achieved.

Initial feedback from officers using the system and from the public has been positive. It is felt that this scheme enhances the payment options available.

Question 24**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What consultation with service users of the Welfare Rights Unit was undertaken prior to the publication of the proposal to cut the Welfare Rights Unit?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Consultation takes place after the Budget headlines are published.

Question 25**Councillor Wayne Casey**

Was the authorisation for the deposit of £27.4M in Icelandic institutions given by a Chief Officer of the Council or a more junior officer?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Deposits are made daily and are a routine activity of the Treasury Management Team within Resources. The team is headed up by the Treasury Manager (who is Association of Corporate Treasurers qualified), and reports to the Head of Strategic Finance, who in turn reports to the Chief Finance Officer.

Question 26**Councillor Brian Gordon**

For how many successive years has our Council managed to keep Council Tax increases below inflation and how has this been achieved?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Unlike the previous Labour / LibDem coalition who increased Council Tax above inflation every year they ran the Council, this will be the 5th year in succession we have delivered a below RPI increase in Council Tax. We are one of only a handful of London Councils to have achieved this.

This has been done by tight budget setting and control. We have consistently reduced the base budget by £10m every year, largely through efficiency measures that protect priority services. We have ensured spending is within budget through rigorous budget monitoring and proactive budget management. All this has been during a period of below inflation grant settlements i.e. real term grant cuts.

Question 27**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

At the last Council meeting the Leader told me that the Council's Equality Scheme was ambitious and that equalities performance was being monitored by testing the equality impact of key corporate priorities. Which key corporate priority does the cessation of the Welfare Rights Unit come under and what equality impact assessment was undertaken prior to the publication of the proposal?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

An equality impact assessment has just been completed and the results will inform the final decision following the publication of the draft budget. Targeting resources to achieve maximum effective use of resources cuts across all priorities.

Question 28**Councillor Bridget Perry**

What grade did Barnet Children's Services receive in its Annual Performance Assessment?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Barnet Children's services received a good grade in its annual performance assessment with an outstanding grade for the enjoy and achieve element of the assessment. This maintains last year's excellent performance and underlines that Barnet's children's services are among the best in the country.

Question 29**Councillor Ross Houston**

Has the Mayor of London replied to Barnet Council's submission on his indicative affordable housing targets for the Borough, and if so what is his response?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

As a result of our submission, Officers met with officers of the GLA on 24 November where it was recognised that Barnet's affordable housing targets were extremely challenging, particularly without additional funding from the HCA London board. It was agreed that additional investment opportunities would be explored. Further discussions will be held over the next few weeks.

Question 30**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Can the Leader please comment on the latest Government Formula Grant Settlement for the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Barnet's grant increase is 2.2% below the national settlement of 2.8%

The percentages cannot hide the poor settlement for London in particular where grant increases will not be enough to meet inflationary pressures let alone new service demands. In fact, it is likely that the NLWA levy increase alone will exceed the grant increase. The current minister has made it quite clear his intention to help his northern supporters by continuing to drain grant away from the economic capital of the UK to the less successful regions. As evidence I need only refer to the flawed changes made in the last couple of years to grant allocations for adult social services that have deprived London of much needed resources to support the vulnerable.

Question 31**Councillor Alison Moore**

When will a suitable pedestrian facility be introduced at Henlys Corner so that all members of the community can cross the road in safety?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Council and TfL are working together to further develop a scheme which would provide pedestrian crossings on all arms of the junction whilst minimising delay to traffic.

There are several statutory processes TfL will need to complete, including tendering for the construction contract. Assuming all statutory processes and approvals are achieved, and current timescales are met, the scheme will be completed in 2011.

Question 32**Councillor Brian Salinger**

What steps has the Cabinet Member taken to ascertain if the Stanley Road Association still exists and if it has complied with the requirements of a registered charity? It is acknowledged that the Trust have not complied with the terms of the lease. What action does the Cabinet Member propose taking and when, to bring this land back in to beneficial use?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The Association who are holding over under a lease are claiming charitable relief from rates on the land. Investigations with the charities commission are in hand to determine the status of the charity. Property services were already arranging to meet with the Association to discuss their plans for the site in the next few weeks, as the indicated at a meeting in the summer that they did not wish to relinquish possession and intended that the site would be used. If appropriate proposals for the use are not forthcoming the option of enforcing the covenants in the lease is available to the Council.

Question 33**Councillor Andrew McNeil**

What is being done to help progress the development of 432 Long Lane and the adjoining land?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

Terms were agreed with Home group for the disposal and development of the site and draft contracts have been drawn up. A delay occurred due to Home group having to re-finance all their proposed schemes as a consequence of the downturn in the market. This re-financing has now been undertaken and approved and the contracts have been sent to them for engrossment and completion, which is anticipated to be imminent.

The development which received planning permission for 4x4 bed houses, 1x5 bed house, and 1x3 bed wheelchair unit is scheduled to start on site this year. The Council will get nomination rights on the completed units.

Question 34**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Cabinet Member tell the Council what steps are being taken to either dispose of Park House in East Finchley or to find an alternative use for the building? How much has been spent to date on securing the property and how much (per week or month) is being spent on security and other outgoings?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Members will recall this site has had a chequered history following the collapse of the secret deal by the previous Labour / Lib Dem Administration to close East Finchley Library and relocate it to this site together with a Waitrose Supermarket. Since then the site has been rented by The Institute and following their relocation was remarketed for sale.

The sale of this site did not complete due to legal problems over claims of rights of access benefiting the adjoining property. While these are resolved the property is being secured by the company "Camelot" and the costs involved are detailed below. The property has been marketed for a short term letting and expressions of interest have been received from various groups. Another London Borough are currently assessing the viability of taking it for the temporary relocation of one of their educational uses. They will give us a firmer indication of their intentions at the end of January. We also have interest from organisations who would consider occupying part, however this could require significant management.

The total costs incurred since October 2007, are £33,087, which include the security costs, utilities and costs associated with the abortive marketing.

Question 35**Councillor Zakia Zubairi**

What is the Cabinet Member doing to press the Mayor to extend the 24 hour Freedom Pass to national overground rail services in London?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

I would not wish to tread on the toes of our excellent GLA member, Councillor Brian Coleman; I suggest this is taken up with him.

Question 36**Councillor Brian Salinger**

The former registry office in High Barnet has been empty for some years and I understand it is now the responsibility of the Coroners office. Does the Cabinet Member know when the building will be brought back in beneficial use?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The refurbishment works are imminent and expected to be completed mid 2009.

Question 37

Councillor Gill Sargeant

What implications are there for the Fairview development at the Colindale Hospital site of the difficulties encountered on the Aerodrome Bridge Road project?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

The answer is none. The Aerodrome Road project to replace two rail bridges and lower the road is progressing to completion this year. The scale of the works is unaltered and when finished will enable scheduled bus services to use Aerodrome Road for the first time, significantly improving public transport accessibility and permeability especially to the eastern part of the regeneration area.

Question 38

Councillor Brian Salinger

How does the Cabinet Member propose to evaluate the effectiveness of the reduction in parking fees over Christmas to ascertain if it achieved to stated objective of the move? It was estimated that the reductions and the associated expenses would cost the Council £170,000. Can the Cabinet Member give a breakdown for this figure or the actual costs if they are known?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Original assessments of the reduced pay and display charges over the Christmas period were assessed as:

Loss of revenue for on street pay and display income	£88,000
Loss of revenue for off street pay and display income	£18,000
Expenditure to implement the scheme, including drafting of traffic management orders and the necessary approval process.	£60,000

In fact, the results of the trial show total costs as:

Loss of revenue for on street pay and display income	£77,265
Loss of revenue for off street pay and display income	£29,241
Expenditure to implement the scheme, including drafting of traffic management orders and the necessary approval process.	£35,055

The total project costs for the reduced charges over the Christmas period are £141,561.

In order to assess the success of the scheme the Parking Section carried out occupancy and duration surveys before, during and after the scheme was implemented. The results of the survey show an increase in short term parking occupancy on street and an overall increase in occupancy and duration in off street car parks. The surveys indicate that traffic flow was not impeded during the scheme.

Question 39

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Would the Cabinet Member advise how many commuters not eligible for the Freedom Pass in Barnet will see a net cash benefit from Boris Johnson's first Mayoral precept?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

I don't have that data and I don't intend diverting Council resources to try to find the answer.

Question 40

Councillor Gill Sargeant

Could the Cabinet Member inform me of the results of the consultation regarding youth provision in the new Colindale Area Action Plan?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

Approximately 9000 brochures were delivered to households and businesses in the local area in relation to the Colindale Area Action Plan Preferred Options along with notices and articles in the local press and a two day public exhibition at the RAF Museum. A total of 54 representation forms were received from residents and local groups and 9 e-mails / letters were submitted.

Residents' comments focused on the existing parks in the area which are highly valued and they wished to see these improved and enhanced. Verbal comments from residents at the exhibition highlighted the importance of the existing youth centre for the people who live on Grahame Park Estate. In terms of specific representations on youth provision, the Head Teacher at St James' Catholic School and the Wright Trust both sought a clear commitment to the replacement / re-provision of the existing youth centre on the Barnet College site.

Officers will take all of the representations received on the Preferred Options report into account as they consider the next stage of the Area Action Plan process which will be to prepare the Publication Draft. This will include setting out a strategy for youth provision in the Colindale area.

Question 41**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Will the Cabinet Member confirm what cash increase on Band D council tax £180k represents?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

£1.32 per annum.

Question 42**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

How will an increase in parking charges in 2009/10 help boost Barnet's local economy?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Parking charges have been fixed for three years, prior to this increase. The expenditure costs associated with these charges have increased year on year and have been maintained within the Special Parking Account budget. The charges for pay and display are being increased proportionately to encourage short term parking and to encourage turn over of parking spaces.

This is within the overall context of our setting a Council budget that will enable a below-inflation Council Tax increase, benefiting all residents across the Borough.

Question 43**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Which advice agencies or other voluntary sector organisations are currently assisting members of the community with benefit appeals and advocacy at tribunals?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Citizens Advice Bureau and Barnet Law Service.