

Council Questions to Cabinet Members
20 April 2010
Questions and Responses

Question 1**Councillor Mike Freer**

Would the Cabinet Member for Public Health confirm that all breast scanners serving Barnet women are now digital?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

I am delighted to be able to confirm that the answer is "yes".

The North London Breast Screening Service, which provides services to Barnet, was the sixth of the 82 breast screening units in the Country to become fully digital. This was achieved in November 2009 with an investment of nearly £2m. The implementation of digital equipment was streamlined so that there was no reduction in screening nor delays in service.

I think that there can be little doubt that this pivotal development in our local Breast Screening service would not have come about without the constant, forthright and dedicated advocacy that you employed as Leader of the Council to improve and advance the cause of women's health services in the Borough and the emphasis you have always placed on the need for high quality safe and accessible breast screening services.

Question 2**Councillor Jeremy Davies**

How many licenses have the Council granted under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 over the last 5 years? And are there any current applications under consideration? And have any been refused?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

There has been one application for renewal of an existing zoo licence in the last 5 years. (The premises is Golders Hill Zoo and its licence was renewed in 2008 and expires in 2013).

There are no zoo licence applications currently under consideration. No zoo licence applications have been refused.

N.B. A Zoo Licence lasts for 5 years.

Question 3**Councillor Alison Moore**

Does the Cabinet Member welcome the additional Government money that Barnet has been given under LABGI – which is the second highest amount given in London?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Whilst any funding is always welcome, I believe the grant of £538 is insufficient to create any real stimulus to aid local businesses out of the current recession, particularly when viewed against the increase in National Insurance as proposed by this Government and that local businesses are facing a 40% hike in their business rates.

Question 4**Councillor Mike Freer**

Would the Cabinet Member for Environment please provide an update on the provision of bus ways as part of the Brent Cross Cricklewood regeneration scheme?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Brent Cross Cricklewood (BXC) scheme has demonstrated through its Transport Assessment that a significant mode split can be attained through a comprehensive public transport offer.

This principally comprises a new railway station, a re-located and improved bus station, the 'Rapid Transit System'(RTS) conventional bus service linking the local train, tube and bus stations, three other new bus services and 11 modified or extended bus routes. The main RTS interchanges at the existing Cricklewood train and Brent Cross tube stations would also be improved and key sections of the core RTS route are proposed to have bus priority measures, including bus lanes and a bus-only street. The RTS vehicles would be high specification, and are expected to greatly assist in raising the profile of the development. A similar type of service operates now between the Friern Hospital residential development and Arnos Grove tube station.

Careful consideration was given to the form of the bus improvements, including officers considering whether guided buses should be incorporated, and it was found that the above bus improvements were at least comparable to that which a guided system could achieve. This took into account that guided busways would cost more and take up more space, and could only be used by specially adapted buses, could not be used by taxis and cyclists, or for parking and loading at certain times, and since they run in permanent fixed guideways, do not offer the "demand responsive" routing flexibility compared to the proposed BXC conventional bus services.

Assuming the BXC scheme progresses the details of the bus elements will be reviewed and agreed through the control regime set out in the legal agreement with all key stakeholders involved through the Transport Strategy and Transport Advisory Groups, and as part of the consideration of reserved matters applications.

Question 5

Councillor Jeremy Davies

How many potholes/bad sections of road have been reported to the Council from 1 October 2009 to 31 March 2010 and how many of those reported have been repaired? Please list by ward.

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Unfortunately, the Council's new customer relations data base (CRM) does not enable us to correlate this information on a ward basis at this time. Borough-wide, thousands of reports have been received since 1 January this year; to manually allocate these to their respective wards would be extremely time consuming – no doubt Councillor Davies would not want our Highways team to divert their resources to this task at a time when their efforts are focussed on the job at hand. Between 1 October 2009 and 31 March 2010 there have been 3,046 potholes reported and over 5,000 repaired in the Borough.

Question 6

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Will the Cabinet Member join us in opposing the recently announced tube station ticket office closures in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

I agree with Mayor Johnson that it is a waste of resources having ticket offices open at times when nobody uses them. Every station with a ticket office will continue to have one. All stations will be staffed at all times when trains are running, and stations will feel safer by moving some staff out of the office and amongst the public.

This measure reflects the increased use of Oyster cards in recent years, with consequent reductions in ticket office sales and enquiries. Across the network fewer than one in twenty customers now start their journeys with a ticket office transaction. Use of ticket offices is down 50% on five years ago, with 80% of journeys made using Oyster. Self service ticket machines are provided at Underground stations in the Borough. London Underground emphasise that there will continue to be staff at all stations to help customers during train operating times.

I oppose Labour's refusal to adapt to customer demand and the benefits of technology, especially at a time of extreme pressure on public finances. I note that Ken Livingstone cut staffing levels at 40 stations when he was Mayor of London.

Question 7

Councillor Mike Freer

Can the Cabinet Member confirm how much was spent on road repairs (revenue and capital) in this financial year to date compared with the last financial year?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council's level of spending on road maintenance over the last two years and the allocated budgets for the forthcoming year (2010/11) is shown in the table below:

Year	Planned Road Maintenance	Principal Road Maintenance	Responsive Maintenance
2008/09	£2,511K	£544K	£1,898K
2009/10	£1,868K	£968K	£1,851K
2010/11	£1,917K	£760K	£1,912K

Question 8

Councillor Jeremy Davies

What plans does the Council have for the former Accident Prevention Centre in Daws Lane NW7?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

The Council has no plans at present for the site as it is occupied.

Question 9

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Does the Cabinet Member support the campaign to save the Whittington A&E Unit?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

I support the Conservative Party's moratorium on **all** A&E closures.

Question 10

Councillor Mike Freer

Would the Cabinet Member please advise Council what the current financial situation is at the Old Barn East Finchley?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Webb

The Old Barn Youth and Community Association (OBYCA) set a revised budget of £124,581 for 2009/10, which represented a reduction of £58,761 on 2008/09 pre-audit costs. Economies have mainly been achieved through the use of volunteers to run some activities in place of paid staff, and on administration of the centre as a whole. Monitoring data received at month 11 suggested that OBYCA was in line to achieve a saving on expenditure of closer to £70,000.

Revised projections of income for the year totalled £135,500, of which income collected through charges for attendance at the after school club and holiday play scheme were forecast to be £45,000, 29% less than the original budget. Estimated full-year income from community use of the premises at £35,000 was up by £5,510 on the original budget. A business plan target of increasing by £26,000 a year self-generated income through fees and lettings was not achieved. Income from fundraising was 65% up on 2008/09.

The month 11 projections, factoring in the Council's 2009/10 grant of £29,000, indicated that OBYCA was on course to achieve a surplus of £10,919 at 31 March 2010.

OBYCA has substantial liabilities, of which the most significant is a debt to HM Revenue & Customs. Total liabilities at 31 January 2010 stood at £52,215.

Council funding of OBYCA through the award of an annual revenue grant came to an end on 31 March 2010. OBYCA was given notice last year that funding from 1 April 2010 would be through a commissioning process by the Children’s Service. No bid was received from OBYCA under any of the commissioning strategies.

The offer of a loan of £10,000 by the Council to OBYCA in June 2009 in support of its sustainability has not been taken up, but remains on the table.

OBYCA states that a newly elected management committee has instituted a range of measures to develop new business; increase income; and address its overall financial position.

Question 11

Councillor Jeremy Davies

How many planning enforcement complaints have been received by the Council in the last three financial years 2007/8 to 2009/10 and how many of these complaints remain outstanding? Please could you break these down by ward.

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

How many planning enforcement complaints have been received by the Council in the last three financial years 2007/8 to 2009/10?

Financial Year	2007/ 2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
Number of site specific enforcement complaints received	1547	1568	1679

How many of these complaints remain outstanding?

736 (out of 4794 complaints)

The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has received an increasing number of complaints over the past 3 years. This may of course be a consequence of increased development activity following the property boom and changes made to the Permitted Development regulations in October 2008, which have enabled more development to be undertaken without the benefit of planning consent.

The planning authority has maintained a high performing enforcement service to respond to the increasing demands placed on it and has seen the number of outstanding complaints fall each year. It has also consistently served a significantly higher number of enforcement notices against breaches of planning control relative to most other London Planning Authorities. The majority of outstanding complaints concern cases where the planning authority is either collating evidence or waiting for information in relation to a breach or an alleged breach or is endeavouring to secure an appropriate resolution prior to taking formal action.

How many of these complaints remain outstanding for each ward?

Number of outstanding enforcement cases (period Jan 2007 – 13 April 2010)

Ward	Total No. of outstanding enforcement cases
Burnt Oak	32
Brunswick Park	19
Childs Hill	72
Colindale	24
Coppetts	23
East Barnet	25

East Finchley	22
Edgware	37
Finchley Church End	46
Golders Green	42
Garden Suburb	46
Hale	41
High Barnet	39
Hendon	5
Mill Hill	56
Oakleigh	35
Totteridge	50
Underhill	19
West Finchley	29
West Hendon	48
Woodhouse	23
Multiple Wards	3
Total as of 13 April 2010	736

Question 12

Councillor Julie Johnson

Will the Cabinet Member condemn the proposed cuts to police numbers in London, and give an assurance that no police officers will be cut in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

There are currently 608 police officers and 180 PCSO's within Barnet. The Police are not aware of any plans to reduce these numbers. Any cuts would be firmly resisted as Barnet already loses out in terms of the formulas that govern the number of Police allocated to Boroughs.

Question 13

Councillor Matthew Offord

How many shopping trolleys has the Council retrieved under the abandoned trolley policy?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Between November 2008 and March 2010, 57 trolleys have been retrieved under the abandoned trolley policy (11 of these were unmarked trolleys, which were scrapped as we could not ascertain ownership).

Question 14

Councillor Jeremy Davies

What plans does the Council have to improve the road junction at Ashley Walk/Devonshire Road and Tavistock Avenue?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

There are currently no plans to take any action at this junction, as officers are unaware of what the concerns are. Details of the issue would be appreciated.

Question 15

Councillor Geof Cooke

Will the Cabinet Member advise what the timetable is for creating the new, long awaited, bus stop westbound on Summers Lane N12 near Sunny Way?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

A revised location for a westbound bus stop in Summers Lane by Sunny Way has been agreed in principle between Council officers, the Met Police and London Buses. Consultation on the proposals will take place once funding for the scheme has been secured. Officers are optimistic that the stop will be introduced by September.

Question 16**Councillor Matthew Offord**

Why has the West Hendon regeneration scheme appeared to have stalled?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

This scheme has been delayed by the credit crunch and recession. The Council and its partners have committed time and money to this project and it is ready to go. We are shortlisted for Kickstart funding of £3million from the Government's Homes and Communities Agency. However, the final decision on this last key element has been delayed until after the election.

Question 17**Councillor Jeremy Davies**

Would the Cabinet Member responsible for information governance detail what training has been given to staff over the last 2 years and detail what further training will be given as a result of the recent data loss?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Webb

Induction	As part of the online induction there is an area designated to "Security and handling Information".
<p>Link Officer Training / Briefings</p> <p>(There are 35 Link Officers spread across all Directorates within the Council part of whose role is to disseminate FOI/DP guidance to staff in their areas)</p> <p>Corporate Governance POD Team Training (POD deals with corporate FOI requests and monitoring)</p>	<p>5 March 2009 – DP Training (External Expert day long course). 4 March 2009 – FOI Training (External Expert day long course). 23 March 2009 – FOI Training (External Expert day long course). 11 September 2009 – FOI Training (External Expert day long course). 22 March 2010 – FOI Training (External Expert day long course). 18 May 2010 – DP Training (planned) (External Expert day long course).</p> <p>20 May 2008, 17 July 2008, 18 Sept 2008, 6 Nov 2008, 9 Dec 2008, 30 July 2009 & 19 Nov 2009 – Quarterly Link Officer meetings.</p> <p>Info Gov bulletin – Aug 2009 & Nov 2009.</p> <p>June 2009 — DP Overview Course 2 Sept 2009 — FOI Level 1 training 15 December 2009 - Training for all POD staff October 2009 — ISEB FOI Certification April 2010 — ISEB Data Protection March 2010 — ICO Conference on FOI/DP Dec 09 – Local Government Conference covering FOI</p>
Training to CGD Staff	<p>May 2009 – Head Of Legal did a short session on DP with the Support Team in Legal Services.</p> <p>July 2010 – As part of the all CGD Staff Development Programme there is a planned module in for Data Protection.</p> <p>April / May 2010 – As part of the All CGD Staff Development Programme there is a planned bulletin for FOI.</p> <p>8 October 2008 – DP and FOI Conference.</p>

<p>Guidance Notes / Policies</p>	<p>There are Information Governance pages on the intranet which are constantly be added to and are in the process of review.</p> <p>New DP Policy and Guidance notes loaded onto the website.</p> <p>January 2009 – IS published a new set of Information Systems policies.</p> <p>Written request from Director of Corporate Governance to Directors asking that they remind staff of their responsibilities with regard the safe keeping of personal data. Specific mention of fax machines and MFD's.</p>
<p>Training in data protection and information security generally</p>	<p>Good practice on IT security is explained when IT equipment is issued. In addition the Information Security Policy, Password Policy, Acceptable Use Policy are available on the Intranet.</p> <p>Council staff are reminded of the location of the policies, and have to signal their intention to comply with these before they are allowed to proceed, in the log-in process.</p> <p>Council staff are also reminded of what compliance means, and of good practice through the Councils internal news letter periodically, the weekly Chief Executives email, and more widely when they are updated.</p>

Question 18

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

Why didn't the Council consult local residents on plans for a new play area in the park behind Tyrrell Way?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Councillor Sodha is not correct in implying that there were no opportunities for involvement by local residents.

The process for selecting the first round of eleven sites for Playbuilder sites involved nominations by Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams amongst others. In the context of the planned removal of the existing playground in York Park at Tyrell Way due to housing development it was felt that play facilities should be replaced in this area with a high number of children and where existing facilities were extensively used.

The York Park play site was identified in a report to Cabinet Resources Committee on 2 September 2009 as one of eleven proposed sites. In December 2009 notices were placed in York Park including alongside the existing play space with the opportunity for residents to contact the Council. A consultation with residents also occurred at the Regeneration Residents Group on 25 February 2010.

A consultation with children attending The Hyde primary school on the design of the playground occurred with a very strong response and a separate consultation for young people at West Hendon Community Centre occurred on 14 December 2009.

Question 19

Councillor Matthew Offord

Could the Cabinet Member outline the process for emptying the next blocks to be re-built at Graham Park?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The next 208 properties to be emptied are in phase 1b to the south of the estate and the process for doing this will depend on tenure.

Secure Council tenants are being visited by the Grahame Park Decant Team and assessed. They are then formally allocated new homes in Phase 1a of the regeneration programme. This is currently being built.

Non-secure tenants are being visited Council Housing Officers to ascertain their continuing needs. They are awarded 300 move on points to improve their chances in the Choice Based Letting system. If this is unsuccessful they will be offered appropriate temporary accommodation.

Those who have bought their own homes will be contacted. The Council will seek voluntary agreement with homeowners to negotiate the purchase of their properties. A compulsory purchase order is in place to secure the timely completion of this scheme but it is hoped that this will not be needed and the negotiations will be successful.

The Council and partners are handling this matter very carefully and with the utmost sensitivity to residents needs and concerns whatever their tenure.

Question 20**Councillor Julie Johnson**

Does the Cabinet Member agree with residents concerns in West Hendon that an open sandpit in a park where many dog-owners walk their dogs may be a health risk to children playing there?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

This is the first Barnet play area with sand, however open sand pits have been installed throughout the country and have proven to be very popular and have not generated the issues detailed. The play area will be inspected and maintained daily and will be closely monitored. If dog fouling is a problem appropriate measures will be taken to address this. However, dogs should be under the control of their owners at all times in a public place and subsequently the decision taken to install or not install essential play spaces should not be influenced by these peripheral issues and perhaps the irresponsible few. The installation of the sand pit is in-line with all current guidance and the appropriate management.

Question 21**Councillor Matthew Offord**

At the full Council meeting on 14 July 2009, this Council unanimously resolved to write to Ed Balls seeking an increase in the delegated schools budget to meet the cost of securing the Borough's faith schools. What response did the Council receive to this request?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Chief Executive received a reply from DCSF junior minister Diane Johnson in August 2009 which, frankly, was very disappointing. The minister outlined the meetings the Department had had with the Community Security Trust, in particular regarding ring-fencing capital funding for security in Jewish schools. The Department was of the view that it would be difficult to justify extra funding for faith schools when other non-faith schools may also have high security requirements. New legislation would also be required. The Secretary of State was therefore of the view that there was already sufficient funding in the system to address security investment at Jewish schools, particularly as they have access to the locally co-ordinated VA funding programme. The letter made clear that extra revenue funding was unlikely to be found nationally, as dedicated schools budgets allowed schools to direct their revenue funding to local priorities.

Question 22**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

What security measures, for example CCTV, lockable gates and fences, are being planned for the new play area in the park behind Tyrell Way?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The play area installed in York Park is one of eleven that have been provided as part of the Central Government DCSF funding. The play area has been built into the landscape and incorporates landscaping elements into the design as play features. The current play area in York Park does not have any security measures such as CCTV or locked gates and there is no intention or requirement to apply anything of this nature to the new play area. The play area will not have a fence installed around its perimeter. The site will be inspected and maintained on a daily basis; should particular issues arise these will be reviewed and appropriate action taken as necessary.

Question 23**Councillor Matthew Offord**

Can the Cabinet Member for Children please advise how many 16-24 year olds NEETs there are in Chipping Barnet, Finchley and Golders Green and the Hendon parliamentary constituencies?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Data is not collected by the Council about 19-24 year olds NEET. For 16-18 year olds, data is available by ward. Ward boundaries do not exactly match constituency boundaries; however, the latest data (February 2010) suggest the following number of 16-18 year olds NEET:

- Chipping Barnet: 105
- Hendon: 126
- Finchley & Golders Green: 92

Question 24**Councillor Ross Houston**

Will the Cabinet Member confirm whether LBB Barnet has agreed the Mayor's affordable housing targets yet, and if not why not?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The target for affordable housing in Barnet has been agreed with the Mayor of London and the Government office for London. This follows a refresh of the Local Area Agreement target for affordable housing initiated by GOL taking account of the impact of the recession on housing delivery in London. The target agreed is 1160 affordable homes to be delivered between April 2008 and March 2011.

Question 25**Councillor Tom Davey**

What is the Council doing to allow disabled people greater control over the services they receive?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

Barnet is at the forefront both in its thinking and in its practice in relation to developing personalisation giving disabled people more control. This is evidenced through:

- The ongoing work of the Developing Choice and Independence Programme with nearly 1000 people receiving direct payments and personal budgets giving more people greater control over their social care services; and
- The selection in March of the London Borough of Barnet with Job Centre Plus as a Right to Control Trailblazer – one of only eight Local Authorities selected nationally. As a trailblazer, Barnet will participate in a national pilot to take personalisation to the next level bringing together a range of funding streams across organisations to make choice and control a reality for disabled people. Plans are being set in place now to implement the Right to Control Programme with a 'go live' date of December 2010.

Aligned closely with the 'One Barnet' and 'Developing Choice and Independence' programmes, Right to Control will:

- Streamline multiple assessments with partners to speed up processes to ensure services are easier to access, easier to navigate and to provide efficiencies with cashable savings;
- Develop a one public sector by forging stronger links with Job Centre Plus, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Independent Living Fund in partnership with Voluntary / user-led organisations locally;
- Put people in control of funding available to them in a personalised person-centred way; and
- Support disabled people into work, enabling those concerned to become contributing active citizens within their neighbourhood.

This is a radical agenda for change involving a whole system transformation. It will be developed in co-production with disabled people and our partners in ways that help disabled people to help themselves.

Question 26

Councillor Andrew McNeil

Why hasn't the Cabinet Member denounced the Mayor of London's proposal to cut opening hours of tube station ticket offices at tube stations across London, like the one in East Finchley?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Please see my answer to question 6.

Question 27

Councillor John Hart

Could the Cabinet Member give me the number of pot-holes reported in Mill Hill Ward since 1 January this year; and the number that have been repaired to date?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Unfortunately, the Council's new customer relations data base (CRM) does not enable us to correlate this information on a ward basis at this time. Borough-wide, thousands of reports have been received since 1 January this year; to manually allocate these to their respective wards would be extremely time consuming – no doubt Councillor Hart would not want our Highways team to divert their resources to this task at a time when their efforts are focussed on the job at hand. It is extremely likely that the Borough-wide situation of repairs outnumbering reports (as stated in my answer to question) is also true in Mill Hill.

Question 28

Councillor Kath McGuirk

What is the Cabinet Member going to do to get the re-cycling and waste minimisation rate up in Barnet (other than rely on the Government to give NLWA over £250m)?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council is working on a range of actions, including the distribution of further information to encourage residents of flats to recycle more and the recent introduction of a trial of on-street recycling bins close to eight underground stations to make recycling more convenient. The Council will be looking at a range of options to improve waste services and communicate more effectively with residents about recycling and waste prevention.

Question 29

Councillor John Marshall

Could they Cabinet Member for Planning list all the sites in the Garden Suburb ward where planning applications for mobile phone masts have been refused since April 2006?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

Location Address	Reference	Decision Date
Grass verge at junction of The Bishops Avenue and Lyttleton Road, Hampstead, London N2	F/03791/08	20/11/2008
Grass verge on public highway opposite 9-16 Belvedere Court, Lyttleton Road, London N2 0TW	F/01175/09	3/6/2009
Grass verge at north west junction of Lyttleton Road (A1) and The Bishops Avenue, London N2 0AJ	C16420D/06	5/1/2007
Highways and land on Meadway opposite 16 Heathgate, Hampstead Garden Suburb, London NW11 7AS	C17226/07	26/9/2007 Appeal dismissed 4/4/2008
Grass verge at north-west junction of Lyttleton Road (A1) and The Bishops Avenue (outside Crossway, 26 Bishops Avenue).	C16420B/06	5/5/2006
Junction of Southway and South Square opposite St Judes Vicarage, London NW11	C16709/06	17/7/2006
Grass verge on south-east junction of Temple Fortune Hill and Willifield Way, London NW11 7XU	C16710/06	17/7/2006
Junction of Neville Drive and Kingsley Way, London N2	C16726/06	28/7/2006

Question 30

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

What is the Cabinet Member doing to fix all the potholes in this Borough – like the ones in Colindale on Grahame Park Way, Hillfield Road, Rushgrove Avenue and Woodfield Road to name but a few?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Please see my answer to question 31.

Question 31

Councillor Brian Gordon

Could we have an update on progress made in repairing roads, pursuant to the severe weather this past winter?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Between 14 February to 8 March 2010 we attended to over 4500 potholes, this is considerably more than the number of customer reports received as we addressed all potholes in the vicinity of each report. Details of customer pothole reports are given in the table below.

Month	Type	Number
10.2009	Pothole	73
11.2009	Pothole	86
12.2009	Pothole	206
01.2010	Pothole	590
02.2010	Pothole	874
03.2010	Pothole	1,217
	Total	3,046

From 8 March we implemented a revised ‘permanent fix’ technique to fixing potholes, these are guaranteed for 12 months by the contractor, however they are more time consuming and costly to implement so less can be undertaken per day by a gang of workmen and within resources available. From 8 March to 31 March we fixed over 500 potholes by the permanent method, this included the 239 customer reports that were outstanding as of 8 March. The outturn cost of repairing potholes from 14 January to 31 March 2010 is £240,000.

To address the wider problem of damage caused to our roads by the severe cold weather, we also undertook a complete driven visual inspection of all our roads in early March. As of 12 March, we identified 2,560 potholes that needed attending across the borough, along with a whole raft of further interventions such as major patching, sealing, surfacing and re-construction where appropriate.

Customer reports continue to come in through March and now into April, these are being cross referenced with the outcomes of the visual driven survey and then prioritised for action. The permanent fix approach is continuing and we have estimated further costs of £285,000 to address pothole repairs. This sum does not cover all of the 2,560 potholes identified by the survey as we are actively prioritising repairs so that those that pose a hazard, and those we consider will decay further to cause a hazard, are being prioritised.

We are also working through the outcomes of the visual survey to identify interventions beyond the basic programme of pothole repairs which will provide long term solutions and value. We are identifying the most cost effective and appropriate solution for each road where problems have been identified and where simply fixing a number of potholes is neither an appropriate or sustainable solution. For example, options such as major patching, sealing or micro-grouting surfaces (which prevents further water penetration and gives a smoothed surface to run on), possible surface dressing if beneficial, scarifying and relaying or reconstruction if necessary. We are also reviewing the existing planned works programme for 2010/11 to identify where these different techniques would be appropriate and could therefore save us money.

We have received our allocation of a Government grant (totalling £176,700) which we are required to spend specifically on winter related problems on our roads.

Question 32

Councillor Agnes Slocombe

Is the Cabinet Member in favour of reducing the opening hours of ticket offices in tube stations like Hendon Central?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Please see my answer to question 6.

Question 33

Councillor Lisa Rutter

What progress has there been with the implementation of the Playbuilders Scheme in different parks within the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The first phase of the Playbuilder scheme has seen 11 projects in Barnet parks and open spaces, at Oak Hill, Swan Lane, Mill Hill, Colindale, York (West Hendon), Silkstream, Tudor, Cherry Tree Wood, Stoneyfields, Bethune and Sunnyhill. There has been a delay on some sites due to very wet weather in March, but all sites are currently on schedule to complete by the time of the Council meeting and work is now underway to prepare for phase 2, in 2010-11.

Question 34

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

What is the Cabinet Member doing to help disabled people re-cycle more of their household waste?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council offers assisted recycling collections to any resident who requires them if they are physically not able to lift or move their recycling boxes.

Question 35**Councillor Mike Freer**

Does the Leader believe that the inflammatory comments of the Liberal Democrat's former front bench spokesman, Jenny Tonge, are helpful to community cohesion in Barnet, considering the significant faith communities living in the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Barnet is a multi-racial, multi-faith Borough and a model of successful community cohesion. This is a tribute to the longstanding work between our residents and this Council and our partners which has fostered friendship and understanding.

Jenny Tonge's comments are unhelpful to this and she should apologise, though I believe our residents are intelligent enough see her rant for what it is – ignorant and divisive.

Question 36**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Will the Cabinet Member say whether he welcomes the Playbuilder money Barnet has been awarded, would he also name the sites that will benefit from new play areas in the second wave of Playbuilder, and will he commit to ensuring proper consultation of local people on the next wave of schemes?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Administration is already on record as having welcomed this funding.

The sites for Phase 2 of Playbuilder have not yet been selected. The areas will be chosen based on a number of selection criteria including condition/amount of current play area provision, number of under-14 year olds per play area, and deprivation.

Extensive consultation was carried out for Phase 1 of the programme, particularly with children and young people near to proposed sites, although the very tight timescales imposed by the DCSF meant that the consultation period was necessarily constrained. Given the longer lead-in time for Phase 2, the consultation process will involve residents to a greater degree in selecting sites, advertise the proposals more widely and give more time for people to respond to proposals for the further 11, new play spaces in the Borough.

Question 37**Councillor Brian Gordon**

What would you consider to be the outstanding achievements of this Administration during this concluding Council session 2006-2010?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Too many to mention, but some stand out:

- excellent schools results;
- brought schools out of special measures;
- the PSCIP programme which has seen our Primary schools rebuilt;
- New Secondary School, JACOSS and East Barnet rebuilt;
- Green Flags for our parks;
- choice and independence and direct payments for our elderly;
- regeneration schemes underway;
- extended recycling;
- even more roads and pavements resurfaced;
- new and refurbished libraries; and
- all with Council Tax rises below inflation and a freeze this year.

We have also put money aside for a rainy day and are responding to the tough national financial challenges through Future Shape. This Administration has a lot to be proud of, and I would like to thank all Members and Officers who have been involved in delivering these achievements.

Question 38**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What action is being taken to ensure that the Council answers the phone within 5 rings (which is currently only being done half of the time)?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Webb

The performance of the Council's contact centres has steadily improved throughout the year but was significantly affected by the poor weather in December and January. During this period the number of calls to some of the contact centres increased by over 160%, which put significant pressure on available resources. As well as dealing with this unusual pressure, the Council has been working hard throughout the year to improve performance across all contact centres. Specifically, the Council:

- Has carried out two recruitment rounds to fill to vacant positions. Staff are now in place and currently going through training.
- Is constantly developing and improving the performance management framework for all contact centres.
- Has developed the telephone system to improve the ability of customer service staff to respond to queries promptly.

Most importantly, the work now taking place to implement the Future Shape plans for a new Customer Service Organisation will significantly improve customer service for the Council.

Most notably, this work will:

- Consolidate all customer service telephony into a single contact centre, so increasing the flexibility to move staff to cover peaks in customer traffic.
- Develop the Council website so that far more interaction with the Council can be carried out on line, so reducing pressure on telephony.

Question 39**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Cabinet Member for Resources tell Members of the Council what the current advice from CIPFA is with regard to the approval of 'Treasury Management Strategy'?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

The recently revised advice from CIPFA is as below:

- The approval of the strategy remains as the body which approves the budget.
- The strategy and amendments to it should be approved by full Council.
- A relevant Committee may approve changes to the Treasury Management Practices or policy statements.

Question 40**Councillor Ross Houston**

The number of households in temporary accommodation in Barnet has been over 2000 for years. The current target for reduction is just over 2000. When will the Cabinet Member start taking action to resolve this problem?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Action has been taken, and is being taken to resolve this. The number of households in temporary accommodation has fallen from 2489 in March 2008 to 2228 at the end of February, this year. About 900 of these households are statistically recorded as being in temporary accommodation even though they are in homes that may be available for some considerable time. These homes are on a par with standard council accommodation.

The key to accelerating the reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation will be using more privately rented accommodation. We have secured such housing for 700 households in each of the last two years and reduced statutory homelessness from 325 in 2008/9 to 230 in 2009/10.

Question 41**Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

To ask the Cabinet Member for Adults what are the aims of the Innovation Fund?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

As Adult Social Services gives more people choice and control through personal budgets, the Council is working closely with social care providers who deliver care and support in the London Borough of Barnet to respond to the personalisation agenda. In the period 2009/10 the Council received 'Social Care Transformation Grant' funding to support the implementation of personal budgets and 20% of this grant was used to support the social care market to prepare for personalisation. The aims of the 'Innovation Fund Project' are to:

- Provide private, voluntary and community sector organisations with a low-risk opportunity to develop new services that are more flexible and responsive for service users than those currently available; and to
- Provide the London Borough of Barnet with the opportunity to evaluate these services and to share learning about their creation and development with the wider social care market; and to
- Support close partnership working between the Council and the social care sector in respect of Personalisation and to harness social care entrepreneurs to trial sustainable service options for the future.

The 'Innovation Fund' received over forty applications for awards of up to £40,000 and thirteen providers have received funding. The 'Innovation Fund' has been identified as an example of best practice in London and other Local Authorities are following the lead of the London Borough of Barnet in this area.

Question 42**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

What is the Cabinet Member doing to tackle the unacceptable level of detritus on Barnet's streets?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Every road is swept on a four weekly cycle including mechanical sweeping. Detritus levels are within the NI195 targets. There is an issue at the moment due to the deterioration of the road surfaces and loose gravel from potholes which is currently being addressed.

Question 43**Councillor Fiona Bulmer**

To ask the Cabinet Member for Adults how many service users are benefiting from direct payments and individualised budgets?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

In the twelve months to April 2010, 994 people have benefited from direct payments and personal budgets. During 2009/10 a new care model was implemented to allow for all new ongoing packages of care from 2010/11 to be funded through a 'Personal Budget' and in practice this change is reflected in the target in the Corporate Plan against NI130 belonging to the same and concerning the number of people receiving self-directed care. In addition, following the successful bid by the London Borough of Barnet to be a Right to Control Trailblazer site in relation to the disabled, we will be extending direct payments to other areas including 'Department for Works and Pensions' funding streams, 'Supporting People' and aids and adaptations from December 2010 onwards.

Question 44**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What is the latest update on whether or not Barnet will get back all the £27.4m it invested in error in failed Icelandic banks?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Barnet, through the LGA and its legal team, continues to work tirelessly to recover the money. Boroughs controlled by all the major parties (including Labour Haringey LB with £37 million and Lib Dem (then) Somerset CC with £25 million) have Icelandic exposures. It is worth re-emphasising that the money has not been lost.

Proceedings are ongoing, with local authorities' cases expected to be referred to court shortly. The legal processes in Iceland are likely to take 12 months. Creditors such as Barnet are being kept informed about bank restructurings and their impact (if any) on recoveries with the next meetings scheduled to take place in May.

As soon as any further information emerges Members and the public will be informed.

Question 45

Councillor Fiona Bulmer

To ask the Cabinet Member for Policy and Performance if he believes the CAA inspection regime provides value for money?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Webb

The answer is no. The CAA is another example of the Labour government's insistence on having expensive centralised bureaucracies.

The Audit Commission charge a fee to local authorities for their Audit and Inspection services based on a flat rate per type of authority and a figure per head of population. This is set in statute and the Council has no discretion over whether to pay or not.

Last year this cost the Council £245,000 and took up an inordinate amount of office time.

I believe in localism and want to see all councils cut free from the centralised bureaucracy. I look forward to an incoming Conservative government replacing the CAA with something that will give local taxpayers value for money and something useful.

Question 46

Councillor Anne Hutton

What discussions have been held with developers regarding North Finchley Library?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Discussions concerning North Finchley Library have been held with the developers of the site at 886-902 High Road, otherwise known as Furnitureland, over the course of the last two years. These discussions focused on the possibility of relocating the library as part of the redevelopment of the Furnitureland site. The recent proposals for the development of a mixed use scheme comprising residential and commercial uses made provision for a potential new library on the ground floor fronting the High Road.

The option of relocating the existing library was considered as the opportunity had presented itself to provide a modern, state-of-the-art DDA complaint facility nearby within the town centre. A new library in this location would provide greater and more flexible space, a possible new 'front office' for the Council and better opportunities to work with the local community.

A report was taken to Cabinet Resources Committee on 2 July 2008 seeking approval for the Council to pursue the option of taking a long leasehold interest in part of the ground floor of a new development on the former Furnitureland site and transferring the freehold of the current library site to the developer once a new library had opened.

As you will be aware the planning application relating to 886-902 High Road was recently refused however by the Planning and Environment Committee on 18 February 2010 on grounds of scale, density and impact on neighbouring amenity.

I understand that they are planning to appeal.

Question 47

Councillor Fiona Bulmer

To ask the Cabinet Member for Children's Services what are the latest figures for persistent absence in Barnet's schools?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The DCSF data on persistent absence in Barnet schools in the academic year 2008/9 was released in March 2010.

Barnet primary school pupils have a rate of 1.2% in 2008/9 which represents a reduction from 1.3 % in 2007/8. The average rate for both outer London local authorities and for England is 1.5% in 2008/9.

Barnet secondary school pupils have a persistent absence rate of 3.5% in 2008/9 which represents a reduction from 3.6% in 2007/8. The average rate for outer London authorities is 4.2% and for local authorities in England is 4.9% in 2008/9.

Combining both primary and secondary gives us the fourth lowest persistent absence rate of any London Borough.

Question 48

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Given that one North Finchley resident received his own council tax bill as well as one for a completely different property, what is being done by the Council to ensure no such breaches of data protection occur ever again?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

We are aware of the problem but fortunately it appears to be isolated. The annual billing of 145,000 items is handled by an external mailing company and, unfortunately, there are occasional mailing machine malfunctions.

Personal data has been disclosed, albeit accidentally, and we deeply regret this. However, no information about the customers' bank accounts appeared on the affected bills. We have written to the council taxpayers affected to apologise. The mailing house have procedures in place to guard against this happening again.

Question 49

Councillor Hugh Rayner

Would the Cabinet Member please re-state his support for all the 'Friends of' groups who work hard to support the efforts of Green Spaces in maintaining and improving Parks within Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

I support the work of Friends Groups who are an integral part of managing the Borough's Greenspaces. Particular success stories of 2009 include:

- the Friends of Oak Hill Park who achieved funding for additional outdoor gym equipment;
- the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood who achieved grant funding and delivered habitat improvements to the wood including coppicing;
- the newly formed Friends of Highlands Gardens who have held a number of events bringing together the local community and raising funds;
- the Friends of Windsor Open Space who continue their good work; and
- Coppett's Wood Conservationists who dedicate an enormous amount of time and undertake lots of work in the woods and Glebelands LNR clearing litter, undertaking conservation work etc.

Question 50**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Is a full and detailed schedule of how and when Future Shape savings will be made for 2010/11 now available?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Work on the Future Shape programme continues. Whilst the overall programme will be an evolutionary process many projects are progressing well and savings for 2010/11 will be fully reported in the Quarter 1 Monitoring Report to Cabinet Resources Committee.

Question 51**Councillor Hugh Rayner**

Can the Cabinet Member please confirm whether there are any plans for the sports ground adjacent Woodcroft Park within my ward and confirm what the likely timescale of their implementation is? Could he also advise any plans for the Pavilion Way sports ground which although not within my ward is very close to it and would be used by Hale residents?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The site adjoining Woodcroft Park is held under a lease with 13 years unexpired by The Really Fine leisure company. They are currently discussing proposals to redevelop the site with a community / recreational facility, but to date have been unable to provide an acceptable scheme due to scale and use. There are also a number of outstanding rent reviews on the site which are in the process of being negotiated. Property Services and planning are in discussion with the Really Fine leisure company in an attempt to find an appropriate financial and development solution to maximise the potential of this large site, and it is anticipated that a solution will be achieved by the middle of this year. The site in Pavilion Way is currently vacant and an appraisal of the options available to the Council is in hand. We are liaising with Sport England on the matter and hope to be in a position to bring the facility back into use by the middle of the year.

Question 52**Councillor Geof Cooke**

Will the Cabinet Member back local residents in opposing any cuts to ticket office opening hours at Woodside Park tube station?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Please see me answer to question 6. Residents want value for money, efficiency, staffed stations and services that make best use of technology.

Question 53**Councillor Hugh Rayner**

Can the Cabinet Member please join me in congratulating Green Spaces on their magnificent efforts in regards Scratchwood Open Space, in particular in cutting back the dense undergrowth to make the car park clearly visible from the road? Restaurant facilities on this site have been discussed. Can he please advise what plans there are and in what timescale?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council have marketed the site and an offer has been received. Solicitors have been instructed, although there has been a slight delay due to the tenant requesting extending the opening hours (planning has now been granted for this).

Question 54**Councillor Matthew Offord**

Can the Cabinet Member please advise how many Fair Price Officers, who decide the amount paid for personal care, we have in the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

Between the years 2007 and 2008 the Council had used the Fair Pricing Tool which had been developed to support Councils achieve a fair price for the learning disability residential care placements by the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships. This was replaced in 2008 with the Care Funding Calculator (CFC) in order to better support a sustainable care market. The CFC is used for negotiating and agreeing the price for all new placements for supported living and residential care for people with a learning disability. Thirty members of staff from across the learning disability social work team, brokerage and contract management functions have been trained in the use of the tool.

Question 55

Councillor Mike Freer

Would the Leader please confirm the cost to the Council of the increase in employer's national insurance?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

We believe the impact on the Council will be in the order of £1 million of Council taxpayers' money. This is in addition to the impact it will have on our local businesses.

Provision will be made in Barnet's 2011/12 Budget to reflect this, though of course the planned rise may be determinant on the result of the General Election.

Question 56

Councillor Mike Freer

Would the Leader of the Council please confirm the cost to the Council of the increase in fuel duty on the cost of petrol/diesel bought for our vehicles?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

The impact on the Council and (again) council taxpayers of the Government duty hike is likely to be at least £16,000. This of course excludes any inflation in global fuel prices, which would mean an even bigger impact.