

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members
15 December 2009
Questions and Responses**

Question 1

Councillor Duncan Macdonald

Can you confirm the Council's current policy regarding the division of powers between the Council and the police to enforce by-laws such as dog fouling and littering? Is the Council planning to allow the police to enforce any of these by-laws?

Answer by Councillor Matthew Offord

Officers within the Council's Community Protection Group currently enforce provisions within the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (sections 87 and 88) that deal with littering and the power to deal with dog fouling within the Dogs Fouling of Land Act 1996.

The Community Protection Group is currently reviewing all of the powers available to regulate the street scene which update the above powers and include others which have not yet been formally adopted by the Council.

Question 2

Councillor Brian Salinger

In the light of the motion passed at the Council meeting on 3 December, will the Cabinet Member please tell Members which schools in the Borough do NOT have some form of school uniform.

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

The following do not have any form of uniform:

Special Schools

Mapledown
Oakleigh

Pupil Referral Units

Northgate
Pavilion
Discovery Bay

Nursery Schools

St Margaret's Nursery
Brookhill Nursery
Hampden Way
Moss Hall Nursery

Schools

Moss Hall Infants

Question 3

Councillor Andrew McNeil

Would the Cabinet Member explain why at the Finchley and Golders Green Area Environment Sub-Committee – 30 November 2009, no Conservative Member, apart from the Chairman, was present, and only one Member gave an apology?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

It is for the Councillors concerned to explain their absence; Councillor McNeil can ask them directly if he wishes. I am happy to explain my absence: I was caught in extremely heavy traffic due to the closure of the Blackwall Tunnel that evening. I advised the Committee Chairman and Democratic Services at 18:38 that evening via email.

Question 4

Councillor Duncan Macdonald

Can you advise as to what steps are being taken in the light of several recent incidents to ensure that the Tudor Park Golf clubhouse is not let to people who allow alcohol fuelled anti social behaviour and noise nuisance to neighbours?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Council Officers are to seek a meeting with the Club to warn the Club that such behaviour must cease. The club will also be written to with a formal warning to comply with the terms of the lease.

Question 5

Councillor Brian Salinger

Acknowledging that it is the Council's policy of supporting independent living, will the Cabinet Member advise Members of the criteria used to assess whether or not an individual, be it someone with a medical condition or conditions or physical handicaps or learning difficulties or a combination of factors, is a person capable of living independently or whether they should be supported to live in a residential institution where a higher level of care is available to support the individual?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

It is possible almost all individuals can be assisted to some further independence. That independence may be very slight but it helps maintain and improve dignity. There are of course those who do need to be supported through higher care in an institution. The criteria used to decide this would depend on the condition of that individual as assessed by the various professionals involved as well as the individual's (and family's) wishes.

Question 6

Councillor Agnes Slocombe

I understand that the contract to deliver Barnet First to every household in Barnet. Would the Cabinet Member confirm that this includes the council estates?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Yes, Council estates are included. If Councillor Slocombe knows of any households that haven't received copies she is welcome to let me know and I will rectify the situation.

Question 7

Councillor Duncan Macdonald

Can you confirm that the Future Shape proposals will not lead to any changes in the frequency of rubbish collection or to the size of the bins being collected?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Refuse collection is a fundamental service provided by the Council. This Conservative Council has no plans to force residents to change the size of their wheelie bin. The Administration is firmly committed to a weekly collection system.

Question 8**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Officers have advised me and other Members of the Council that a major review of the housing allocations system and choice based lettings is taking place. Will the Cabinet Member tell the Council who will be consulted before any changes are made and will he confirm that there are no plans to return to the days when Council Officers told residents where they were going to live rather than allowing them to choose?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

A staff led review has been underway of the housing service which focuses on the customer experience. There are no plans to return to a system where housing applicants are told where they have to live. Any proposals will be consulted upon widely as is required by law.

Question 9**Councillor Colin Rogers**

Can the Cabinet Member say why it is taking up to two weeks after receipt for Barnet to publish notification of planning applications, and what is being done to improve this?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

I take it the question relates to the publication of the weekly lists which contain all applications validated (**not received**) on the electronic system during the **previous** week.

Applications normally take 2 to 3 days to validate and be placed on the system. Therefore all applications on a weekly list will always be at least 2 to 3 days old from the Registration date and a number can occasionally be older if taken longer to validate, which can often be the case with more complicated submissions.

All customers and users can in any event use the online Weekly List Search (<http://planningcases.barnet.gov.uk/planning-cases/acolnetcgi.exe>) to view, by weekly list date **all** applications received or applications received by **ward**.

The online weekly list starts to appear as soon as any application has the next weekly list date assigned to it. It will continue to grow until the end of the week prior to the weekly list date, e.g. for weekly list dated say, the 30/11/2009, this will grow until no further applications are added during the week before.

Importantly, it should be noted that neighbour consultation letters are usually sent out on the same date that an application has been recorded on the system as validated. Therefore, neighbour consultation periods are not in any way compromised by the way the weekly list is generated.

The planning department is continuously seeking to improve its processes and systems and in particular the time taken to validate applications. It has consistently reduced this over the last two years and has recently targeted a maximum 2 day turnaround period for all applications.

The department is also leading on a pilot project, partly funded by the DCLG in relation to the more effective use of electronic communication and media such as 'email alerts'. This may enable for instance customers being notified, if they so wish of any application validated in a particular street or area on the same day.

Question 10

Councillor Duncan Macdonald

Will the Leader agree with me that Cabinet Members should not comment in public on the individual performance of Officers?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Given the challenges facing our residents as a result of this Government's mishandling of the Economy and public sector reform (a party HIS party has propped up locally) – is this the most pressing question he can summon up?

Question 11

Councillor Daniel Webb

Can the Cabinet Member please tell me how much the Council is paying to subsidise free swimming for 16 years and under?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

I'm pleased to confirm the Council is not subsidising free under-16 swimming from its own resources. As a result of a successful bid to the Department for Culture Media and Sport we received £205,570 to fund the scheme for a year.

This covers the estimated cost for running the scheme and contributes to the administration costs. This is being run on our behalf as part of the GLL contract. It is planned that any residual grant funding will be invested towards local swimming initiatives.

Question 12

Councillor Ross Houston

We are now nearing the end of the year, has the Council agreed final affordable housing targets with the Mayor of London yet, and if not, when does he think this will happen?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

No, 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.

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 funding is agreed.

Question 13

Councillor Duncan Macdonald

Can you advise the current cost to the Council of the messenger service and what steps are being taken to reduce the number of journeys made by the messengers by for example email only delivery of documents?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The internal courier/messenger service makes daily deliveries to Council buildings. Deliveries include internal correspondence, leaflets and stationery. Deliveries are also made to Members home addresses, every Tuesday and Friday and on Mondays before Council meetings. The cost of the service is approx £56,000 which includes salaries, vehicle hire, maintenance and fuel. Costs are recharged back to relevant service areas at the end of the

financial year. The reduction in the number of Council buildings which are now used as offices and the greatly increased use of e-mail has significantly reduced the volume of internal correspondence carried by the couriers.

External couriers are used for longer distance deliveries or that are extremely urgent. The expenditure on external couriers in the period 1/11/08 to 1/11/09 was £ 6,699.

For financial year 2008/09, the cost and recharge to Democratic Services for home deliveries of hard copies of agendas and minutes to Members was £26,600.

A reduction in the number of printed copies of agendas and minutes would bring savings in printing costs. Fewer deliveries would also bring savings. Both outcomes would also be beneficial on environmental grounds. As all agendas, reports and minutes are available online, steps are being taken to ensure that hard copies of these documents are only distributed to those who have specific need to receive them through attendance at meetings or for scrutiny purposes.

Question 14

Councillor Dean Cohen

Approximately, how much does it cost to print and provide Members with advance hard copies of committee papers?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Based on black and white copies, the approximate cost to print agendas is £33,000 per annum.

The approximate cost to print minutes is £3,500.

The cost of delivery to Members (twice a week) is £26,600.

Therefore the approximate cost to print and provide Members with advance hard copies of committee papers (and minutes) is approximately £63,000.

This does not include the colour copies which are produced on an ad-hoc basis.

Question 15

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

On 3 November, in response to a parking ticket appeal query I was told by the Director of Environment that the resident's appeal had been rejected and the parking ticket would need to be paid. On 4 November, I emailed the resident to advise them of the Director's response that their appeal had been rejected. The resident then received a letter dated 4 November, but emailed out to the resident on 5 November, saying the parking ticket had been cancelled. I have asked for an explanation of this course of events, but still have not received a reply – would the Cabinet Member advise how this PCN came to be cancelled? (I am happy to email him the correspondence).

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The advice given by the Director was correct, however the member of staff dealing with the case made an error of judgement in cancelling the PCN before being given the outcome of the decision. The member of staff had been fully trained in the necessary processes and appropriate action has been taken to prevent a recurrence of this mistake.

Question 16**Councillor Duncan Macdonald**

Can you advise as to why the recordings of Council meetings currently made are not available as podcasts on Barnet's website? Also how long are recordings kept?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Council Procedure Rules 30.11 and 43.4 cover the recording at a Council meeting of Questions and Comments on the work of the Cabinet. These are the only parts of the meeting that are recorded so that the Democratic Services Manager can send a transcript to the relevant Members for correction of grammar and punctuation prior to publication. The Council Procedure Rules do not authorise the use of the recordings for anything else. I have requested confirmation of how long the recordings are kept for and will update Councillor Macdonald.

Question 17**Councillor John Marshall**

Could the Leader advise how many older residents have benefited from his Computers for the Elderly Scheme?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The recycling scheme has now been running for 16 months. To date, 252 local residents aged 55+ have been awarded a second-hand computer (104 in 2008 and 148 in 2009). There are currently 25 applications awaiting consideration.

Question 18**Councillor Anne Hutton**

When will the Administration appoint someone to the Fostering Panel? There has been a vacancy for several months – and there is an issue around safeguarding.

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

A nomination to fill the vacancy has been put forward.

Question 19**Councillor Monroe Palmer**

Could the Cabinet Member dealing with Adult Social Services inform Council **what action he**, as distinct from officers, took about the dismal Performance Indicators for:

- (a) Percentage of carers receiving needs assessment or review, which showed a disturbing 21% variance from the target Barnet set itself;
- (b) Percentage of adults with learning difficulties in paid employment, which showed a disturbing 16% variance from the target Barnet set itself; and
- (c) Percentage of adults social care assessments completed within 28 days, which showed a 7% variance from the target Barnet set itself.

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I sought re-assurance from officers

- (a) This target is achievable for the full year;
- (b) The Council is struggling to meet this target in the current economic climate and it may well be that the target itself was over ambitious; and
- (c) The Council is achieving a higher level of assessments than last year and has coped with an increasing work load from safeguarding referrals, NHS Barnet for Continuing Care Assessments and extra work with Asylum Seekers.

Question 20**Councillor John Marshall**

Could the Leader please advise on the number of applications received to join the Council's intern scheme?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

Number of Applications to date is 65.

Question 21**Councillor Anne Hutton**

What plans are there for the development and or relocation of North Finchley library, and in what timescale?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

A planning proposal for the redevelopment of the Furnitureland site in North Finchley is expected to be submitted to the Planning department in mid-December. An earlier proposal – which did not proceed – did include proposals for a new library within the Furnitureland development, and we are awaiting the new proposal which would confirm the nature and content of the development.

Question 22**Councillor Monroe Palmer**

Could the Cabinet Member dealing with Children's Services inform Council **what action she**, as distinct from officers, took about the poor Performance Indicators for:

- (a) Percentage achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving the expected level at Key Stages 4, which showed a massive 43% variance from the target Barnet set itself; and
- (b) Percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within 7 working days, which showed a 17% variance from the target Barnet set itself.

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

As with all performance indicators, I discussed these with the Director of Children's Services at my regular meetings.

With regard to the target for narrowing the achievement gap, I was advised that the trend in Barnet is very encouraging and the latest figures show Barnet pupils record results 16% above the national average. In a high performing authority the 21% target is very challenging. I was assured that detailed work is continuing in particular schools to improve attainment further.

With regard to the target for initial assessments, I have been paying close attention to this issue for some time. In 2008, I requested an audit of Initial Assessments and an action plan was developed from that audit. However, in line with other authorities, the number of initial assessments needed has increased dramatically (by 40% since 2007). I have made it clear to Officers that, in the light of these pressures, the priority must be the delivery of a safe service and that this should never be compromised by chasing targets. I have also noted that the DCSF is now consulting on extending this target to 10 days in recognition of the widespread view from professionals that 7 days is not long enough to carry out an effective assessment.

Question 23**Councillor Tom Davey**

Can the Cabinet Member please tell me what is being done to improve customer service?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

There are two performance measurements for customer service in Barnet: one for waiting times at corporate receptions and one for demand met by telephone. We are exceeding the waiting time target and my response to question 28 outlines what is being done in our contact centres to improve customer service.

In our efforts to improve external and internal customer service throughout the Council, we held a Customer Month during September. The following activities raised the profile of customer service:

- A meeting of managers from across the council at the beginning of the month to highlight customer service performance across the council and identify areas for improvement.
- A selection of customers were invited to meet with managers from across the Council. This stimulated discussion around developing a new relationship with our customers and the importance of basic customer services.
- Well attended lunchtime talks from customer service professionals, including Andy Rubin from Pentland, Bob Winnington from the Institute of Customer Service (ICS) and Norman Black from Brent Cross.
- Two well attended Customer Services Market Days (NLBP and Barnet House) hosted by customer service staff and key Partners, highlighting the importance of partnership working to improve customer services for the citizens of Barnet (those attended were Job Centre Plus, PCT, Barnet Homes, Police, ICS, 2e2, Logica, Safer Communities, Homeseekers, Pensions Service, Housing Benefits, among others). This helped promote much of the good work done currently and share best practice.
- Short customer service masterclasses in basic customer service skills such as resolving issues and complaints, secrets to good customer service success, and communicating with customers.
- ICS round table discussion hosted by Corporate Customer Services to promote and share best practice with other councils.
- Back to the floor programme for managers across the council with over 10 Directors actively taking part and spending time “on the floor” within other customer facing service areas.

ICS

We have been corporate members of the Institute of Customer Service for just over a year and are actively taking part in their Professional Award scheme. This scheme gives us the opportunity to offer staff a chance to gain a nationally recognised accreditation for their Customer Service skills.

Evidence from other participating authorities suggests that the ICS Awards programme has been key in motivating their staff, giving them confidence and improving customer service levels.

29 members of staff, supported by 15 coaches, across different service areas are currently working through their award with some of these now beginning to take their final assessments.

A communications programme for the next intake of practitioners will start in the New Year with the aim of recruiting a further 20-30 staff.

General Customer Service Training

As part of our commitment to improve customer service skills we also offer an in-house customer service training programme, covering areas such as Call Handling, Customer Service Awareness and Equalities and Complaint Handling. Since we began offering this training in 2007, over 200 members of staff have attended. I encourage all services to enrol their staff on the training that is available.

Question 24

Councillor Andrew McNeil

Can the Cabinet Member explain the effective steps he has taken to address the genuine concerns of residents living in Summerlee Avenue N2 and other streets south of Fortis Green to whom he pledged the removal of the 6 day all day parking restrictions – residents who expressed these concerns eloquently at the recent Finchley and Golders Green Residents' Forum?

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 received a significant number of valuable responses expressing concern with our conclusions. Depending on the origin of the correspondence, the concerns were varied but the Council were keen to ensure that its conclusions and intentions were designed in good faith to meet the demands of the area and the needs of the community.

Therefore, further investigation in to the sentiments of the submissions took place, which included The Leader and myself meeting with representatives of a cross section of the East Finchley community which, when considered in context of the further work carried out by Council officers subsequently resulted in a decision being made not to proceed with any changes to the way that the East Finchley CPZ currently operates.

Although the CPZ review itself did not highlight a particular concern with the current hours of operation of the CPZ in and around Summerlee Avenue, it did subsequently receive comment, including a petition requesting that the hours of operation of this part of the CPZ be reduced to operate only between the hours of 2 and 3pm on Mondays to Fridays, which were the original hours of operation when the scheme was first introduced and were subsequently increased to their current operational hours of Monday to Saturday 10 am to 6.30pm.

The operational times were increased due to the increased parking pressure anticipated by the Council as a result of the Garden Suburb Institute relocating to East Finchley and the Council felt at the time that there were significant reasons to proceed with an increase in the operational times on an experimental basis. By its nature the experimental scheme allowed the changes to be introduced rapidly but whilst the experiment continued comment could be made to the Council by those actually experiencing the effects of the increased hours – the experimental period effectively being a consultation period as well. It should be stressed that this was not a pilot scheme, but a scheme designed to mitigate against the increased parking pressure in the area whilst allowing community comment to inform subsequent decisions on whether to make the changes permanent.

In due course having considered all comments received the decision was subsequently taken to make the scheme permanent. The current scheme is valid, although it is recognised that some residents would like to revert to the original lesser restrictions.

This has been conveyed to members of the community who attended the two recent Finchley and Golders Green Forums who were also advised that a further letter would be sent out to all properties within the CPZ advising of the decision now taken not to proceed with any changes.

However, again as emphasised at the Forums, should significant support for further investigation into reducing the hours of operation of the CPZ still remain and that this support for investigation is favoured by a significant number of the population then the Council would of course be prepared to consider this option including further consultation and engagement with the community. This would not be likely to take place though until well into the next financial year.

Question 25

Councillor Monroe Palmer

Could the Cabinet Member dealing with Housing Services inform Council **what action he**, as distinct from officers, took about the dismal Performance Indicator for:
Number of affordable homes delivered, which showed that of our unambitious target of 390 homes we achieved a miserable number of 161 homes.

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I sought an explanation.

The Council has not achieved the target because plans have been hindered by the continuing property market recession and uncertainties regarding funding.

Question 26

Councillor Brian Gordon

According to a recent Council Report, GLA projections predict that numbers of primary school aged children in this Borough could rise by 24% by 2019, which means nearly 6,000 more children. What provision is being made by the Council by way of long-term strategy to deal with this need?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

Preparations are underway to increase the number of school places for September 2010 and discussions are being held with Head teachers of schools in areas of predicted high pressure. The project to rebuild and expand Colindale school is progressing and for the longer term, sites have already been identified within the regeneration growth areas for expansion and new provision. We now need to identify existing schools that can be expanded on a more permanent basis and develop a long term funding strategy for the significant capital investment that will be required. Unfortunately, the Government continues to fail to recognise Barnet's needs and awarded the council a grant of only £1m towards meeting new demand when officers estimate that we will need at least £30 m to meet local pressures.

Question 27

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

How does the 'Three Strands' approach help to prevent inappropriate town centre developments?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

The Three Strands Approach sets out the strategic vision for planning and development in the Borough. It underpins the existing policy approach and will also be embedded within the emerging Local development Framework, the new local plan from the Core Strategy through to detailed development management policies.

The Three Strands Approach places considerable emphasis on the importance of the boroughs town centres and the need to ensure they continue to perform well as economic and social focal points. In particular, it seeks to promote opportunities for attracting new investment into these key locations and build upon the individual strengths and characteristics of Barnet's many centres. Delivering high quality mixed use and sustainable development is critical to the approach and through the robust application of current planning policy and the preparation of new local policies the Council is in a strong position to prevent inappropriate change now and in the future.

Question 28

Councillor Monroe Palmer

Could the Cabinet Member dealing with Corporate Services inform Council **what action she**, as distinct from officers, took about the poor Performance Indicators for:

Percentage of telephone calls answered within 20 seconds (5 rings) by our call centre, which showed that of our target of 85% Barnet managed a miserable 46.5%. In case the Cabinet Member is unaware of the breakdown of this disturbing lack of response, that of the 85% target in Planning we only made 16%; in Parking only 21%; in Environment and Transport only 23%; in Adult Social Services only 34%; in Council Tax only 45%; in Registrars only 43 %; in Housing Advice only 52%.

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

My actions, distinct from Officers, included three visits to the contact centre to meet staff and managers, listen to calls and observe staff dealing with enquiries. My visits have highlighted to staff that their work and performance is important to me and fellow members. Since my appointment to Cabinet, I have met managers responsible for customer services at least monthly and the contact centre is always discussed. As a result of my meetings with officers, officers know that members expect performance to improve.

I am aware of the issues facing the contact centre and have highlighted these below. I have fully supported and encouraged measures to improve performance including visits to councils that perform well in this area – these visits have helped us establish a way forward which is also highlighted below. I believe that despite recent performance figures progress is being made which will see improvements over the long term. In November for example, overall performance against target was 57%, a 10.5% increase on quarter two.

Other more general actions include spearheading 'Customer Month' in September (please see my response to question 23 for more details). This included a visit to the contact centre and all staff receiving a message from me reiterating the need to improve customer service.

Councillor Palmer may find it helpful if I share my understanding of the issues facing the contact centre and the way forward:

Background information

This financial year, the corporate telephone target was changed from "percentage of calls answered" to "85% of calls answered within 5 rings". This is a more ambitious target but has

made it easier to benchmark our performance. For previous years, this indicator was reported only for Corporate Customer Services (i.e. Street Based Services and Planning First Contact) but has been extended this year to include all contact centres across the Council – therefore giving us a more accurate picture of customer service performance across all Council contact centres.

Issues

Other boroughs that are nearer to meeting comparable targets have their officers taking between 31 and 58 calls per day. Barnet officers take on average 115 calls per day.

Accountability, control and efficient use of resources is difficult within a devolved customer service structure.

Moving forward

Officers have visited councils who perform well in this area: Surrey, Kent, Cambridgeshire and Slough. Learning from these visits has highlighted the need to proceed with the following:

Consolidation of contact centres

- Accelerate contact centre consolidation – proposing an initial merger of current contact centres into Corporate Customer Services. This will improve control, accountability, and increase the scale of resource we have available for customer contact. Parking have physically moved to Corporate Customer Services and we can already see improvements in performance (only 1% of calls were answered within corporate target prior to move (June 2009); performance was 23% in November).
- Reduce telephone demand by enhancing our website and encouraging more online transactions.

Improved performance management

- We currently only measure 2 performance indicators for customer services. We are in the process of developing more focussed customer service indicators to ensure a broader understanding of customer service performance and better demonstrate the quality of customers' experience. Consolidating customer service functions within Corporate Customer Services will make this easier to implement and manage.

We have standardised service level agreements across all contact centres so everyone is now measured against the corporate target.

Question 29

Councillor Brian Gordon

There are still a number of roads within the Borough that have humps. In view of their general unpopularity, the damage they do to vehicles and the fact that their existence has not proven to have reduced road accidents, when can we see all these remaining humps being removed?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Currently, there are no proposals to remove remaining speed humps on Borough roads – it would be too expensive. The removal of speed humps is only pursued where they exist on roads which are to be resurfaced. As part of the carriageway resurfacing programme, technical assessments are undertaken to assess the effectiveness of any existing measures such as humps, including pre and post resurfacing speed surveys, accident data analysis and consultation with residents, ward members and emergency services. The Officer findings are reported to the Cabinet Member and the Area Environment Sub-Committee chairman for decision before measures are replaced or alternatives recommended.

Question 30

Councillor Alison Moore

Will the Cabinet Member confirm that Area Environment Sub-Committees will not be scrapped?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

This is not in my gift, it would be a matter for the Constitutional Review Committee.

Question 31

Councillor Monroe Palmer

Could the Leader of the Council, whoever this is at this time, inform Council **what action he/she**, as distinct from officers, took about the dismal Performance Indicators presided over by his/her Cabinet Members.

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

I appointed Councillor Thomas to focus on driving up performance and I am happy to compare the performance of this Administration to the shambles we inherited from the Labour led administration he and his wife were prominent members of.

Question 32

Councillor Joan Scannell

Now that the results have been issued of the consultation on the review of the Edgware CPZ, when are we likely to see some changes in that CPZ – hopefully to make it less restrictive than at present?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Statutory consultations for proposals based on the outcomes of the Edgware CPZ review commenced on 5 November and have now finished. The responses received as part of these statutory consultations are now being analysed. A report including recommendations and intentions will be ready next week, and a decision reached on the Council's agreed way forward by the end of this year. Assuming agreement is reached measures will begin to be implemented from the end of January onwards.

Question 33

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Will Barnet join the 10:10 project to achieve a 10% cut in the UK's carbon emissions in 2010?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Council has not signed up to the 10:10 project which is acknowledged to be a very bold target to cut CO2 emissions by 10% in 2010. However, the Council is committed to reducing carbon emissions from its operations, and to raising awareness of energy efficiency and carbon reductions among residents and businesses. For example, the Council is investing in

energy efficiency improvement measures within its offices and other premises and has recently been working with the Energy Saving Trust on its strategy to reduce carbon emissions in the Borough.

Question 34

Councillor Jack Cohen

How many planning applications including reserved matters remain outstanding (by this I mean have not yet been determined) for more than one year? Please provide details of these.

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

There are 22 outstanding planning applications over a year old including applications for Reserved Matters. This excludes, however, applications to discharge/vary conditions (50), Certificates of Lawful Development (3), Advertisement Consent applications (2) and Listed Building/Conservation Area Consent applications (1).

The majority of the 22 full and outline applications are minor in nature and have involved extensive negotiations to secure satisfactory outcomes. A smaller number of applications, due in the main to their scale and complexity unfortunately are requiring more time to deal with such as Brent Cross Cricklewood.

The planning department seeks to determine all planning applications in a timely manner and this is reflected in its performance which consistently significantly exceeds the national performance indicator targets'.

Question 35

Councillor Darrel Yawitch

I know you have been trying to assist in pressing for more 113 buses (now that the 186 has been re-routed) to assist with transport needs for Copthall and Hasmorean girls' schools. What progress has been made in this respect?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Following the change in the 186 bus route, Officers have followed up the Hasmorean Girls School's concerns with London Buses. London Buses have promised an urgent survey to determine the extent of the loading problems at Fiveways Corner and the reliability of bus 113 in the afternoon, with a similar survey being undertaken at the morning travel to school times.

The Council hopes to hear from London Buses very soon.

Question 36

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

When will meetings of the Local Strategic Partnership finally be held in public rather than in secret?

Answer by Councillor Mike Freer, Leader of the Council

The meetings of the LSP Executive remain private meetings and there are no plans to change this.

Question 37

Councillor Brian Coleman

Could the Cabinet Member update Council on when the tenants of 1 Friern Park might be able to move to their new facilities in Friary House?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

Tenders have gone out to 5 building contractors, and are due for return in mid January. Negotiation will take place with the contractors on receipt of their tenders for the work, concerning the contract period, and a comprehensive project plan will then be constructed. The revised estimated move date is August 2010.

Question 38

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Now that officer Treasury Management Practices have been reviewed, will the Cabinet Member for Resources review the scrutiny of Treasury Management exercised by the executive in the light of comments from the previous Cabinet Member for Resources that the Cabinet Resources Committee had 'minimum technical knowledge' to do this job?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan

In exercising their responsibilities the executive rely on expert advice provided by the Director of Finance, the Chief Internal Auditor, the external auditors and the Council's independent treasury management advisers. As in all other areas of Council operations, detailed technical knowledge is not required in order for the executive to discharge its role effectively.

Since enhanced compliance checks and arrangements for regular reporting to the executive were put in place in April 2009 there have been no instances of non-compliance with the Treasury Management Strategy. The effectiveness of executive oversight of treasury management is further evidenced by a recent internal audit follow up report which has confirmed that there is now full assurance that all of the necessary controls are in place to mitigate key risks.

Question 39

Councillor Wendy Prentice

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the roll out of Oyster card usage on rail journeys?

Answer by Councillor Alan Harper

Oyster pay as you go will be accepted on National Rail services in London from 2 January on routes that currently accept Travelcards. This means Oyster pay as you go will be available on First Capital Connect services through the borough. (Pay as you go will be newly available between Elstree and Borehamwood and West Hampstead including Mill Hill Broadway, Hendon and Cricklewood, and between Hadley Wood and Finsbury Park including New Barnet, Oakleigh Park and New Southgate). Pay as you go cannot be used for journeys starting or finishing beyond the London zones (or beyond Watford Junction or Grays on the relevant lines), or on certain services to/from Heathrow or on Southeastern high speed services between St Pancras International and Stratford International.

The train operating companies set the fares for Oyster pay as you go on the newly included lines, based on the same zones as used for Travelcards. These will be different to the fares on the tube and rail lines already operating pay as you go. The Peak Oyster single fare will be set at, or just below, half the price of a cash Anytime Return. Off peak fares are similarly linked to the price of an off peak return.

The peak fare applies Monday to Friday 0630-0930 and 1600-1900 (except public holidays) with the fare charged based on the time you touch your card on the yellow card reader (rather than the time of the train). Off peak day return tickets will no longer be available within the zones so customers will need to use Oyster pay as you go to take advantage of these fares

The daily price cap will apply so all journeys made between 0430 and 0430 the following day will cost no more than the price of the equivalent Day Travelcard.

Nevertheless customers travelling on most days may find it cheaper or more convenient to buy a National Rail or Travelcard season ticket. Also customers using pay as you go on national rail services beyond zones covered on a travelcard season ticket will need to set up an "extension permit" on their Oyster Card to allow this before travelling.

Information about the changes including fares is already available from TfL's website <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/modalpages/2688.aspx>. Leaflets and posters about the changes will be available at National Rail stations from early December. Leaflets will be available at Tube and London Underground stations from 2 January and posters will be shown across the tube, bus and London Overground networks. Press advertising is also to take place together with emails to Travelcard and registered Oyster pay as you go customers.

Question 40

Councillor Geof Cooke

What services does the Council provide out of hours?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Services have provided me with the following information:

Corporate Services provides Registrar services out of ours. They offer an urgent facility to obtain a burial document on a Sunday to enable a funeral to proceed, primarily for the Jewish and Muslim community. This facility is also available over the Christmas and New Year period. It should be noted that Saturdays is considered to be a normal working day for this service area.

The emergency planning section has put arrangements in place to ensure that the Council has officers available 24/7 to manage the Council's response to an emergency incident (as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act) affecting the Borough of Barnet where the emergency services request assistance.

The Social Care Service shares an 'out of hours' duty service with the London Borough of Harrow. This service is accessed through the Council's out of hours number and ensures that there is a social worker and a manager available at all times. In addition, Children's Social Care has a Social Work Team Manager on call who will give advice and assistance to the Harrow Team and also to our own staff who are working out of hours and to foster carers.

The Youth Offending Service will contact the court on Saturdays and Bank Holidays to ascertain whether there are any young people in court during that session. If there are then a worker will attend that session. Additionally, a Manager is on call for advice during these periods. If a young person is arrested out of hours the police will notify the Duty Social worker (as above) as necessary. If a parent is not available the duty social worker will contact the contracted Appropriate Adult service who will then attend the police station to ensure that the young person is adequately represented.

Highways provides the following services:

- Emergency standby for Highway Maintenance issues – call outs to deal with accident damage and urgent highway infrastructure issues which require protection and making safe.
- Emergency cover for street lighting and illuminated signs maintenance – call outs to

- accident damaged equipment etc.
- Emergency cover for Highway Drainage issues – usually when a danger of flooding is identified.
- Winter Maintenance Activity – gritting of roads as appropriate in ice and snow conditions.
- Carriageway Resurfacing – only where and when the location dictates that night working is most appropriate – when considering safety and disruption.
- CCTV control room which operates 24/7/365. It also provides the emergency out-of-hours telephone service.
- Emergency cover for tree damage to make safe.
- Streetscene emergency cover for road traffic accidents and spillages.

Planning, Housing and Regeneration provide the following:

- Environmental Health Noise Nuisance Service (Out of Hours Noise and Nuisance Service, weekends 20:00 hours Friday through to 05:00 Saturday, then 10:00 hours Saturday through to 05:00 hours Sunday morning, then 10:00 Sunday morning through to 05:00 Monday morning), plus mid week for persistent noise and nuisance problems by appointment only.
- Hendon Cemetery and Crematorium weekend burials available by appointment, usually 24 hours notice required to enable preparation of grave.
- Coroners Mortuary, staff on 24/7 on call rota.
- Environmental Health on call at all times to provide life and limb cover, in case of fatal work place accidents, serious food poisoning outbreaks etc.
- Building Control Dangerous Structures Service (Emergency Service Call Out – 24/7, 365 Days pa).
- Emergency Housing and Homelessness Advice (Every Evening after Office Hours including Emergency Housing Accommodation where exceptionally necessary).
- Barnet Homes: Out of Hours Housing and Gas Emergency Repairs Service (24/7); Vulnerable People: Lifeline Alarm System (24/7).

Question 41

Councillor Kath McGuirk

What are the 40 – 50 potential options being considered for reducing household waste and increasing recycling?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

We are looking at a range of options to take forward over the next year to reduce household waste and increase recycling. All options are being evaluated on the basis of their impact on recycling and waste reduction targets and their cost to implement. These will be considered by Cabinet in early 2010.

These options are:

Creating the right conditions to enable householders to reduce their waste

- Ranging from the inclusion of tetra paks into existing kerbside recycling collections, through to rolling out the kitchen caddy scheme to those already with a green bin to make recycling food waste easier.

Redesigning waste collection services to encourage further waste reduction and recycling

- Ranging from working in partnership with a Barnet Homes project enabling furniture from void properties to be reused through Restore community projects to trial something similar with the neighbourhood skip service, through to working with DHL on house to house collections on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE).

A new relationship with citizens around waste reduction and recycling

- Ranging from piloting new approaches with local businesses and shoppers to reduce the amount of packaging residents take home through to improving intelligence gathering to provide a better understanding of who is and who isn't recycling to allow for more effective targeting of messages within geographical areas.

Providing enforcement and encouragement for waste prevention and recycling

- Ranging from tougher enforcement of compulsory recycling through to an environment month timed swapshop / freecycle event after Christmas.

Question 42

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Does the Cabinet Member for Health support scrapping the government's cancer treatment guarantee, and if so what impact would that have on Barnet residents?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

The Government guarantee on universal waiting times for cancer treatment is not worth the paper it is written on if the outcome of that treatment continues to be as far behind our European and American counterparts as it is at present. Leaving aside the post code lottery on both waiting times and treatment, patients must be better served by receiving the most effective, up to date and suitable treatment for their own particular form of this life threatening disease rather than just being another statistic in yet another tick boxing exercise on waiting times.

Barnet patients are relatively more fortunate than patients in other parts of the country in that waiting times for cancer treatment and mortality rates are on target. However, our survival rates for Breast and Colorectal Cancer are some of the worst in England. The Cancer Reform Strategy, published this month, shows Barnet coming in 9th for Breast and 7th lowest for Colorectal one year

survival rates, a very worrying position for our residents.

The danger in imposing targets such those to which Cllr Rawlings refers – as with all the other Government pledges on waiting times – is that clinicians are forced to concentrate exclusively on them and not on what they are just a part of achieving – namely successful outcomes for patients.

Question 43**Councillor Ross Houston**

How many families are there currently on the housing waiting list in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

At 2 December 2009, there are 17,505 households on the housing waiting list. There are 10187 Households seeking family accommodation (i.e. 2 or more bedrooms) 1805 of these are seeking a transfer.

Question 44**Councillor Alison Moore**

Will the Cabinet Member confirm by which date the necessary works arising from the Fire Risk Assessments of council housing blocks will be carried out?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

It has been possible to bring the Risk assessments forward and Barnet Homes will have them all completed at the end of December. The resultant works are being prioritized and correction work has started. The rest of the works will be expedited and finished over the next 2 financial years.

Question 45**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Given the extra pressure on children's social services due to increased referrals what extra resources are being given to that department to help meet the demand?

Answer by Councillor Fiona Bulmer

A range of additional support has been put in place including recruiting a range of new staff to create an additional Child in Need Team to work with the increase in children subject to a protection plan. Additional support with back office functions, including support with scheduling and minuting child protection conferences and support with ICS, is currently being costed.

Question 46**Councillor Gill Sargeant**

What options are there for re-housing the residents of Grahame Park who will be affected by the Phase 1b redevelopment?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Within Phase 1b, the number of occupied units that will need to be re-housed are as follows:

- 44 secure tenants – all but 2 are moving into Phase 1a (one wants to relocate elsewhere and one has chosen to move twice within the estate)
- 108 non-secure tenants – all non-secure Council tenants are being visited during December and January to establish their housing needs by a visiting LB Barnet housing officer. The various blocks will then be dealt with in batches as appropriate.

Residents are being given a number of options, including private rented sector, shared equity and some Choice Based Lettings.

In addition, there are 21 homeowners – who may be subject to CPO procedures, but most of whom are already in discussions with the developers, Choices for Graham Park. The intention is that they will all be acquired by agreement.

The current programme will see vacant possession of all these properties being obtained by Summer 2010, which is after the completion of Phase 1a. An independent advisor is available to help advise tenants and occupiers on their options.

Question 47**Councillor Alison Moore**

How much did it cost to put Cherry Tree Wood forward for Green Flag status, why did the application fail, and how much additional money will it take to secure Green Flag status?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

We spent £81,000 in Cherry Tree Wood during 2008/09. It is not possible to say exactly why the site was not successful in achieving Green Flag status as feedback is issued via written comments rather than a score sheet. However, non achievement of Green Flag status was marginal and thought to be attributable to the substantial further investment still required to the infrastructure. This included the replacement of the footpath through the wood, the refurbishment of the pavilion – about which discussions are ongoing – and resurfacing of the tennis courts, an additional investment of some £100,000 (excluding the pavilion).

Question 48**Councillor Geof Cooke**

What is preventing Council departments from answering the phone within 5 rings?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Please see my reply to question 28.