

Council Questions to Cabinet Members
14 July 2009
Questions and Responses

Question 1**Councillor Dean Cohen**

Can the Cabinet Member tell me if the refuse collection over Pesach was a success?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Yes, it was. The new improved Pesach collections that we introduced this year aimed to deliver a more personalised service to residents of the Jewish community, whilst eliminating the potential for residents and other members of the public to abuse the service. The service, which was delivered in the run up to Passover proved to be very popular, collections were made from designated roads or pre-booked for residents who were not on a designated street. The tonnage was reduced in comparison to previous years however, the waste that was collected was more appropriate for the Pesach service. The service was delivered in line with the published timetable, all roads and collections were cleared by 9pm on the final day of the service. The revised service was well received by the Jewish community; the re-organised operation went extremely well and had a lower impact on the streetscene environment within the borough.

Question 2**Councillor Charlie O-Macauley**

Can the Cabinet Member advise the most up-to-date position regarding the progress of the Decent Homes program, and what is the Council's policy with regard to individual properties that are missed out, once an area / estate has been done?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I am advised by Barnet Homes that 85% of the retained homes are decent as of the end of July 2009, and that 91% will be decent by the end of the year. Where it is not possible to gain access after three written attempts the non-access is treated as a refusal.

Question 3**Councillor Wayne Casey**

Has a health and safety risk register been completed for Hendon Cemetery?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Risk assessments have been completed and documented for Hendon Cemetery and Crematorium and these are continually reviewed.

Question 4**Councillor Dean Cohen**

Does the Council support the establishment of a bus route from Stamford Hill to Golders Green, linking the two Jewish communities?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

This relates to a proposal to extend the 210 bus route which currently terminates at Finsbury Park, to continue on to Stamford Hill. This would mean passengers would no longer need to change at Finsbury Park, something which members of the Jewish community have expressed concerns about.

The proposal would result in only a modest extension of the 210 route, but would be less straightforward now that the 210 bus route is operated by double deck buses as the obvious route to take to Stamford Hill has a low bridge. London Buses are looking at the proposals, but are as yet uncommitted to the idea.

The Council would in principle support this type of alteration. We have been lobbying London Buses

to carry out a comprehensive review of the bus network, not least in respect of orbital routes, and be prepared to make some relatively radical changes. Although the proposed extension would increase operating costs, it is likely to make the route far more attractive to people who might currently do the journey by car.

Question 5

Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

What are the current policies for applications for grants by charities? Can the Cabinet Member tell us how many B.M.E charities have applied to Barnet Council for grants in the last year, and how many have been successful?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

The Council is in a transitional period of funding the voluntary and community sector as it moves from grant awards to commissioning. A Third Sector Commissioning Framework agreed in 2008 sets out guidelines to bring consistency to the financial arrangements with the sector and to bring procurement from, and grants to, the sector into a single framework consistent with the council's procurement rules.

Transitional arrangements are being applied in 2009/10 as grant-funded services that will in future be subject to commissioning processes are identified. Organisations whose grants are affected will be given a minimum of six months' notice of termination of their grant funding. Meanwhile, grants are continuing to be awarded in accordance with existing policies and principles, having regard to the contribution to the council's key corporate priorities; the benefits provided to the local community; the effectiveness of an organisation in its service delivery; its overall value for money; its financial needs; and the budget available.

These considerations will continue to apply where grant funding continues outside of frontline commissioning strategies.

In 2008/09, the Community Grants & Charitable Awards Unit received 15 applications from voluntary organisations supporting minority ethnic communities in Barnet, each of which was awarded a grant, in many cases being the continuation of core funding. The awards also included help on a one-off basis and in establishing one new service.

The unit is currently assessing applications from six such groups seeking a grant in 2009/10.

Question 6

Councillor Monroe Palmer

Following the excellent Training on Safeguarding meeting held in June and July, I understand that the lead members have had their training separately to other members of the Council. How did their training differ from the training attended by non-executive members and why were Cabinet trained separately and when?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Lead Members had received separate training - for those taking part in the safeguarding reviews I have initiated. That is not the same as having separate training sessions. In fact some lead members are attending the regular sessions and some may need additional individual training as their diary commitments may not have permitted them to attend.

Question 7

Councillor John Hart

May I request the Cabinet Member inform me of the borough's policy concerning the use of both pesticides and herbicides in public spaces, and the annual cost thereof?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

I shall answer this under two headings, Highways and Greenspaces.

1. Highways

The Council restricts the use of herbicides to products which are approved by the Pesticides Safety Directorate. Due to the recent withdrawal of the residual chemical *Diuron*, the road channels and footpaths are now sprayed using *Glyphosate* at least four times per annum. This is the first time that the Council has been unable to use a residual spray early in the season and therefore the outcome of the change is being monitored closely in order to consider the full impact. The annual budget for the roads and footpaths is £165,000 for 2009/10.

2. Greenspaces

Pesticides are used on bowling greens where it is necessary to maintain the playing surface, no pesticides are used other than on bowling greens. Herbicides are used to control weeds on hard surfaces and in shrub beds within the parks and openspaces. Where possible mulch is used on the beds as a weed suppressant, reducing the need to use a herbicide. In 2008/09 £10,000 was spent on pesticides and herbicides.

If the Member wishes, the service will send him a more detailed paper setting out policy on peat and pesticide minimisation.

Question 8

Councillor Andrew McNeil

Would the Cabinet Member advise what he is doing to address the concerns of East Finchley residents who have made recent complaints about the positioning of new street-lighting?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Residents within any road being upgraded through the street-lighting PFI contract have the opportunity to make comments and suggestions to the contractor prior to any build commencing. The contractor is restricted by a specification and set of criteria which includes ensuring that British Standard recommendations for lighting residential streets is met and providing this standard can be achieved whilst accommodating residents' wishes, we would expect the contractor to make relevant amendments, as has been the case in certain instances in East Finchley. If the contractor is unable to meet the residents' requests due to, for example constraints with on site constructions such as trees, crossovers and utility company apparatus, they will write to the resident and explain why this was not possible.

Question 9

Councillor Susette Palmer

Will the Cabinet Member join me in congratulating the pupils and teachers of the 78 Barnet Schools who made the Music Festival at Artsdepot such a brilliant and heart warming success?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Yes. I am happy to add congratulations to all those involved. Barnet is very privileged to have so many dedicated and skilled music teachers who make the festival possible and the event is a wonderful demonstration of the breadth of cultural experiences Barnet schools are able to provide.

Question 10

Councillor Brian Gordon

The Mayor of London recently set up a scheme, currently voluntary, whereby utility or service companies digging up roads would first publicise their intention beforehand in order to co-ordinate with other companies who may have the same intention. The purpose is to co-ordinate and streamlines the work, reducing inconvenience to the public. Has this procedure been introduced in any way in Barnet, and what could we do to promote and advance it, for the benefit of our residents?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Under the New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991 and the Traffic Management Act 2004, there is a requirement for all utility companies and local authority contractors to notify the local highway authority of their intention to carry out works on a public highway. This has been the case for many years and enables the local authority to co-ordinate works activity. We also meet from time to time with groups of utilities to review how we work together.

Question 11

Councillor Geof Cooke

Can the Cabinet Member confirm how the Council is able to calculate the correct benefit or impairment that should be applied to the Pension Fund from investments or deposits made using pension fund money and pooled with other council monies if she is unable to say how much pension fund money has been put into individual investments or deposits?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Benefit to the Pension Fund through interest on cash held by the Borough on behalf of the Fund is calculated and applied on a rate equivalent to the Borough's average rate of return. We are not able to apply any impairment by Statute to the Pension Fund. In terms of recent activity regarding the Icelandic banks deposits, may I refer you to the narrative as presented within the Statement of Accounts for 2008/09 which states "Regulations prohibit the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Pension Fund being charged and thus the total impairment will be charged in full to the General Fund." The latest guidance is contained in the LAAP bulletins, which can be sent to you upon request. Although the LGA is currently challenging this regulation, Barnet continues to abide by the statutory guidance.

Question 12

Councillor Brian Gordon

Under new Department for Transport proposals, local councils would be given powers to reduce speed limits from 30 mph to 20 mph on roads in residential areas, and to reduce limits from the current 60mph to 50mph on single carriageways in the countryside. What would be our Council's position on this?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Councils already have powers to set appropriate speeds on roads for which they are the traffic authority. The national speed limits of 30mph in urban areas and 60mph on single carriageways in rural areas do not normally require any traffic signs to be put up. Introducing lower limits - for example 20mph in urban areas and 50mph on rural roads - can help to tackle accident problems, but some authorities are reluctant to do this as the cost of providing and maintaining signs can be considerable.

Some authorities have been lobbying for the national limits to be lowered so these lower speed limits do not require signing and could therefore be implemented at lower cost. Accident problems generally relate to specific issues with junctions or the characteristics of a particular road. This is the reason why the national speed limit is set at the higher level, and signs are used to indicate where lower (and in exceptional cases higher) limits apply. Whilst reducing the national limits would allow speed limits to be reduced on a 'blanket' basis, it would also mean that the limit was reduced on roads where the higher level of speed does not pose a problem. Reducing the speed traffic moves at means increasing journey times, and for commercial operators and work related journeys, this will have a measurable economic cost. Unnecessarily reducing speed limits would have the effect of reducing the efficiency of the transport network and increasing the cost of transport in the national economy.

In some cases, the existing national speed limit is appropriate for a particular road, and it might be possible for authorities to introduce speed limits which are higher than the new national one applying to that type of road, but this would involve providing signs and incur the significant cost attached to

that. Therefore it is unlikely that authorities would be willing to maintain the current speed limit and this would result in roads unnecessarily defaulting to the new lower national speed limit.

It appears that the DfT have considered this idea, and are actually proposing that authorities look at reducing speed limits on a case by case basis, rather than as a national change.

Question 13

Councillor Barry Rawlings

In the responses to the Leader Listens on the 1st April, a neighbour raised an issue about a local community centre to which the recorded action is 'Feed back the issues surrounding the centre to central government' – what is meant by this, which arm of central government is involved and has such an action been proposed against any non-Somali centre?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

This event was chaired by Cllr Offord and he has no recollection of the referral to a central government. His recollection is that there was considerable emphasis was placed on mediation. No central government department has been contacted and this appears to be an administrative error.

Question 14

Councillor Dean Cohen

Can the Cabinet Member update Council on the most recent visitor numbers for the Borough's libraries?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Barnet's libraries have seen a significant increase in visitor numbers this year, following Barnet Council's £1.24 million investment to improve and develop libraries.

In a comparison of visitor figures for May 2008 and May 2009, there has been an average 17% increase in the number of visitors to Barnet Libraries per week. This equates to almost 8,500 additional visits per week.

The industry standard is for Library visitor figures to be measured through data sample for a week long period, twice per year, in May and October. These figures are then submitted to CIFPA for audit and review. Our May 2009 sample showed 57,802 visits in one week, compared to 49,273 for the same sample week in May 2008. This is an increase of almost 8,500 visits per week.

State-of-the-art self service terminals, wireless internet connectivity, better building access, and a reorganisation of the service were some of the improvements made helping to increase visits.

Question 15

Councillor Barry Rawlings

In the Internal Audit Annual Report no assurance could be given regarding the 'Telecare' system. This report was issued on 01/06/09 – a week before the cabinet meeting discussing the future of wardens in Barnet's Sheltered Accommodation and in which Telecare was cited as a major component of future provision. Were Cabinet informed that there were 'weaknesses in control that put the systems objectives at risk' before making their decision?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The Telecare system is a valuable technology that enables people in need of assistance to summon help immediately. This system has additional functions over and above the basic alarm service and is in its third year of operation.

Barnet's alarm monitoring service (Assist) has dealt with Alarm calls since 1989 from Sheltered Housing schemes and others. This operates 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. This exceeds Telecare Service Association good practice in terms of response. This will continue to provide service to all Sheltered Housing Residents.

The Telecare audit raised the issue of a service level agreement not being signed with the response support service. This agreement is now being finalised and will contain performance targets, reporting expectations and information sharing. The Cabinet made its decision regarding the replacement of the warden service in sheltered accommodation as a forward looking improvement and no specific allusions to the audit of past and present telecare system were made.

Question 16

Councillor Brian Gordon

Could you please comment on a recent finance blunder by the Government's Learning and Skills Council and the way this has affected the funding of Barnet's schools?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

This failure caused considerable concern and anxiety in Barnet schools and it is very worrying that a Government body was able to make such a mistake. However, after sustained lobbying the Learning and Skills Council has identified further resources and both schools and colleges have been informed of their revised budgets which are now in line with original expectations and requirements.

Question 17

Councillor Barry Rawlings

In the Internal Audit Annual Report, no assurance could be given regarding the Meals at Home Service. This is more than 2 years after the failure of the invoicing system that caused so much distress to users of the service. How many years will it take to get it right and is this not further evidence of the administration's lack of competence?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The audit of the meals on wheels service was initiated by the Director. The report recognised that improvement work had started prior to Audit. The assessment and invoicing function continues to improve. All concerned are working to ensure that the invoicing will be right, very quickly and not in a timeframe measured in years.

Question 18

Councillor Brian Gordon

Is Barnet Council going to be consulted by the Government regarding plans to make extended sex education compulsory in all State schools, with particular reference to exemptions for faith schools?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

The Council is still awaiting further information from DCSF on this requirement. Clearly there is particular need to ensure that any requirements are sensitive to the needs of Barnet's faith schools. So I hope proper consultation will take place but this Government has a track record of imposing inappropriate obligations on schools without discussion.

Question 19

Councillor Barry Rawlings

The government has once again provided extra money to Barnet – in this case to provide 22 play areas for older children, with 11 to be ready for next May. Could the Cabinet Member provide a list of the 22 sites identified and indicate which 11 are earmarked for phase 1?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Officers are currently finalising the list of sites in phase one.

Question 20

Councillor Brian Salinger

With just over 3 years to go to the London Olympics, can the Cabinet Member outline what this Council has done and is planning to do to ensure that Barnet and Barnet residents benefit from the Olympics coming to London?

Answer by Councillor Dan Thomas

The Local Authority is currently working on Public Service Agreement (PSA)22 pertaining to the Olympic Legacy. The quantitative measure for this is NI 57.

(PSA 22 to “deliver a successful Olympic Games and Paralympic Games and get more children and young people taking part in high-quality PE and sport.”

National Indicator 57 defines national outcomes in terms of take-up of sport by children and young people as: “The percentage of 5- to 16-year-olds participating in at least 2 hours per week of high-quality PE and sport at school, and the percentage of 5- to 19-year-olds participating in at least 3 hours per week of sporting opportunities.”)

NI 57 will be measured in the following way:

- Percentage of 5 -16 participating in at least two hours a week of high quality **curriculum** time PE and sport at school is the measure for NI57
- The two hour target will be measured until 2011
- National target is 2010/11 is 88 – 92%
- Trajectory milestones in the preceding years should reflect progress towards this target.
- Data relating to the percentage of 5-16s participating in at least two hours of curriculum time PE at school will be collected by the annual school sport survey
- There is an expectation that systems are put in place to start collecting data around 5 hours however this data will NOT form part of NI57

The National PE and School Sport for Young People Strategy (PESSYP) is delivered in Barnet through a strong infrastructure of Sports Colleges, School Sports Partnerships, Local Authority Sport Development Unit, Barnet Competition Manager and the Further Education Sport Co-ordinator. The annual school sport survey is undertaken each year in June by the School Sport Partnerships and the official results are published in each October. This years survey has just been completed and although NI57 was not reported last year Barnet achieved 71%. We expect to see an increase in this figure when the 2009 results are published this October.

The PESSYP infrastructure are using a tracking tool with schools to ascertain how many hours children and young people participate in PE, sport and physical activity in an average week. The PESSYP Steering Group and infrastructure uses this data to focus and inform it's work.

In the lead up to 2012 there will be a number of Children & Young People Olympic and Paralympic related events that will aim to increase sustainable participation. A successful athletics event for children and young people was held at Copthall Stadium on 17th September 2008 as part of the Paralympic handover and the intention is to build on this type of festival style event.

Schools have been encouraged to become members of the GET SET London 2012 educational programme and Copthall Stadium has been designated as a pre Games training camp for athletics.

The PESSYP infrastructure group works closely with the Community Sport and Physical Activity Network (CSPAN) for Barnet and the County Sports Partnership (Pro-Active North London) to consider how best to address adult participation in sport and physical activity to meet national targets of an annual 1% increase. The CSPAN leads on 2 adult based Sport England funded projects related to female and older adult participation as priority groups.

Question 21**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

What services would the administration cut if there were to be a 10% cut in government funding?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

As Mr Darling said ‘To do detailed allocations running up to 2013-14 at the moment, with all the uncertainty, just does not make any sense’.

Question 22**Councillor Brian Salinger**

How many new street/pavement trading licences have been issued since his predecessor reported to Council on 7th April? How many traders or others have been prosecuted or fined for failing to have a licence since the policy was introduced?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

28 licences have been granted since the 1st April 2009.

Enforcement Action:	Total Since implementation
FPN's Issued	3
Prosecutions taken	0
Warning Letters	33
Problem premises being investigated	13

Question 23**Councillor Zakia Zubairi**

In April, Barklands cut down a number of trees in Annesley Avenue, Colindale – can the Cabinet Member confirm whether a survey was undertaken of the trees in that street prior to them being cut down, what the results of that survey were and what consultation with local residents took place regarding the cutting down of the trees?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Council would only have control over treatment of trees if the trees were included in a Tree Preservation Order or in its ownership – neither of which applied to the trees in question. Regardless of who had contracted Messrs Barkland to fell the trees for whatever reason, Council consent would not have been required to fell the trees, nor would the Council have had any powers or authority to stop the felling being undertaken.

Question 24**Councillor Brian Salinger**

How many of the 63 councillors attended the training courses on ‘Safeguarding’ recently arranged for Members?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

12 on 18th June

12 on 7th July

Question 25**Councillor Zakia Zubairi**

Can the Cabinet Member say what action he will take to clean up the pond in the Grahame Park estate, which is in a filthy state?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

As part of the Grahame Park regeneration scheme the pond is to be completely refurbished, including the removal of rubbish and debris and its enhancement into a valuable habitat for wildlife. The pond is included in the works of phase 1a, which is scheduled to start imminently.

Question 26

Councillor Brian Salinger

Will the Cabinet Member please inform the Council of the details of all staff (suitably anonymised and broken down by department and including school staff) who have been suspended from work on full pay in the last 12 months, detailing the time that each of those members of staff has been suspended, the pay that each has received while not working and where appropriate the outcome of the suspension (dismissed, returned to work, or left after a financial settlement)

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The question can not be answered as posed as employees can be identified by department and outcomes

Under paragraph 1 & 2 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) I am able to provide information as follows.

Suspensions in the last 12 months

Directorate	Number of suspensions	Total number of days	Total cost	Outcome
Total for the Council	31	2,856	281,684	12 – On going 5 – Final Written 5 – Resigned 3 – Dismissed 2 – Compromise Agreement 4 - Reinstated
Schools	10	1,377	106,063	6 – On going 1 – Resigned 2 – No Action 1 – Compromise Agreement

Supporting information

- Suspension is carefully considered on a case by case basis, taking into account the nature of the alleged misconduct.
- Recently revised guidelines from the ACAS code of practice on Disciplinary & Grievance (April 2009) is encouraging employers to only suspend where the nature of the case for both/either the employer or employee would pose difficulties if they remained in the workplace.
- Different management controls are in place (since April) and all cases are tracked by HR including a RAG status. Red cases are reviewed and continually risk assessed
- One reality of today’s culture - some employees facing an investigation may notify us that they are now sick with anxiety and stress, which then hampers and prolongs the investigation. (cynical but true)
- Legislation continually asks for an employer to prove they have ‘acted reasonably’
- Thorough investigations support any ET claims we are called to defend

Question 27**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Will the Cabinet Member advise if Barnet is supporting the popular “Open House” programme this year? And if not, why not?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

Although in previous years Barnet has participated in the London Open House architectural festival it has been decided, because of budgetary constraints and lack of public interest, that the borough should no longer be involved.

Participation in the 2009 event would have required the Council to make a £3,800 contribution to the Open House organisers. Given that few people visited council buildings in previous years it is felt that this contribution cannot be justified in these very difficult economic times and under continuing budgetary constraints.

Question 28**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Earlier this year, NHS Barnet organised Chlamydia testing for girls in Barnet schools. Can the Cabinet Member please tell Members what the results of those tests were (% of those testing positive) by schools or other institutions, as well as % who were actually tested. Will the Member list the schools which did not take part?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

As part of the national programme to improve young people’s sexual health, NHS Barnet undertook a screening programme to identify possible genital Chlamydia infection and this was targeted at people aged 15-24 years. This included approaching all of Barnet’s secondary schools to see if they would permit screening amongst their sixth-form students.

Young people were also invited for screening by letter and through other social marketing approaches. Screening was also performed in family planning clinics, GP surgeries and community pharmacies.

The results of the Chlamydia screening programme were not identified by school or place of contact inviting screening. The figures in the tables below are those of Barnet residents who responded to an invitation for screening from all of the various approach routes used.

Tests undertaken		Number of positive tests	
Age	Number	Age	Total
13	4	13	0
14	15	14	0
15	47	15	2
16	197	16	12
17	406	17	21
18	511	18	21
19	521	19	41
20	515	20	40
21	493	21	30
22	544	22	24
23	585	23	17
24	871	24	22
TOTAL	4709	TOTAL	230

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The results, as detailed above show that some 4.9% of tests were positive. This is lower than the London average of 6.4%. These figures also show that the partnership of agencies is within our health target as set out in the Children & Young People's Plan – N1 113 – Prevalence of Chlamydia in under 25 year olds. This target will continue to be kept under review by the Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership Board and in addition Cabinet will also be receiving regular updates as part of its tracking of 14 Health key performance indicators.

Question 29

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Can the Leader specify what safeguards are in place in Barnet to prevent expenses being claimed on bogus meals taking place?

Answer by Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

I am pleased to reassure Cllr McGuirk that the Council's procedures (detailed below) are significantly different from those she may be used to (and indeed those her Group Leader may be used to) in their roles of Parliamentary Assistant/Secretary and Constituency Agent respectively to Dr Vis MP; where they may have experience of the expense claims for second homes in Suffolk.

On the occasions where an employee needs to claim for meals the policy guidelines below are to be followed.

All employee claims are sent to their line manager for approval accompanied by the relevant receipts and a brief explanation as to why the expense occurred.

Once the line manager has approved the expenses it is passed to payroll for processing.

Senior employees on Barnet Bands 4, 5 and Chief Officers may not claim for any additional costs for meals whilst attending evening meetings. The exception to this is Barnet Band 4 graded employees who may claim for additional expenditure when attending evening governing body meetings.

Extract from the Policy

REIMBURSEMENT OF ADDITIONAL EXPENSES

Reimbursement of additional expenditure to staff will be paid in the following circumstances (and where staff are not able to take a meal or refreshments at a council canteen and where additional expenditure is incurred):

- *Post entry training courses*
- *Seminars*
- *Meetings away from the workplace*
- *Attendance at evening meetings*

2. PAYMENT

2.1 Where reimbursement is being claimed, receipts should be submitted to the line manager. Claims should be made using e-forms (unless not available).

2.2 *Only the difference between the average cost of a council canteen meal (£3.50) and the actual cost incurred (of a similar meal) will be reimbursed.*

2.3 *References may be made to the upper limits of the last nationally agreed rates. These are to be reviewed annually in line with the Retail Price Index.*

Question 30

Councillor Brian Salinger

Will the Cabinet Member for Resources please inform Members what legal advice for Members is covered by the insurance for which the Council pays an annual premium? How much is the premium paid for this cover, and how many claims have been made against this policy in the last 3 years?

Answer by Councillor Lynn Hillan

External legal expenses insurance has been arranged in relation to Members Standards Board, Ethical Standards and Monitoring Officer Case Tribunal investigations and Standards Board hearings. The cover available provides an indemnity limit of £50,000 per incident or cause, subject to an aggregate annual limit of £500,000.

The report to Cabinet on 18th June 2007 stated the cost was circa £2,000 per annum and that if this varied significantly it would be reported to a subsequent Cabinet Resources Committee. I can confirm there has not been a need to report to CRC as the annual premium remains the same as when cover was incepted.

Cover was first arranged in May 2007 and currently there have not been any claims made on the policy.

Question 31

Councillor Ross Houston

Has the Council agreed final affordable housing targets with the Mayor of London yet, and if not, when does he think this will happen? And when will they be published?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The Council is in the process of agreeing a target with the Mayor of London. The target is ambitious and its achievement will depend on financial support from the HCA and GLA, as well as normalisation of the property market. In terms of quantum the target is likely to be in line with the LAA target ie 2269 affordable homes *by 2010/11*. Hopefully an announcement will follow in the next few weeks.

Question 32

Councillor Brian Salinger

Will the Cabinet Member please tell Members, the amount of money currently held by the Council as deposits from builders or property owners to cover possible damage to pavements or roads in the vicinity of building works?

Answer by Councillor Lynn Hillan

The current total of deposits held is £719,964.81.

Question 33

Councillor Alison Moore

What is the Cabinet Member doing to ensure that parking meters in Barnet are operating correctly and are not undercharging or overcharging residents?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

We are currently in the process of undertaking a comprehensive review of our stock of pay and display machines. As part of this review we will ensure that the machines are operating correctly.

Question 34

Councillor Brian Salinger

Will the Cabinet Member tell the Council how many deposits have not been repaid when works have been completed, the total value and the number of sites where monies have been withheld to cover the costs of remedial work in each of the last 3 years?

Answer by Councillor Lynn Hillan

A total of 21 deposits from April 2006 to March 2009 have not been repaid, the total value of these deposits is £24,687.50 to cover the costs of remedial work.

Question 35

Councillor Kath McGuirk

What role does Barnet highways department play in agreeing road diversions on TfL roads?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Under the Traffic Management Act 2004, adjacent local traffic authorities have a duty to cooperate to discharge the Network Management Duty; this is especially the case where the proposals of one authority could impact on the network of another authority. This requirement applies to both the council and to TfL, and therefore both parties need to discuss and agree diversion proposals which might impact on the movement of traffic on the network.

Whilst there is a statutory requirement for boroughs to apply to TfL for their formal agreement if a borough proposal has an impact on the TfL network (the Network Assurance requirement), there is no equivalent statutory process applying to TfL proposals which might divert traffic onto borough roads.

The practice established in the Barnet area is for an informal agreement about the most appropriate way of handling traffic which needs to be diverted as a result of works on the TfL network. This informal arrangement allows issues other than those normally covered by the Network Management Duty to be considered - for example, the impact of diverted traffic on residents. Discussion takes place, using our local knowledge, to agree a method of working which attempts to minimise the overall impact of the work on a case by case basis.

The Council has no power to 'veto' TfL's reasonable proposals as the Network Management Duty requires us to co-operate, and in the spirit of this duty, the best result is usually arrived at through discussion. Likewise, there is no requirement for TfL to consult the borough on diversion proposals which only involve the TfL network, but the established practice is that the same level of discussion would take place to identify whether there could be any impacts on the local network.

Question 36

Councillor Brian Salinger

On 19th November last, the Leader submitted further papers relating to the Barnet Finance Plan to John Healey MP, then Minister of State at DCLG. Did the Minister respond and if so will he publish the response, and any other relevant correspondence that might have been exchanged between either himself and ministers or officials or officers of the Council and officials at the ministry?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The updated position is that John Healey MP – now in his new role at DCLG – wrote to all Leaders and CEs on 18th May asking for brief details of any Tax Increment Financing (TIFs) schemes that

LAs across the country were working on. There was a submission date of 30/6 Officers have meet with PwC and CLG officials and talked through our proposed draft submission which was based on the Colindale pilot. We secured public support from our key partners TfL, MU, Choices, Fairview, and St George.

We have also been invited to sit on a “TIF/ADZ Core Group” run by CLG.

Correspondence is available if the Member asks the Deputy Chief Executive.

Question 37

Councillor Agnes Slocombe

How long will it take the Council to resolve underground cabling issues with BT so that plans for residents to park on West Hendon Broadway can be progressed?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

BT have indicated their forecasted fees of approximately £45,000 to carry out their aspects – ones that unfortunately, only BT themselves can legally undertake, which include the lowering of services and reconstruction of chambers to withstand vehicle loads. We are awaiting costings from EDF but I understand that there will be a necessity to divert high voltage cables.

Therefore, as previously advised the cost to introduce the footway parking bays (on West Hendon Broadway) is significant and at the present time there is insufficient funding available to justify such measures. However, given the above the decision on whether to proceed or not will be made later in the year when exact costings will have been obtained and a decision taken as to whether the known cost is warranted and whether the increased costs can be met.

Question 38

Councillor Brian Salinger

How many of the Borough's Scout Groups applied for the £500 donation that the Leader offered to each group?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

None

Question 39

Councillor Agnes Slocombe

Can the Cabinet Member confirm if councillors are able to liaise directly with BT over the billing of Members' council phone lines?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Enquiries have been made with BT One Bill. Individual councillors would be able to query their own bill by ringing 0800 2346356 and selecting Option 3 if prompted and quoting their One Bill account VP 87783270.

Question 40

Councillor Brian Salinger

Can the Leader tell the Council how in real practicable terms the London City Charter will change the way in which the Council operates and will he, with examples, spell out what difference the Charter will make to the residents of Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Our Corporate Plan positions Barnet as a city-suburb of London and this reflects the spirit of the charter and reinforces our position as a leading suburb.

By showing how the tiers of London Local Government are working together, it makes a stronger case for local government influence over other bodies in London and this reinforces Our Future

Shape programme which works towards one public sector in the Borough.

It is a helpful statement of the shared interests- eg delivering better services for London and making the case for London- but different responsibilities of the two tiers. Therefore it is a good basis for dialogue rather than a confrontational approach around turf wars. It needs to focus on outcomes and the work areas identified are a good starting point and gain this underpins much of our work on Future Shape especially on the access strand..

Also our recent role in championing the views of our residents on the Barnet/Haringey/Enfield Clinical Strategy and the Trauma/Stroke consultation is in line with the role envisaged for Councils in health-making the case for greater local government involvement in health commissioning in London.

Question 41

Councillor Alison Moore

Cabinet has not yet worked up the detail of how many sheltered housing “hubs” or community teams will need to be in operation to ensure that the needs of residents currently living in sheltered accommodation, and those not living in sheltered accommodation are met. How does Cabinet know therefore that they are able to make a saving of £400k from the sheltered housing budget?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The option agreed by Cabinet to replace sheltered housing with an alarm service and floating support has been costed, based on the known costs of alarm service provision together with additional staffing costs to offset the removal of residential wardens to respond to day time calls and an analysis of needs data supplied by sheltered housing providers as part of the consultation process. The alarm service component is estimated to cost £215,000. Analysis of the needs data has been broadly consistent in indicating that up to one third of residents, about 450, receive benefits from the support services, although not on a continuing basis, and that a small minority up to 120 residents at any one time are at high risk. The rest make less frequent or occasional use of the support. It is intended that the new service should aim to meet the needs of up to 250 residents at any one time, which will in due course provide capacity to support older people living in the wider community. Based on costings from a recent floating support tender, the identified budget of £645,000 is sufficient to fund a minimum of 15 full time support staff, which would have the capacity to support 250 residents at any one time. A proportionally larger number of staff would be affordable if the establishment included a mix of grades and work will be undertaken during July and August 09 to develop the service specification and staffing profile in partnership with sheltered housing residents and sheltered housing providers.

Question 42

Councillor Sachin Rajput

Can the Cabinet Member advise what action is being taken to deal with this year’s unprecedented demand for primary school places?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

The Council has made arrangements to provide additional places at Colindale schools, Deansbrook Infants, Moss Hall Infants, Tudor School and Danegrove Infants.

These additional places should meet the current demand. However, officers and schools will continue to monitor the situation over the summer to manage any late applications.

Question 43

Councillor Alison Moore

Would the Leader confirm the basis on which the savings figures were calculated in the Future Shape report to the July 6th Cabinet?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The savings figures were calculated through an exercise conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers. They are based on an analysis of the way that staff spend their time. The outcomes of the analysis were then compared against a benchmarking database and areas highlighted where:

- The current spend in Barnet on these activities is higher than in other Authorities that have been counted in this way.
- There is considerable duplication of activity, for example where there are places within the Council that perform a large number of processes within a single function, implying a large amount of duplication and fragmentation and presenting opportunities to simplify, standardise and share processes.
- There is a significant gap between current practice in Barnet and leading practices elsewhere. Where this is the case there are opportunities for securing greater efficiencies. The use of private sector investment and contractual partnership structures have produced better value elsewhere.

Question 44

Councillor Terry Burton

Would the Cabinet Member please give us an update on the latest tonnage on recycling and how it has improved over the past year? Also, how are we progressing with being able to extend the recycling service to blocks of flats and other such buildings including fast food outlets and businesses who throw out horrendous amounts of cardboard boxes every week, which could dramatically improve our tonnage rates?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

In 2008/09 we collected 31.18% of household waste for recycling, composting and reuse. This is an improvement from 2007/08 when we collected 30.71% for recycling, composting and reuse.

The actual tonnage collected for recycling in 2008/09 has slightly decreased from the previous year. In November 2008 we started to collect plastic bottles and cardboard from houses (collecting 1,277 tonnes of these materials), however, there has been a decrease in the other materials when compared to the previous year, such as paper down 346 tonnes, textiles down 475 tonnes and glass down 289 tonnes. It is likely that this reduction is connected to the current recession, for example free papers are smaller as there are fewer properties being advertised, fewer textiles are being put out for recycling as residents keep clothes for longer or mend / repair clothes instead.

From February 2009 we have been able to offer the collection of plastic bottles and cardboard from flats and schools in the borough. All schools have been offered the service and over 50 schools now have containers for these materials. For flats we are rolling out the service as managing agents contact us. Over 40 plastic bottle and cardboard sites have been installed on Barnet Homes sites so far.

Unfortunately our recycling figures are based on household waste only, therefore collecting cardboard from fast food outlets and businesses would not help improve our recycling figures. We are however aware that these establishments would like to recycle their cardboard and so we are investigating providing a trade waste recycling service to our existing trade waste customers. This potential scheme will continue to be investigated.

Question 45

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Has the Council given notice to quit the LGA, and will Barnet lose out from not being a member?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Yes. No.

Question 46

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Can the Cabinet Member detail the contract monitoring activity for all currently externalised Council services?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

There are at least 400 contracts in place across the council, some of which are provided by external organisations and partnerships, and it would not be possible in this reply to provide comment on them all. Some contracts, such as the Primary School (PSCIP) Contract with Kier and the leisure contract with Greenwich Leisure London are managed centrally within Major Projects, though the majority of contracts are managed and monitored across the organisation by Directors and their heads of service. The Corporate Procurement Team manages corporate contracts and is available to provide advice and support to service directors in carrying out their contract monitoring responsibility. The monitoring of contracts and effective delivery of services remain important elements of these commercial arrangements.

Question 47

Geof Cooke

The most recent Future Shape report finally admits that there is a significant risk that the pension fund will not be able to meet its current commitments if many council services are privatised and employees leave the council's employ. What measures will be put in place to ensure that this does not happen under future Future Shape proposals?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The Pensions fund like all pension funds is under pressure anyway as a result of the economic downturn and the pressure on public sector finances.

The use of the term privatisation is not particularly accurate in this context, there are a variety of models available to attract private sector investment. Transferring services out of the Council permanently is one model, but this is only appropriate when it is judged that a service or group of services do not contribute significantly to the strategic aims of the council and would best be provided by another party. In this instance, the impact on the Barnet Pension Fund would need to be considered as part of the overall business case.

Far more likely is the development of joint venture type arrangements where these have clear advantages in meeting the future shape tests. In these instances there are a number of considerations including the use of TUPE arrangements, and the status of any organisation that the Council partners with as an admitted body of the Barnet Pension Fund. Alternatively many Authorities have used secondment arrangements to ensure that employees remain within the Councils scheme.

It will be for the Commissioning and People streams in the Consolidation phase of Future Shape Programme to debate and make recommendations to the Programme Board as to how the pensions fund can be sustained in the future.

Question 48

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Will the Leader provide the latest data on the number and cost of consultants and agency staff across council services?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Consultancy spend in quarter 1

Consultancy spend per directorate (quarter 1)	Spend
Corporate Governance	£0
Adult Social Service	£27,316
Environment and Transport	£61,700
Strategic Hub	£62,093
Future Shape Programme	£105,622
Resources	£125,162
Children's Service	£154,535
Planning, Housing and Regeneration	£566,606
Consultancy Sub Total	£1,103,034
Quarter 1 Agency Spend	£1,036,026
	£2,139,060

Question 49

Barry Rawlings

How much did the consultants report that informed the Cabinet report on Hendon Cemetery and Crematorium cost the Council?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

The consultants report was provided by Sector, a subsidiary of Capita at a cost of £30,000.

Question 50

Ansuya Sodha

What is the basic pay scale for traffic wardens employed by the Council?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The basic pay scale for Civil Enforcement Officers, as traffic wardens are now officially known, is spinal column point 20 - 26 (£20,004 - £23,733).

Question 51

Ansuya Sodha

What is the Council doing to ensure that local public swimming pools are accessible for all?

Answer by Councillor Dan Thomas

The Council-run swimming pools are compliant with disability legislation. In addition, the Council has been working with Mapledown School to introduce facilities at Barnet Copthall Leisure Centre that will allow more severely disabled pupils to access the pool. Equipment has been selected and will be purchased by the Council and a suitable location within the centre has been agreed with Mapledown and GLL, the Council's leisure partner.