

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members  
3 November 2009  
Questions and Responses**

**Question 1**

**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Cabinet Member please update members on the latest position with regard to the future of Stanley Road Playing Fields?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

Discussions with the tenant have been undertaken regarding how the playing fields can be brought back into use. At this point in time no specific proposals are identified.

**Question 2**

**Councillor Monroe Palmer**

How long does it take to remove a pair of plimsolls hanging on a wire over Golders Green Road?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

It's a good start if Ward Members do their duty and report such matters to the relevant part of the Council.

**Question 3**

**Councillor Julie Johnson**

Can the Cabinet Member advise what progress has been made on completing fire risk assessments of Barnet Homes housing blocks, and what the results of those FRAs are?

**Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius**

There are 1296 Barnet Homes blocks requiring FRAs. Approximately 850 FRAs are currently outstanding, but this is changing daily.

We now have 3 fire risk assessors working full-time undertaking FRAs. Two of these are building surveyors and one is a Chartered Member of the Institute of Buildings, which gives us great confidence in their competence.

Over 770 works orders have been raised from the 450 (approx) FRAs undertaken so far. Any works raised are prioritised as red/amber/green and the fire risk assessor prioritises this work.

Works orders are also sectioned in to 3 areas: operational (e.g. fire door repairs), planned works (e.g. emergency lighting) and housing issues, (such as storage in the corridors/electrical intake cupboards). Operational repairs are collated and orders are raised bi-weekly, planned work items are being collated and costed and will then be commissioned as a programme to ensure value for money. Any housing issues identified are referred to the relevant housing management team for action.

All works identified from the FRAs are logged and progress is monitored until completion. Each FRA is specific to the block and also requires an assessment of the risk in relation to occupants of the building, for example residents with mobility problems or other physical or mental impairments. We will also be cross-checking information held on our systems and will feed this into the FRAs.

All high risk blocks have had their FRA (all scissor style, high rise – 7 floors and over, sheltered and alarm assisted) and we are currently working our way through the low risk (0-2 floors) and medium risk blocks (3-6 floors). All FRAs should be finished by the end of December 2009.

We continue to work closely with the London Fire Brigade and are due to meet them again in early November to review a sample of FRAs completed, overall progress and also the plans for future ongoing review.

**Question 4**

**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Cabinet Member please update members on the latest position with regard to the sale or future use of Park House in East Finchley?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

We are currently negotiating with a new tenant for this site. Terms have been exchanged and negotiations are progressing.

**Question 5**

**Councillor Monroe Palmer**

Why is it impossible to keep the road in The Vale NW2 free from dirt?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

The Vale is used as a 'rat run' by waste hauliers and due to the nature of these operations sand and loose mud does tend to fall from the vehicles and build up on the highway.

The Council does carry out additional sweeps of the lower section of The Vale, mainly due to haulage companies' waste transfer and builder merchant operations in Claremont Road. We have met with residents in the vicinity recently to discuss the issues and assure them that the Council is actively seeking to improve the street scene in the area.

**Question 6**

**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Can the Leader confirm that in the event that a Councillor is found in breach of the Code of Conduct any money paid by the Council towards their legal costs under the Council's indemnity scheme will be repaid by them?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

Barnet's Indemnities Policy is publicly available and makes clear that if a breach is proved, costs are incurred by the Member. Councillor McGuirk should perhaps avail herself of these papers.

**Question 7**

**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Cabinet Member please update members on the latest position with regard to the future of the former Quinta Club site in High Barnet?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

The public inquiry into the village green application will take place on 18 – 20 November 2009. The outcome will determine the future opportunities available to the Council.

**Question 8**

**Councillor Jack Cohen**

Why is there no answer to a strong request to remove a tree at the junction with The Vale NW11 and Hendon Way, which pedestrians have to climb over its roots to walk the footway?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

The issue of the root damage to the pavement was raised on the Chief Executive's ward walk on 27 May and was referred to the Highways section to review the issue. It was not apparent that there was a strong desire to see the tree removed until a request was received from Councillor Susette Palmer on 12 October to re-consider the tree and this subsequent Council question regarding the same matter.

The tree is a mature Silver Maple in a prominent position. Due to its proximity to the A41 there are logistics that will need to be considered in reviewing the appropriate treatment for the tree, with associated costs of a possible lane closure if it was to be felled and consultation with Transport for London and local residents. A Tree Officer is due to inspect the tree and determine an appropriate course of action with consideration for its removal by the end of next week. An update will be provided to ward Councillors on 30 October to advise on the outcome.

**Question 9**

**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

In the light of concerns by the Board of Deputies and Stonewall, would the Leader confirm whether or not he supports the Conservative EU Alliance with right wing parties from Poland and Latvia, and if so could he say what impact such support would have on community cohesion in Barnet?

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

It is sad that you should seek to spread discord in our communities where none exists.

My view on this echoes that of the editor of the Jewish Chronicle, Stephen Pollard who wrote the following in *The Guardian* on 9 October. My only divergence is that unlike Mr Pollard, I have never voted Labour!

Stephen Pollard said "Poland's Kaminski is not an anti-Semite: he's a friend to Jews. Kaminski is – as his record in Brussels shows clearly – one of the greatest friends to the Jews in a town where anti-Semitism and a visceral loathing of Israel are rife.

The National Rebirth of Poland, whose forerunner Kaminski joined as a 15-year-old, is indeed virulently anti-Semitic and neo-fascist. But the group today is very different from 1987. As a schoolboy he could not join Solidarity, and so he joined one of the few Polish nationalist groups. It is simply wrong to say the organization was anti-Semitic during the two years Kaminski was a member.

The president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews has now written to Cameron – true – and so they should have, that is part of their role. That is his job – and he should have done it at the start of the controversy. As it happens, on Wednesday 7 October night the Board president met Mark Francois, the Conservative European spokesman, who happily agreed to hand over the party's dossier on Kaminski – with evidence he is not an anti-Semite.

My understanding is all the parties in the group are signatories to the Prague protocol and believe in a liberal society with human rights and as such the impact on community cohesion in Barnet will be exactly the same as the impact of Labour's association with some of its partners in the European Parliament.

With regard to Stonewall, they are of course right to campaign for equal rights across Europe but accept that the various states are at different stages in their development of social policy. Poland of course remains a deeply Catholic country and whilst I hope that they adopt the UK's approach to equality and diversity, simply belittling a European Partner is unlikely to be helpful. Mr Kaminski is proud that Poland was among the first countries to decriminalise homosexuality; says he would vote for civil partnership legislation. None of the mainstream parties in Poland, including those associated with Labour, embrace the Stonewall agenda.

Labour of course are associated with a Polish party who have members that are fans of Adolf Hitler's and are associated with anti-Semitic publishers. Labour are also associated with Italian politicians who goes round the world claiming that 9/11 was a CIA plot and Labour are sitting with eastern European parties stuffed with former Communists who were hardly known for their tolerance of Jews and Gays.

**Question 10**

**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Cabinet Member accept my congratulations on securing the promise of funding for the BSF programme? The proposal includes relocating the PRU away from Chandos Avenue and Burnt Oak Sports Centre to an as yet unknown site. Will the Cabinet Member please list the options that have been considered and those still under consideration?

**Answer by Councillor Robert Rams**

I, as I have before, cautiously welcomed the funding through BSF – and hope that the Government has left some money for us to be funded.

The Pupil Referral Unit is included within the BSF wave 1 redevelopment. There is currently an options appraisal underway to identify potential locations giving consideration to the educational requirements and service delivery strategy as part of BSF programme works. It is inappropriate to release details of specific sites before that appraisal is complete. Once complete the recommendations of the report will be shared for comment.

**Question 11**

**Councillor Wayne Casey**

How much money did the Council originally plan to spend on the street lighting contract by period six (financial year 2009/10) and how much money did it actually spend by the same period?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

The original plan month 6 estimate is £2,518,649 (please note that the original planned budget has been revised as it did not take account of the change in the government grant between financial year 07/08 and 08/09 – originally the 07/08 budget had been inflated by 2.5% to derive the 08/09 planned budget – this has now been corrected and the month 6 estimate reflects the true position for 08/09).

Certified payments to month 6 are £2,225,019 (this is 5 months' actual, 1 month estimate).

The Council's financial system (SAP) states the actual spend as £1.46 million at month 6 in SAP which includes £560k grant (PFI credits) received so far, however, this is subject to some processing delays.

The differences between the original plan and the certified payments are due to contractual deductions and adjustments for energy prices.

Deductions are made from the contract on a monthly basis based on performance criteria set within the contract. When entering into the PFI, energy was purchased at a defined rate. This rate is due to change later this month so the profile for energy spend may well increase to the later half of the financial year.

**Question 12**

**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Would the Cabinet Member say how many school governors in Barnet come from BAME communities?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

This data is not available.

**Question 13**

**Councillor Tom Davey**

What was the outcome of the men's health event at the Mill Hill depot?

**Answer by Councillor Helena Hart**

Thanks to the sterling efforts and support of all the various agencies involved in setting up this Event, the very first Mill Hill Depot Health Check on Thursday 17 September proved to be extremely successful with some 168 members of staff taking advantage of these checks. As well as having their blood pressure and weight checked, attendees were also able to have their Body Mass Index measured and receive advice and information on weight management and healthy eating from the PCT dietician. In addition there were 32 Referrals to the Stop Smoking Service and with the first Clinic taking place on 3 November it is hoped that even more will sign up.

Based on this success and our aim to help more people become involved in taking responsibility for improving their own health, we would very much like to roll this programme out across the Borough and have already had great interest shown in it with Barnet Homes being one such example.

**Question 14**

**Councillor Jack Cohen**

Why was the Finchley and Golders Green Residents Forum cancelled?

**Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas**

The Residents Forum was postponed to 26 October 2009. It was rearranged as the owner of the venue to be used on 14 October was subject to an outstanding enforcement notice that had not been complied with. The Director of Corporate Governance felt it was inappropriate for the Council to hold a public meeting at the venue and I support his decision. The Leader and Chief Executive were notified. At the time of cancellation no items of business had been submitted.

**Question 15**

**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Does the Cabinet Member support the recent fare hikes announced by Mayor Boris Johnson – and if so what is his advice to Barnet's hard pressed public transport using residents who may have to pay as much as 20% extra for their regular Travelcard?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

The Travelcard comment is incorrect. Virtually all Travelcard prices will be frozen. The single exception is the 'Seven Day 2 Zone' Travelcard, which will rise by 15%.

In general, my advice to hard pressed residents is never to vote for Ken Livingstone or Labour again. Mayor Johnson inherited a funding gap of £1.7 billion after the previous administration allowed the cost of running the transport system to outstrip combined income and subsidy. The Mayor is now clearing up the mess from years of reckless spending by Ken Livingstone, the financial burden of Gordon Brown's Metronet fiasco and the drop in income that has been caused by the recession.

I support the actions of a responsible Mayor of London who has ensured that efficiencies at TfL have been made before this unfortunate but necessary step was taken. These actions are in sharp contrast to his predecessor whose administration both failed to live within its means and failed to be honest with Londoners about the financial pressures TfL was under.

**Question 16****Councillor John Hart**

As waiting lists for allotment plots lengthen, would the Cabinet Member consider extending allotment land, or creating new sites, in areas of high demand?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

The Council is working with the Barnet Federation of Allotment holders to identify additional land within current sites that are derelict that could be brought into service. The allotment societies have carried out surveys on sites to grade derelict plots/land in terms of viability to bring them back into service. In addition to this lists of occupied plots have been cross referenced against allotment plot maps to identify any areas of land that may not have been identified in the latter process. For example, Bells Hill are in the process of clearing an area of land which had been derelict with the Payback team which will release approximately 45 allotment plots, we believe there are other areas of land within other sites that can also receive this kind of treatment and we are in the process of identifying these and assessing their viability.

In addition to the above, the management of waiting lists is also being reviewed with a view to improve waiting times through central management and the allocating of plots to a requirement list rather than waiting for a single site, applicants could be considered for a number of sites. Plot sizes have also been reduced from 10 to 5 poles enabling two plots to be let rather than one.

Substantial investment – which unfortunately we cannot afford - would be required to create additional allotment land. A more sustainable approach is to bring into service land within current sites and manage the provision and waiting lists more effectively which should address lengthening waiting lists.

**Question 17****Councillor Jack Cohen**

When will I be sent answers to questions I asked at the last Business Overview Committee (Officers promised to write to me)?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

I understand that Adult Social Services have sent you their response and Strategic Finance has been assembling the information to be sent direct to you with the aim of you receiving it by today's meeting. Please let me know if there have been any problems and I will chase up on your behalf.

**Question 18****Councillor Alison Moore**

The cancellation of the Finchley and Golders Green Forum scheduled for 14 October caused significant concern amongst local residents in Finchley. Does the Leader agree that it was an unacceptable situation and can I have his assurance that this will not happen again?

**Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas**

Resident Forums come under my portfolio, not the Leader's. Given the reason I have stated in my response to question 14, I do not believe postponing the Forum was unacceptable. I believe it was the right decision to make. The Council should not be holding meetings at a venue if its owner is subject to an enforcement notice. I appreciate this may have caused inconvenience to those residents planning to attend, for which I apologise. We will do our best to ensure future meetings are held at suitable venues to avoid postponements. Arranging these sorts of events includes dealing with third parties therefore it is difficult to give assurance this will never happen again.

**Question 19****Councillor Dean Cohen**

Can the Cabinet Member update Council on the situation regarding squatters at Hendon football stadium?

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

The Lessees' order for possession was heard at Willesden County Court on 28 October. Following the judgment, relevant action was taken by the lessee to take possession and secure the site.

**Question 20****Councillor Jack Cohen**

Have you or any other Member of the Administration or any Officer undertaken overseas trips on behalf of the Council in the past 12 months? If so please provide details.

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

I have not undertaken any overseas trip on behalf of the Council in the past twelve months. The only members of the administration who have undertaken a trip overseas on behalf of the Council are Councillor Hillan and Councillor Offord who visited Morphou as part of a town twinning delegation in October 2009. There was no cost to the Council.

Mr Clive Medlam, former Director of Resources, visited Iceland on four occasions for meetings regarding the Council's deposits in Icelandic banks – 14 to 16 November 2008, 11 to 12 December 2008, 17 to 20 February 2009 and 31 March to 3 April 2009.

**Question 21****Councillor Alison Moore**

Given the level of public disappointment with the Council's refusal to support the Open House programme this year, would the Cabinet Member confirm whether the Council will participate in next year's programme?

**Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen**

Participation in the 2009 London Open House programme would have required the Council to make a £3,800 contribution to the Open House organisers. It was felt that this contribution could not be justified in these very difficult economic times and under continuing budgetary constraints.

If sufficient funding can be identified through sponsorship or other sources then involvement in the 2010 programme will be carefully considered.

**Question 22****Councillor Joan Scannell**

Can the Cabinet Member report on the progression of the rebuild of Edgware Junior School's kitchen, including the facilities provided, number of children that can be seated and cost of the rebuild?

**Answer by Councillor Robert Rams**

The construction project at Edgware Junior School included the building of a dining hall and kitchen, with a link building which integrates the two junior school buildings and redefined the junior school main entrance out into the playground. The junior school's new link building incorporates a new office/reception, meeting and multi-purpose rooms. The dining space has also been developed to facilitate additional curriculum use, community functions and breakfast/after school clubs.

Construction on the scheme started in October 2008 and the project was completed in September 2009. The overall project budget identified for the total works outlined above is £2.8m. The cost cannot be confirmed until final accounts for the projects are agreed and this process is currently underway.

At Edgware Infant and Junior schools there are 630 primary age and 45 nursery age children. These kitchen and dining facilities accommodate their needs for both hot meals and packed lunches during the school day.

**Question 23**

**Councillor Jeremy Davies**

How many times has the Council been notified, by TfL, of subway closures on the A1 and A41 in the last year; and what is the longest period of closure?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

The Council is not normally notified by TfL when subways are closed and therefore we do not know how many times subways have been closed, nor the length of the longest closure. TfL may be able to prepare this information for Councillor Davies if he would like to know, but I suspect that this is not the point of his question. The Council is aware of a specific issue with the subway under the A41 at Brentfield Gardens (near the Brent Cross Tesco). The subway is regularly affected by foul sewage flooding caused by a Thames Water sewer under the A41 flooding after heavy rainfall. This results in the subway having to be closed until the water is removed and the sewage debris is removed. TfL have been working with Thames Water to identify a solution and have lobbied OFWAT to secure funding for a scheme to address the flooding problem. At present there is no indication when a decision might be made.

**Question 24**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm what work has been done by Officers since the High Court injunction was granted to prepare for the implementation of Cabinet's decision to remove sheltered housing wardens?

**Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius**

A detailed project plan is in place concerning implementation of the Cabinet's decisions of 8 June and work on this has proceeded on a wide range of different activities in accordance with the timelines approved by the project board. The Council has not however proceeded with issue of notices to terminate the current contracts with sheltered housing providers following the granting of the injunction.

**Question 25**

**Councillor John Hart**

Would the Cabinet Member please let me know how many Tree Preservation Orders were raised in Mill Hill ward in the years 2007, 2008 and 2009 to date and how many were revoked in the same periods?

**Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen**

2007 – No TPOs made in Mill Hill Ward

2008 – 2 TPOs made in Mill Hill Ward (Provincial House, The Ridgeway, NW7 and Outside Block 25 - 47 Curry Rise, NW7)

2009 – 1 TPO made in Mill Hill Ward (Former Officers' Mess, Inglis Barracks, Mill Hill NW7)

20 TPOs have been made during this period across the borough, 15% being within the Mill Hill Ward.



No TPOs have been revoked within the Borough over the same period.

**Question 26**

**Councillor Jeremy Davies**

Has the Cabinet Member been consulted on the recently announced TFL fares increase and the proposed service changes?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

No, and indeed the Mayor of London is not required to carry out a consultation on fares. At the last Council meeting, it was agreed that I would “work with the Mayor of London to ensure that our Borough has the best public transport that finite resources will allow”; this remains the case.

**Question 27**

**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

How many older people were assessed for care services by year since 2002 and do you have data of age, gender, ethnicity and faith where possible? Please include the type of care for different groups e.g. older people, learning disability and whether supported living, domiciliary care, dementia, nursing etc.

**Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius**

A lot of data is necessary to answer this question.

**Clients aged 65+ assessed**

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Physical and sensory disability and frailty	2144	1785	1384	1565
Mental Health	262	237	205	201
Learning disability	3	4	1	3
Substance misuse	1	2	2	2
Other vulnerable people	256	250	111	93
<b>Total of above</b>	<b>2666</b>	<b>2278</b>	<b>1703</b>	<b>1864</b>

Note: pre 2005-06 data includes reviews as per RAP definition

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Physical and sensory disability and frailty	4201	2252	2687
Mental Health	92	1071	807
Learning disability	7	42	35
Substance misuse	0	1	2
Other vulnerable people	0	52	203
<b>Total of above</b>	<b>4300</b>	<b>3418</b>	<b>3734</b>

**Clients aged 65+ receiving care after assessment**

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Physical and sensory disability and frailty	715	867	993	*
Mental Health	126	122	126	*
Learning disability	1	1	1	*
Substance misuse	0	1	2	*
Other vulnerable people	110	95	74	*
<b>Total of above</b>	<b>952</b>	<b>1086</b>	<b>1196</b>	<b>1459</b>

\*A breakdown by category was not required for the 2008-09 submission but can be calculated.

Note: pre 2005-06 data includes reviews as per RAP definition

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Physical and sensory disability and frailty	3055	1077	752
Mental Health	51	252	215
Learning disability	1	1	4
Substance misuse	0	0	0
Other vulnerable people	0	31	92
<b>Total of above</b>	<b>3107</b>	<b>1361</b>	<b>1063</b>

#### Clients aged 65+ assessed by Ethnicity

		2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
White	British	1712	1457	1167	1254
	Irish	92	86	61	62
	Any other white background	345	373	219	249
Mixed	White and Black Carribean	1	3	5	1
	White and Black African	2	1	4	1
	White and Asian	1	0	6	1
	Any other mixed background	3	5	4	4
Asian or Asian British	Indian	160	135	95	119
	Pakistani	7	8	7	8
	Bangladeshi	5	2	3	3
	Any other Asian background	34	38	30	40
Black or Black British	Carribean	24	17	18	22
	African	21	20	12	16
	Any other Black background	2	6	1	6
Chinese or other ethnic group	Chinese	5	8	11	6
	Any other ethnic group	90	41	27	37
Not stated		162	78	33	35
<b>Total of above</b>		<b>2666</b>	<b>2278</b>	<b>1703</b>	<b>1864</b>

**Clients aged 65+ receiving care after assessment by Ethnicity**

		2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
White	British	630	698	810	994
	Irish	35	45	42	43
	Any other white background	133	184	164	195
Mixed	White and Black Carribean	1	2	2	0
	White and Black African	1	1	2	1
	White and Asian	1	0	6	1
	Any other mixed background	0	2	4	3
Asian or Asian British	Indian	43	66	67	90
	Pakistani	2	3	4	6
	Bangladeshi	3	2	2	2
	Any other Asian background	6	20	26	36
Black or Black British	Carribean	14	6	15	18
	African	5	9	7	11
	Any other Black background	1	2	1	5
Chinese or other ethnic group	Chinese	4	2	6	4
	Any other ethnic group	40	17	20	28
Not stated		33	27	18	22
<b>Total of above</b>		<b>952</b>	<b>1086</b>	<b>1196</b>	<b>1459</b>

**Clients aged 65+ assessed**

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
65-74	565	386	270	*
75+	2101	1892	1433	*
<b>Total of above</b>	<b>2666</b>	<b>2278</b>	<b>1703</b>	<b>1864</b>

\*A breakdown by age was not required for the 2008-09 submission but can be calculated.

Note: pre 2005-06 data includes reviews as per RAP definition

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
65-74	840	531	597
75+	3460	2887	3137
<b>Total of above</b>	<b>4300</b>	<b>3418</b>	<b>3734</b>

**Clients aged 65+ receiving care after assessment**

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
65-74	160	161	169	*
75+	792	925	1027	*
<b>Total of above</b>	<b>952</b>	<b>1086</b>	<b>1196</b>	<b>1459</b>

\*A breakdown by age was not required for the 2008-09 submission but can be calculated.

Note: pre 2005-06 data includes reviews as per RAP definition

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
65-74	586	270	178
75+	2521	1091	885
<b>Total of above</b>	<b>3107</b>	<b>1361</b>	<b>1063</b>

**Question 28****Councillor Brian Gordon**

Please could you give details of the stronger action being taken by the Council to deal with anti-social graffiti.

**Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord**

The Council has recently used its CCTV system to identify a graffiti vandal committing an offence. Operators contacted the Police who were able to track the individual and when he was arrested further information was given about a number of similar incidents in Burnt Oak and Colindale that contained the same 'tag'. This resulted in the courts giving the man a suspended sentence and a sixth month exclusion notice from the Borough of Barnet.

Such partnership working between the Police and the Council is proving effective in a range of other areas in addition to that of graffiti vandalism.

**Question 29****Councillor Jeremy Davies**

Could the Cabinet Member for Planning and Environmental please inform Council what is the process for consulting neighbours on planning applications where the properties are not immediately opposite each other and if there have been any recent changes in the consultation guidelines?

**Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen**

The Planning Service's practice for publicity and consultation in relation to planning applications was agreed by the Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 March 2003 and updated in November 2006.

Properties opposite an application site which have a view of a development proposal, such as a front or side extension are always consulted. Depending on the type and nature of an application, properties will generally be consulted within either a 50m or 100m radius of the boundary of a site for non-householder proposals. If a development proposal is more significant a site notice may also be erected.

Additional neighbour notification may be undertaken in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Area Planning Manager.

It should be noted that Barnet's approach to consultation exceeds that required by the legislation.

**Question 30**

**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

In the light of Barnet's changing demographics what plans does the Council have to provide culturally sensitive social care services?

**Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius**

Giving people choice and control of their own social care through individual budgets and direct payments together with targeted investment in third sector community based organisations remains the key way in which culturally appropriate social care services are and will be provided. For example in September 2009, our ethnic monitoring of direct payments shows that 40% of service users aged 18-64 in receipt of direct payments describe themselves as non-white contrasted to 32% of the Borough profile who are aged 18-64.

**Question 31**

**Councillor Brian Gordon**

To what extent is Barnet Council's economic policy consistent with that recently enunciated by London Mayor Boris Johnson – namely cutting spending, reducing or even freezing taxation and still improving the quality of public services?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

Absolutely side by side on this one. We are very much ahead of the game with our proposals to provide best quality services for the best possible price.

**Question 32**

**Councillor Alison Moore**

When did the Leader become aware that Councillor Harris – a member of his Group until mid-October – was absent without leave, and, given Councillor Harris' disinclination to return to Barnet, will the Leader join me in publicly calling for Councillor Harris to pay back the allowance he has claimed since going abroad?

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

8 October at 16.30; the whip was withdrawn at 17.35 and I have already done so.

**Question 33**

**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Although it may ultimately be a matter for the Highways Agency, would you be able to use our Council's influence to try and raise the ridiculously low 30 mph speed limit at the flyover over Staples Corner?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

Responsibility for traffic on the A5 Staples Corner flyover is split between Brent and Barnet councils. Transport for London are responsible for maintaining the structure, but the Highways Agency have no responsibility at all.

We have previously looked into the possibility of increasing the speed limit on the flyover and the approaches to it. The current limit of 30mph is felt to be too low for a high standard dual carriageway where pedestrians are not normally expected to be present, and is used by very few cyclists. The Police have carried out enforcement here in the past which has resulted in many complaints from the public as there is no obvious reason for the limit to be 30mph. The problem is compounded by the fact that as the flyover is a street lit road, the traffic signs regulations prevent the Council from using conventional "30" speed limit reminder signs.

Previous investigations indicated that a high proportion of drivers were travelling at or around 40mph, with a minority travelling at higher speeds. The A406 flyover passing over the top of the A5 flyover is of a similar standard but has a clearly signed 40mph speed limit.

There are concerns that drivers travelling at high speed over the flyover continue to drive at higher speeds on the A5 at either end – either on the approach to West Hendon Broadway, or to the south where there are numerous side turnings and traffic signals.

The proposal considered was to increase the speed limit to 40mph for the length of the flyover and approaches between the two overhead gantry signs, a distance of around 720m. The gantries would provide a convenient location for the required signs and would enable very prominent signs to be used to show that the speed limit was 30mph either side of the flyover. It was felt that this was likely to help improve compliance with the 30mph speed limit either side, whilst allowing drivers to travel at a higher speed where it was safe to do so. The distance of 720m is also exceeded the Department for Transport minimum recommended length for a change of speed limit. This guidance recommends minimum distances so drivers are not subjected to frequent changes in the speed limit as they follow a particular road.

The proposal was not implemented because it would require the agreement of Brent, and approval by Transport for London as the A5 is a Strategic Road. At the time it was felt that neither organisation would agree to the proposal as it would be seen as 'pro-car' and it is difficult to prove that increasing the speed limit would not result in an increase in the number of accidents.

The situation with TfL has changed now, and they might be more receptive to the proposal if it is also supported by Brent. Further work would be necessary to look at the most recent accident data and vehicle speeds to confirm whether the change would be appropriate. It should also be noted that, if approved, the Brent Cross/Cricklewood proposals would result in changes to the road layout on the A5 to the South of the flyover. It would be important to confirm that these proposed changes would not be affected if the speed limit on the flyover were increased to 40mph.

**Question 34**

**Councillor Alison Moore**

Will the Cabinet Member listen to local residents in East Finchley and scrap the current CPZ proposals?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

Following the review of the East Finchley CPZ and the advisory letter to residents regarding the outcome of the review and proposed actions, the Council has received a significant number of responses expressing concern with our conclusions. Depending on the origin of the correspondence, the concerns are varied but of course we need to ensure that our intentions do meet with the needs of the local community. It's very helpful to have people express their opinions so clearly at this stage. So, further analysis of the representations we've received will take place and our original conclusions will be revisited before deciding on what to do next.

**Question 35**

**Councillor John Marshall**

How many homes in Barnet are worth £1million pounds or more?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

Whilst the Council does not hold this information, the total amount of households in band H is 3864 and I would suggest that the majority of these are now worth 1 million or over.

**Question 36****Councillor Geof Cooke**

What does the farce over the Brent Cross/Cricklewood planning meeting show about this Administration's competence?

**Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen**

The Brent Cross Cricklewood application has been deferred (without discussion) from both the 23 September and 20 October Planning and Environment Committee. It will now be heard at a special two evening meeting of the Planning and Environment Committee to be held on 18 and 19 November. This special meeting will be subject to the approval of 3 November Council meeting which will have to approve a change to standing orders in order to allow more than the usual three public speakers to address the Planning and Environment Committee.

These deferrals have been made to allow full consideration of all issues raised in the planning report appraising this important regeneration project and to enable full public participation in this decision.

The deferral from the 23 September Committee was agreed to allow interested parties more time to study the 800 page report submitted to the Planning and Environment Committee and to deal with some further representations received after the main report had gone to print.

The deferral from the 20 October committee was to allow standing orders to be relaxed to allow more than 3 speakers to address the Planning and Environment Committee. This will need to be agreed by the 3 November full council meeting.

I consider that the arrangements now proposed will allow all interests and issues to be given the fullest consideration. I do not consider that altering and extending the normal procedures for public consideration of this important planning application reflects adversely on this Administration's competence.

On the contrary, I believe it demonstrates that we listen to the public and are committed to a full and transparent debate in the public interest. What is farcical about that?

**Question 37****Councillor Dean Cohen**

What measures are being taken to ensure Barnet Council is paying its local suppliers promptly?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

Barnet Council has always striven to pay all businesses within 30 days and to reinforce this commitment has recently signed up to the Prompt Payment Code. This commits the Council to paying suppliers within 30 days, with independent checks being made at regular intervals with our suppliers by the Institute of Credit Management (ICM) to ensure that this standard is maintained.

Additional measures have also been taken by this authority to stimulate the local economy and increase the cash flow of local businesses. This is being addressed by improving payment terms for local traders, which were reduced in February from 30 days to 10 days. In the last quarter 9 out of 10 invoices submitted from local traders were processed and paid within 10 days.

**Question 38****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 Borough has indicated to the GLA that it would be prepared to agree to an affordable housing delivery target in line with the LAA target of 2267 affordable units by 2010/11, subject to receipt of significant HCA Kick Start funding.

Round 1 Kick Start funding has now been formally agreed for Stonegrove/Spur Road but bids for West Hendon and Grahame Park were unsuccessful. The Council has subsequently submitted an application for Kick Start 2 funding for West Hendon and is expecting a decision by December.

Given the continuing uncertainty on the availability of external funding to support delivery the Council will not be in a position able to formally agree our affordable housing target until the end of 2009 at the earliest.

**Question 39**

**Councillor Anne Hutton**

What are the problems with using the swimming pool at Whitings Hill School and how and when will they be solved?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

The day to day use and management of the new swimming pool at Whitings Hill School are a matter for the Head Teacher and the Governing body. I understand that an approach to the use of the pool was agreed at a recent governing body meeting.

**Question 40**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

How successful is the new South Friern Library with regard to new members, usage, etc?

**Answer by Councillor Robert Rams**

The Conservative Council has invested £1.24m in a programme to modernise and improve Libraries across Barnet. As part of this programme, South Friern library has been completely rebuilt, opening its doors to the public on 15 September 2009, and with a formal opening by the Mayor of Barnet, which was held on 23 October. The new library has some excellent features, including customer self-service terminals, WiFi throughout the building, modern community rooms, and provides excellent services to a wide range of customers.

The library has proved very popular with local residents, as over 1,000 new members have signed up to use the new library. In addition, over 200 'lapsed' borrowers who have not used a library for a number of years have also rejoined the library. South Friern is averaging almost 1,000 customer visits per week, though we do anticipate further growth over coming months.

**Question 41**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

After almost 8 years in power why does the majority of Friern Village still have unadopted roads and can the Cabinet Member explain why his Administration has failed to get this sorted out?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

On Friern Village Development, the Council is not able to progress road adoption agreements because the developer has not negotiated a sewer adoption agreement with Thames Water Utilities Ltd (TWUL) for the adoption of sewers on this estate. The adoption of sewers are a prerequisite condition to progress road adoption on any development.



Barratt North London (BNL) being the Consortium leader for the whole development is currently negotiating with TWUL for the maintenance arrangements of the balancing pond within the development at the bottom of Kettlewell Close. Once this is agreed, progress will be made by BNL to get all the sewers adopted on Phases 1 and 2 of this development.

The Council will progress road adoption agreement with BNL soon after the sewer adoption agreements have been concluded.

**Question 42**

**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Does the Cabinet Member believe the outreach workers in Children Centres are doing a good job?

**Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

The children's service is currently undertaking a review of all aspects of Children's Centres, including the outreach team, to ensure that all their work is effective and is reaching families in need. Once that review is complete it will be possible to make a judgement on the work being carried out by the outreach team.

**Question 43**

**Councillor Geof Cooke**

When does the Cabinet Member expect to bring invoicing up-to-date for meals on wheels and home care?

**Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius**

Current client billing for meals is up to date and bills have been sent out covering the period up to 27 September 2009.

In relation to billing for homecare, we expect invoicing to be up to date in three weeks' time. This means that all homecare providers will be an average of six weeks in arrears.

**Question 44**

**Councillor Geof Cooke**

When will all risks identified by Audit for Housing Revenue Account monitoring be fully mitigated?

**Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius**

The Planning Housing and Regeneration Service has completed the actions agreed in the Audit. This will be subject to a follow up Audit, which will, itself be completed by the end of December 2009.

One of the actions was about ensuring that there were robust arrangements for recovering cost associated with the regeneration schemes from regeneration partners. Detailed time sheets are being completed with notification of costs collated monthly and with 3 monthly invoicing to partners.

**Question 45**

**Councillor Alison Moore**

Could the Leader tell Council what, in the context of Ryanair Barnet, he believes constitutes a core or basic service?

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

There is no such thing as 'Ryanair Barnet' and so the question is irrelevant.

**Question 46**

**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What are the PwC costs to date on the Future Shape programme?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

Total costs to date are £195,138.

**Question 47**

**Councillor Ross Houston**

According to Caroline Spellman Tory councils should delay housing projects until any Conservative government is elected – does the Leader and/or Cabinet Member agree with this proposal? Did the Leader receive a copy of this letter, and if so how did he respond to Ms Spellman?

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

The letter from Caroline Spelman sent to Conservative councillors makes no such assertion. It outlines how a Conservative administration, if elected, would dismantle the regional planning process in England outside London, and let local authorities decide the right level of development for their area. Many of the Regional Spatial Strategies are seeking to delete Green Belt protection contrary to the views of local people and local councils. Labour and the LibDems remain ambivalent to protecting the green belt, where we will continue to robustly defend the green belt from housing development.

It is wrong that councils are forced into pushing forward with unsustainable development that will increase carbon emissions and congestion.

Under Labour, the regional planning process is currently in disarray – with a succession of successful legal challenges against the flawed process. Even the Government has no confidence in the regional planning process – given its plans to create new Integrated Regional Plans to replace the Regional Spatial Strategies.

London has a different constitutional settlement to the rest of England, as a consequence of the 1998 GLA referendum.

**Question 48**

**Councillor Jim Tierney**

Has the Cabinet Member looked into the Hillingdon proposals to bring their ALMO back in-house in order to analyse whether this might be an option for Barnet Homes, and if so when will such a proposal come before Cabinet for a decision?

**Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius**

We are aware of the decisions taken about ALMOs both by Hillingdon and Ealing Councils. The Council has no plans to bring Barnet Homes back in-house as it is satisfied with the progress in delivering the Decent Homes programme and with most areas of service supplied by Barnet Homes.

**Question 49**

**Councillor Charlie O-Macauley**

What is the policy for trimming or pruning trees around Barnet when trees are overgrown or grow wild?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

We have a cyclical pruning programme which means that all street trees are inspected proactively and works identified every three years. This stems directly from a Policy document from 1995, Management of Street Trees in Close Proximity to Buildings. Essentially this document addresses our subsidence risk as a Borough but has the side benefit of ensuring our trees are also inspected for safety and any general issues that may be causing with neighbouring properties.

We also respond to over 2000 resident requests regarding trees and if they are found to be in a condition that warrants extra expenditure above the cyclical programme, the Tree Officer will authorise this.

Trees in parks are inspected annually, primarily for safety reasons, and we have a different approach to trees in these situations and carry out minimal works to parks trees.

**Question 50**

**Councillor Charlie O-Macauley**

What scope is there within the street lighting contract to address street lighting in areas where community safety, security or health and safety issues emerge or where there is new building?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

Any roads or areas having street lighting replaced by the PFI contract are or will be lit to modern standards which provide a good level of lighting. This represents an improvement on the existing levels. Areas of existing poor lighting are to be addressed in the first five years of the contract. Although the PFI contract is geared to replace the majority of the existing stock, we have provision within the contract to accommodate new developments and carry out additional works. Both of these activities are not and could not be budgeted for and would incur an additional cost.

**Question 51**

**Councillor Charlie O-Macauley**

What are the conditions or policies in Barnet Council for providing support accommodation for residents with mental health difficulties when it comes to discharging them into the community?

**Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius**

People are assessed by multi-disciplinary teams in hospital, prior to discharge according to the Care Plan Approach policy (CPA). The approach requires that health and social services assess need, provide a written care plan, allocate a care coordinator, and then regularly review the plan. Should social care needs be identified, these will be assessed under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. Services are tailored to the individual needs of each person with both users and carers closely involved in deciding what they need.

**Question 52**

**Councillor Charlie O-Macauley**

What has been done in the space of recession for traders and businesses in Barnet especially in deprived areas or wards and what measures have been taken by Barnet council to assist small traders/businesses?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan**

Cabinet received a report on 20 October outlining the support to small and medium enterprises. It highlighted the following initiatives.

**Supporting town centres** – the Council has analysed the impact that the recession has had on businesses in the town centres and a number of targeted actions to support town centres have been proposed, such as piloting parking initiatives that will boost visitor numbers and working with local traders to support them in setting up initiatives to attract people into town centres. A report is being submitted to a future Cabinet meeting.

**‘Leader listens’ with business** – The Leader of the Council has been running a series of ‘Leader Listens’ events with local businesses across Barnet. These events aim to engage with the local community and gain a more fine grained understanding of their needs and concerns during the recession. Members of the council’s corporate procurement team were also there to offer advice to businesses on how to do business with the Council.

**Business Support officer** – The Council created a new post of ‘Business Support Officer, whose role is funded by s106 monies in order to strengthen dialogue with local businesses in the borough. This post will help the Council to:

- understand more about the experience of local businesses in the current economic climate;
- support local SMEs and enable them to be more aware of, and bid for, contracts from local developers;
- act as a conduit for support and advice;
- understand the skills needs of local businesses;
- encourage links between business and education – support contractors in the preparation and implementation of their Local Procurement Strategy documents (as per below) which will act as a frame of reference for the resulting partnership between the Council, developers and local businesses.

**Section 106** – Cabinet on 2 September agreed an interim guidance note formalising how the Council will support development through the recession. This includes the requirement that any developer receiving flexible arrangements over the S106 contributions will need to submit a Local Procurement Strategy, which will be reviewed by the Business Support Officer, to support its implementation.

**Prompt payments to businesses**– The Council has signed up to the Government’s Prompt Payment Code (PPC). This demonstrates to our suppliers that we are serious about treating them fairly and paying them on time as it requires us to:

- Pay suppliers on time within the agreed terms;
- Give clear guidance to suppliers on payment procedures and ensuring that there is a system for dealing with complaints and disputes;
- Encourage good practice by encouraging our lead suppliers to adopt the code throughout their supply chains.

**Business rate relief** – The Council has sent targeted advice and information to those businesses in the Borough that are entitled to Small Business Rate Relief. As well as actively encouraging the take-up of rate relief, the Council has been providing help to struggling local businesses to arrange payment plans. Traders can make payments over 12 months instead of the usual ten. In addition if people are struggling with paying rents on commercial tenancies in council properties payment terms are being negotiated.

**Reduction of street parking charges** – Over the Christmas period the Council reduced on and off street pay and display charges to as low as 10 pence per hour to £1 per day for a two week period. The move was an attempt to increase the usage of parking spaces, generating increased footfall in town centres and provide a boost to retail trading and the local economy over the Christmas period. Analysis showed that short term parking increased significantly with some car parks showing a 35 per cent increase in their occupancy rate.