

Minutes

OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET held at
The Town Hall, Hendon, NW4, on Tuesday, 2 November 2010.

PRESENT:

- *The Worshipful the Mayor (Councillor Anthony Finn BSc (Econ), FCA)
- *The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Lisa Rutter)

Councillors:

*Maureen Braun	*Anne Hutton	*Kate Salinger BEd (Hons)
*Alex Brodkin	*Geoffrey Johnson	Gill Sargeant
*Anita Campbell	*Julie Johnson	*Joan Scannell
*Pauline Coakley Webb	*Sury Khatri BSc (Hons), MSc	*Brian Schama
*Dean Cohen BSc (Hons)	*David Longstaff	*Alan Schneiderman
*Jack Cohen	*John Marshall MA	*Daniel Seal
*Melvin Cohen	*Kath McGuirk	*Mark Shooter
*Brian Coleman AM FRSA	*Andrew McNeil	*Agnes Slocombe SRN, RM
*Geof Cooke	*Alison Moore	*Ansuya Sodha MBA(Middx), Cert Ed, DipM (CIM), AMBA
*Alison Cornelius	*Graham Old	*Stephen Sowerby
*Richard Cornelius	*Charlie O-Macauley	*Andrew Strongolou
*Tom Davey	*Monroe Palmer OBE, BA, FCA	*Andreas Tambourides
*Barry Evangeli	*Susette Palmer MA	*Joanna Tambourides
*Claire Farrier	*Bridget Perry	*Daniel Thomas BA (Hons)
*Brian Gordon LLB	*Wendy Prentice	*Reuben Thompstone
*Eva Greenspan	*Sachin Rajput BA (Hons) PgD Law	*Jim Tierney
*Andrew Harper	*Robert Rams	*Rowan Turner
*Helena Hart	*Hugh Rayner	*Darrel Yawitch
*John Hart BA MA	*Barry Rawlings	Zakia Zubairi
*Lynne Hillan	*Colin Rogers	
*Ross Houston	*Brian Salinger	

*denotes Member present

1. PRAYERS (Agenda Item 1.1):

The Mayor's Chaplain offered prayer.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1.2):

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gill Sargeant and Councillor Zakia Zubairi. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Jim Tierney who was attending a School Governors meeting and Councillor Brian Coleman who was chairing The Mayor and London Assembly People's Question Time in Camden.

3. MINUTES (Agenda Item 1.3):

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 14 September 2010 be approved, subject to the following amendments:

- (i) That Councillor Ansuya Sodha is added to the list of Councillors who declared a Personal but non Prejudicial Interest on Item 5.3.3 - London Local Authorities Bill (Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager – 14 September 2010)**
- (ii) That Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb declared a Personal and Prejudicial Interest on Item 5.3.2 - National Grid Response to the Council Regarding the East Barnet Gas Supply Disruption (Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager – 14 September 2010). Councillor Coakley Webb is a resident who was affected by the incident. She left the chamber and took no part in the discussion or voting of this item.**
- (iii) That Councillor Geof Cooke declared a further Personal and Prejudicial Interest on Item 5.3.2 - National Grid Response to the Council Regarding the East Barnet Gas Supply Disruption (Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager – 14 September 2010). Councillor Cooke is a resident who was affected by the incident. He left the chamber and took no part in the discussion or voting of this item.**

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1.4):

There were none.

5. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS (Agenda Item 5):

The Worshipful Mayor on behalf of the Council passed on his condolences to Councillor Joan Scannell and her family on the passing of her mother.

6. BUSINESS REMAINING FROM LAST MEETING (Item 1.6)

There was none.

7. QUESTION TIME FOR MEMBERS (Agenda Item 2.1)

Questions were put to the Leader and Members of the Cabinet. These questions, together with the answers provided and the text of any supplementary questions and answers are set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

8. VARIATION OF ORDER OF BUSINESS

Councillor Joan Scannell, duly seconded, moved under Council Procedure Rule, Section 1, paragraph 10.2.2, that the order of business relating to Agenda Item 3 be varied so that Motions 3.1, 3.4 and 3.5 be heard first.

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED – That the order of business be varied to allow Motions 3.1, 3.4 and 3.5 to be debated and voted upon in advance of votes being taken on the other Motions on the Agenda.

MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR KATH McGUIRK (Agenda Item 3.6)

Under Council Procedure Rule 31.6, Councillor Kath McGuirk submitted a further Motion asking that her Motion at Agenda Item 3.6 be withdrawn from the Agenda and referred to Cabinet. Upon being put to the vote this further Motion was declared lost.

RESOLVED –

- 1. That Motion 3.6 in the name of Councillor Kath McGuirk is not withdrawn from the agenda and is therefore not referred to Cabinet.**
- 2. That Motion 3.6 is not voted upon as Council Procedure Rule 31.5 was not cited in the original submission of the Motion.**

9. **MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR LYNNE HILLAN (Agenda Item 3.1)**
Motion 3.1 in the name of Councillor Lynne Hillan was moved by Councillor Andrew Harper. An amendment in the name of Councillor Alan Schneiderman was moved. Debate ensued. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor Schneiderman was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared carried.
RESOLVED - Council agrees with the Coalition Government that Local Authorities should have the powers to run their own affairs as Elected Representatives of local people see fit, and not according to dictats from Whitehall.
Council welcomes the abolition of the Standards regime, Local Area Agreements (LAAs), and many of the associated targets.
Further, Council welcomes the statement by Eric Pickles MP that boroughs such as Barnet will soon be able to manage their own affairs through a general Power of Competence. This is, Council believes, the foundation of the new Localism Bill.
Council is pleased that LBB already seeks to shape services around local people, particularly through One Barnet.
Accordingly, Council calls on Cabinet to tailor even more of its work around local people following the moves to restore power to Local Authorities.
10. **MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR LYNNE HILLAN (Agenda Item 3.4)**
Motion 3.4 in the name of Councillor Hillan was moved. An amendment in the name of Councillor Alison Moore was moved. Debate ensued. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor Moore was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared carried.
RESOLVED - Council affirms its support to the One Barnet Programme that is breaking down barriers across the local Public Sector to enable our residents to access better services at lower cost.
Council believes this work is vital given the tough economic times we are in, and also believes the One Barnet approach represents the future model of Local Government in the UK.
Therefore, Council is extremely proud to have been selected as one of a handful of authorities to pilot Community Place Based Budgets by the Government.
Council notes this will bring together several public service budgets to direct care for families with complex needs.
Council calls on Cabinet to work to ensure this pilot is a success, and the excellent One Barnet approach that led to this accolade continues.
11. **MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR KATH McGUIRK AS AMENDED BY COUNCILLOR STEPHEN SOWERBY (Agenda Item 3.5)**
Motion 3.5 in the name of Councillor Kath McGuirk was moved. Amendments in the name of Councillors Stephen Sowerby and Ansuya Sodha were moved. Debate ensued. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor Sowerby was declared carried. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor Sodha was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote, the substantive Motion as amended was declared carried.
RESOLVED - Council is appalled that the outgoing Labour Government left this country £900 billion in debt, the legacy of reckless spending and economic mismanagement.

Council believes that drastic measures are needed to fix our Country and applauds the Coalition Government's efforts.

Council further believes that Child Benefit should be re-calibrated as the Government is proposing, so that the very poorest and neediest are helped while the more affluent are encouraged to stand on their own feet.

Council therefore calls on Cabinet to work with the Government so that this and other much-needed benefits changes are introduced as smoothly as possible.

12. MOTION 3.2 IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR BRIAN SALINGER AS AMENDED BY COUNCILLOR BARRY RAWLINGS (Agenda Item 3.2)

Motion 3.2 in the name of Councillor Brian Salinger was moved. An amendment in the name of Councillor Barry Rawlings was moved. Councillor Brian Salinger accepted Councillor Rawlings' amendment. Upon being put to the vote, the substantive Motion as amended was declared carried.

RESOLVED - This Council recognises the importance to all residents of Barnet of the need to safeguard our children.

This Council welcomes and supports the decision of the government to confirm the roll-out across the country the measures that have become known as 'Sarah's Law' which will enable parents to request information on any adult with access to their children. They are required not to pass on this information to anyone else. Police will decide whether to pass on any information.

The pilot schemes have been a success with fewer requests than expected and these 315 formal applications from parents and carers resulted in the disclosure of the background of 21 convicted child sex offenders. The Home Office says more than 60 children were protected from abuse in that period.

Council calls on the Cabinet to ensure that they work in partnership with other relevant agencies to ensure full and appropriate publicity is given to the measure when it is rolled out in London.

13. MOTION 3.3 IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR RICHARD CORNELIUS (Agenda Item 3.3)

Motion 3.3 in the name of Councillor Richard Cornelius was moved. An amendment in the name of Councillor Ross Houston was moved. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor Houston was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED - Council believes that Social Housing is there to help the needy back onto their feet.

Council further believes that under-occupied properties need to be freed up to help others in greater need and to ensure the most equitable and fullest use of such homes.

Social Housing is intended to help those who need help, whilst they need help. The tax payer cannot be expected to continue to subsidise tenants who no longer need assistance.

Council strongly welcomes the Coalition Government's plans, contained in the Spending Review, with flexible Social Housing Tenancies that reflect the changing circumstances of individuals and families, so that people can access appropriate social housing in ways that better reflects their needs.

Council therefore calls on Cabinet to work with the Coalition Government in implementing the new forms of tenure for the future to ensure that Social Housing is allocated to those who will benefit the most whilst they need the help.

14. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING.

In accordance with the Agenda, the Mayor adjourned the meeting. The meeting reconvened at 8.55pm.

15. ADMINISTRATION POLICY ITEM - LIBRARY SERVICE (Agenda Item 4.1)

Councillor Robert Rams proposed the item and moved that it be adopted. An amendment in the name of Councillor Alex Brodtkin was moved from the floor. Debate ensued. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor Brodtkin was declared lost.

At least ten Members rose in their places and demanded a formal division on the voting on the amendment in the name of Councillor Alex Brodtkin. Upon being taken, the results of the Division were declared as follows:

For	Against	Not Voting	Absent
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Brodtkin	Braun	Finn	Sargeant
Campbell	Dean Cohen	Susette Palmer	Zubairi
Coakley-Webb	Melvin Cohen		Coleman
Jack Cohen	Alison Cornelius		
Cooke	Richard Cornelius		
Farrier	Davey		
Houston	Evangelini		
Hutton	Gordon		
Geoffrey Johnson	Greenspan		
Julie Johnson	Harper		
McGuirk	Helena Hart		
McNeil	John Hart		
Moore	Hillan		
O-Macauley	Khatri		
Monroe Palmer	Longstaff		
Rawlings	Marshall		
Rogers	Old		
Schneiderman	Perry		
Slocumbe	Prentice		
Sodha	Rajput		
Tierney	Rams		
	Rayner		
	Rutter		
	Brian Salinger		
	Kate Salinger		
	Scannell		
	Schama		
	Seal		
	Shooter		
	Sowerby		
	Strongolou		

	Andreas Tambourides		
	Joanna Tambourides		
	Thomas		
	Thompson		
	Turner		
	Yawitch		

For	21
Against	37
Not Voting	2
Absent	3
TOTAL	63

Upon being put to the vote, the Policy Item was declared carried.

RESOLVED - Council believes that the Borough of Barnet and its residents deserve a library service that is fit for the 21st century.

Council therefore requests that Cabinet consults on a strategy to achieve a long-term, sustainable library service for this Borough and its people.

16. OPPOSITION POLICY ITEM AS AMENDED BY COUNCILLOR BRIDGET PERRY - IMPACT OF CON-DEM CUTS ON WOMEN (Agenda Item 4.2)

Councillor Claire Farrier proposed the item and moved that it be adopted.

Amendments in the name of Councillors Bridget Perry, Jack Cohen and Geof Cooke were moved. Debate ensued. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor Perry was declared carried. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor Jack Cohen was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor Cooke was declared lost.

At least ten Members rose in their places and demanded a formal division on the voting on amendment in the name of Councillor Geof Cooke. Upon being taken, the results of the Division were declared as follows:

For	Against	Not Voting	Absent
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Brodin	Braun	Finn	Sargeant
Campbell	Dean Cohen	Jack Cohen	Zubairi
Coakley-Webb	Melvin Cohen	Susette Palmer	
Cooke	Coleman	Monroe Palmer	
Farrier	Alison Cornelius		
Houston	Richard Cornelius		
Hutton	Davey		
Geoffrey Johnson	Evangeli		
Julie Johnson	Gordon		
McGuirk	Greenspan		
McNeil	Harper		
Moore	Helena Hart		
O-Macauley	John Hart		
Rawlings	Hillan		
Rogers	Khatri		
Schneiderman	Longstaff		

Slocombe	Marshall		
Sodha	Old		
Tierney	Perry		
	Prentice		
	Rajput		
	Rams		
	Rayner		
	Rutter		
	Brian Salinger		
	Kate Salinger		
	Scannell		
	Schama		
	Seal		
	Shooter		
	Sowerby		
	Strongolou		
	Andreas Tambourides		
	Joanna Tambourides		
	Thomas		
	Thompsonstone		
	Turner		
	Yawitch		

For	19
Against	38
Not Voting	4
Absent	2
TOTAL	63

Upon being put to the vote the Policy Item as amended was declared carried.

RESOLVED - Council notes that Labour's Recession devastated the Private Sector and their uncontrolled spending has led to a spiralling debt that now has to be paid off.

The damage wrecked by Labour on the Private Sector has badly hit areas such as construction, wrecking the lives of everyone who work in the trades.

Damage borne by financial services and engineering, key productive sectors of our economy, also hit everyone.

Council regrets that cuts have to be made to the Public Sector, but believes they are the result of Labour recklessness with the public purse. The Public Sector also cannot be immune from the challenges the Private Sector has needed to face in the downturn.

Council calls on Cabinet to ensure that any Budget reductions are enacted with the highest possible consideration for the Borough and its people, and have due regard to all equalities considerations and legislation.

17. **REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE (CONSTITUTION REVIEW) – 13 OCTOBER 2010**

The Worshipful Mayor, Councillor Anthony Finn, moved adoption and reception of the report.

RESOLVED

1. That Council note the requirements of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ("the 2009 Act").
2. That Council
 - (a) approve the introduction of a Petition Scheme which meets the requirements of the 2009 Act on the basis set out in the report, with the exception of the signature thresholds needed to require (a) that an officer be held to account and (b) that a petition be debated by Council, which should be 2,000 and 7,000 respectively.
 - (b) approve the adoption of the amendments to the Constitution set out in Appendix C of the report attached as Enclosure 3.
 - (c) instruct the Director of Corporate Governance to facilitate a process for publishing petitions electronically via the Council's website and provide reasons for refusal of an e-petition if it is deemed inappropriate for publishing on the website.

18. LEADER'S SCHEME OF DELEGATION (Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager – Items 5.3.1 and 5.3.4)

RESOLVED -

1. Council note that the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships is amended to include:
'To lead on the development and delivery of the One Barnet Programme'
2. Council note that Councillor Darrel Yawitch is appointed Assistant Cabinet Member for Health.
3. That the Acting Democratic Services Manager makes the appropriate changes to the Council's Constitution.

19. PROPOSED NEW MEETING DATES (Report and Supplemental Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager – Items 5.3.2 and 5.3.5)

RESOLVED – Council approved the proposed new meeting dates contained in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Committee	Date of the Meeting	Proposed new date of the Meeting	Reason
Finchley & Golders Green Area Planning Sub-Committee	6 December 2010	7 December 2010	With the agreement of the Chairman and Members of the Finchley and Golders Green Area Planning Sub-Committee, it is proposed that the meeting of the Sub-Committee on be rescheduled to 7 December 2010
Future Shape Overview & Scrutiny Panel	-	10 November 2010	To consider items prior to the meeting of the One Barnet Programme Board on 18 November 2010
General Functions Committee	16 December 2010	13 December 2010	Due to special budget meeting
Business Management Overview & Scrutiny	13 December 2010	16 December 2010	Due to clashes with Special Cabinet and General Functions Committee on 13 December 2010, it is proposed that the meeting of the Business Management

Committee			Overview & Scrutiny Committee be rescheduled to 16 December 2010.
Licensing Committee	-	14 December	With the agreement of the Chairman and other Lead Group Members on the Licensing Committee, it is proposed that a Special Meeting of the Committee be held on the 14 December, prior to the Council meeting to consider Barnet's Licensing Policy

20. PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE NAME OF THE FUTURE SHAPE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager – Item 5.3.3)

RESOLVED – Council approved the proposed change to the name of the Future Shape Overview and Scrutiny Panel to the One Barnet Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

21. APPOINTMENTS TO SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES (Supplemental Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager – Item 5.3.6)

RESOLVED – That;

- 1. Mr. Neel Khiroya be appointed a Governor to Frith Manor's Governing Body.**
- 2. Mrs. Nita Khiroya be appointed a Governor to Woodridge Governing Body.**

22. COMMENTS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE CABINET (Agenda Item 6.1)

Comment: Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Thank you Mr Mayor. The point which I would like to see if I can get assurance on is regarding future grants of which I know there are many organisations that will be lobbying to see if the current grant that they obtain will still be secured for the forthcoming year. But, the grant to which I am referring to is a grant that goes to Age Concern for the Handy Person Scheme. And, the assurance I would like to receive this evening is that this grant will actually continue when the current funding expires in 2011. To expand on that, the reason why I think this fits in with the idea of caring; and a Big Society; and people helping each other – is that the whole rationale why this Handy Person Scheme works is that it actually makes sure that older frail people who we want to be able to live independently, as much on their own for as long as possible, can access a service which gives them assistance for the sorts of jobs around the house which, if they don't have someone to be able to undertake that for them, they will no doubt try to attempt themselves and that often results in falls, in accidents, which in turn impinges on the extra cost to both us and to the Health Service for the injuries they receive. When we look at the information that comes out of Age Concern on this service, they take in the region of 40 calls a day. They complete 300 jobs a month, they also know that one broken hip costs £18-19,000 both in the care, and treatment and surgery of. It seems completely wrong that if we take this grant away it will force the possibility of more breakages, more injuries – therefore this service should really be guaranteed to make sure older people can have the assurance that when they need to move things, reach things, they are kept an eye on.

Response: Councillor Sachin Rajput

I don't doubt the hard work and effort that many voluntary organisations put in to look after the interests of our residents. But, what I do say is this – as an authority we

have to look very careful at how we fund, if at all, any services that the voluntary sector, and any other organisations external to the Council, provide on our behalf. We will always make sure that those in greatest need will be provided for and what I can't say, and I make it implicit here, is who will get what funding and at what rate. It's very well known that the former Government's approach was that if there was a problem or there appeared to be one or indeed where there wasn't one at all, then throw some money at it. I cannot create money, the ring fenced funding will be stopped from March next year, the NHS has already withdrawn any funding that they provide for this, so as far as I am concerned I can't commit to providing funding but what I will say is that we will, as an authority, always make sure that however services are provided, whether by us or on our behalf by the voluntary sector, that we will support those in the most need.

Comment: Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

Mr Mayor, we just have heard again about Big Society. I'm obliged to mention this once again - that the United Kingdom is a cosmopolitan country with a diverse black and ethnic minority population who, according to recorded history, have made a unique contribution to building this Nation. There are countless inventions by African, British, European and American – they cover everything from food processing to electrical technology, the inventions started as foundations from numerous ideas that black inventors have made to the comfort and the advancement of mankind. It will therefore be a big leap forward if Barnet Council could develop its programme of events for Black History Month to include BAME, groups who would widen the celebrations of this important festival. Lest we forget about doing the good things we had so that when this Council is compared with other councils could they compare better things also?

Response: Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Of course, Black History Month is very important for all of us. However, we have got to be very careful not to create tokenism and ensure equality is spread out throughout the whole year – it is very important. We have not been asked for any money for any event and whether or not we look at that is, of course, is a different matter and that may be within the services. But, our schools totally support Black History Month, the ethnic minority achievement co-ordinator in each school leads on the area. Also, our libraries do an awful lot. So, we may not necessarily be able to give money but we can facilitate. They had Caribbean stalls at Burnt Oak Library which went down very well; and there was a percussion demonstration and live painting at South Friern Library; and we had Caribbean stalls at Childs Hill Library. So, we do what we can and it is the Big Society and if people come to us to say they are prepared to do something then we will always look at it.

Comment: Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

Mr Mayor, can the Cabinet Member for Regeneration point out what plans are put in place for various community facilities, for sport, youth meetings etc, to accommodate the demands of the 21st Century events for multi-national activity?

Response: Councillor Richard Cornelius

Mr Mayor, I am actually lost for words, which is very usual for me. The answer is of course is important but does not necessarily fall within the remit of the regeneration programme.

The meeting finished at 10:15pm

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members
2 November 2010
Questions and Responses**

Question 1**Councillor Mark Shooter**

What does the Leader think of the Eric Pickles' proposals to abolish the Standards for England regime, create a new Criminal offence and letting councils decide how to organise themselves in the future?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I am very pleased that the Secretary of State has recognised the negative impact of the constraints placed on local authorities by the former Labour Government and that he has placed his trust in local authorities to organize themselves and their affairs by affording them the General Power of Competence. The Standards Board for England has been a burden to many local authorities, often used for political posturing and mischief making. I am delighted that it is just one of the many initiatives the Secretary of State has identified for abolition in the Localism Bill that was announced in the Queen's Speech. The £7.8 million spent by the Standards Board can be spent to much better effect. Last year it dealt with 1,000 complaints at a cost of £7,800 per complaint. We do recognise and welcome the responsibility that is being devolved to us and work is already underway to amend the Council's Code of Conduct to ensure that the highest standards of behaviour are met. I am unclear as to what the new criminal offence you refer to might be. It seems logical that Councillors who behave illegally would be reported to the Police.

Supplementary Question 1**Councillor Mark Shooter**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Currently only 10 of the 63 Councillors are involved in decision-making at Barnet Council. When will the Leader of the Council, in line with Conservative national policy, bring forward a motion to allow us to have a system where we can get the fullest value for money from all 63 Councillors by removing the undemocratic and over centralised Cabinet system and giving Council greater transparency?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I'm terribly sorry Mr Mayor the question is about the Standards Board so I am not quite sure that Councillor Shooter has got the wrong supplementary.

Question 2**Councillor Alison Moore**

Is it fair to give child benefit to a Barnet family with two parents jointly earning £80,000 a year whilst taking it away from a Barnet single mum earning £45,000 a year?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

My understanding of the anomaly you describe is that it is temporary, has been acknowledged and will be addressed. The Secretary of State has stated: "When we bring in the universal credit these sorts of things will no longer be issues or problems".

Supplementary Question 2**Councillor Alison Moore**

Councillor Thomas, my supplementary starts with asking precisely what happens in the meantime because make no mistake there will be real financial ramifications for families in Barnet. So perhaps you could explain exactly how this benefit cut will be enforceable in Barnet because it is apparently panic stations in the Treasury over it. Mothers are under no obligation to say if they get paid Child Benefit and fathers are not required to reveal their incomes to their partners who submit the claim. It is really not clear that this is workable and whilst you talk about a universal credit, there will be families in hardship in the meantime.

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Mr Mayor, first of all I question and certainly the public of this country questions whether anybody earning £45,000 per year should be in receipt of any sort of benefit. And the complications that Councillor Moore just eluded to, the complications with the taxation system, with the benefits system, were created under the Labour Government and it is those complications and mess that we are trying to clear up. That is the reason why the anomaly exists and actually it will cost more to rectify the anomaly than pay the benefit. So when the universal benefit comes in and when this system is made simpler the anomaly will of course be eradicated.

Question 3**Councillor David Longstaff**

Please could the Cabinet Member outline how successful the Pothole Elimination Programme has been?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The Pothole Elimination Programme has been a complete success, on time and under budget.

Phase 1 of PEP included the major road network. 14,253 metres squared of pothole repairs were completed in 168 roads during the month of July at a cost of £660K. Phase 2 of PEP included all of the remaining Borough roads. 44,488 metres squared of pothole repairs in at least 645 roads from 875 which have been revisited by inspectors are estimated to be completed by the end of October. At present, 42,988 metres squared has been completed and we are on programme to complete the programme by the end of October as planned. Phase 2 is estimated to cost £1.95Million. Around 230 roads were identified as not requiring work in terms of pothole elimination programme.

Question 4**Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb**

Will the Cabinet Member for Environment provide an updated list of all roads that have been completed for pot hole elimination? How many roads are outstanding and have they been completed by the end of October. For any roads not completed by end of October what is the timescale for elimination?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

I refer the Member to the answer to question 3. I do not propose to provide a written list of over 1,000 roads.

Supplementary Question 4**Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Giving that Councillor Brian Coleman is paid an awful lot of money in Members' Allowances to not answer questions I would appreciate he would write to me on this occasion and provide me with the information that I have requested.

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I personally don't think it is a very good use of using Officer's time sitting there listing a 1,000 roads. If you absolutely insist on it, then obviously it is your right as a Councillor, but I do think that you consider it especially in these times a financial constraint.

Question 5**Councillor Barry Evangeli**

Can the Cabinet Member for Environment please state how many streets have been re-lit since the inception of the PFI scheme?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Another good news story for Barnet, since the Street Lighting PFI Contract Commencement, 1,325 streets have been relit and passed by the Independent Certifier (IC), as of 15/10/2010. This equates to a total of 11,691 old column removals. There are a further 95 roads which have been relit but, as yet, have not been through the final inspection process.

Question 6**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

The back of the fag packet budget calculations that predicted Future Shape would result in £3m savings this year have now been confirmed by officers to be incorrect. Would the Cabinet Member now give a complete and detailed breakdown of the £1.4m savings that apparently will be made directly as a result of Future Shape this year?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Work stream	Project	Total Savings	
Value for Money	Procurement		
	Agency	300,000	Entering into a new contract with the existing provider as part of the wider London Contract Supplies Group consortia arrangements.
	Utilities – excluding schools	220,000	Contract renewal and change of pricing structure as part of the LASER energy buying scheme.
	Cleaning – RPI	24,700	The cleaning contract has been renegotiated to reduce RPI increases.
	Mobile Phones	30,000	Renegotiation and realignment of tariffs of the corporate mobile phone contract.
	Stationery	30,000	The contract has changes to increase minimum order values and reduce invoices.
	Travel Management	25,000	A new contract which increases discounts available, and achieves economies of scale by consolidating travel requirements.
	Security	50,000	Savings are achieved via economies of scale and reduced tender and management costs by consolidating Council exiting security arrangements.
	Water	20,000	Achieved by undertaking billing audit and considering other water saving measures across Council estate.
	Video conferencing	25,000	External video conferencing services changed to in-house service provision.
	Transport contract	60,000	Renegotiations of the corporate transport contract.
	Information Services (IS)	80,000	Change of supply arrangements including direct deals with manufacturer and rationalisation of suppliers and re-tendering of specific IS categories.
New Relations with citizens	Revenue Income optimisation	339,500	Charging for services not previously charged, for example car parks.
Commissioning	Transport	70,800	Reviewing passenger routes, SEN home to school transport and the number of staff receiving essential car user allowance.
People and Culture	Recruitment & Agency	160,000	Moving towards e-recruitment and reducing the staff advertising costs.
TOTAL		<u><u>1,435,000</u></u>	

Supplementary Question 6**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Will the Cabinet Member actually admit that most of those savings that he has listed in the answer to this question are simply run of the mill in-year savings and have absolutely nothing to do with the Future Shape programme? And it looks that there is even fewer savings from this project than even we thought and when will they admit it is just a big con?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

No I won't.

Question 7**Councillor Andrew Strongolou**

Given that Parking is often a contentious issue does the Cabinet Member have a long-term plan to improve the service?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The long-term plan for improving the service is being prepared and detailed proposals, which will include both options and a recommendation, will be presented to Cabinet in the next cycle. In the meantime, I have tasked officers with making immediate improvements to the service offered to residents, businesses, and visitors.

Question 8**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

What is being done to ensure that Safer Neighbourhood Team officers are not being asked to perform duties outside the ward they are dedicated to?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

The Borough Commander has responsibility for ensuring the effective and efficient deployment of Policing resources across the Borough. SNTs include officers who have specialist skills who from time to time are deployed to other areas because of this and the operational need. Such abstractions are kept to a minimum and the Police report that SNT officers are deployed within their wards 95% of the time.

Supplementary Question 8**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Would the Cabinet please advise actually when the ring fence was removed and who authorised it?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

I'm afraid I do not have the answer to that and will endeavour to find it and write to you.

Question 9**Councillor Hugh Rayner**

Does the Council have enough grit in case we have another cold winter?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Yes. The Council's preparations for the next winter season, due to start on 1 November 2010, are well under way. All the Council's grit bins have been checked and filled with salt. The Council has recently changed its salt supplier and Cleveland Potash Ltd has been replaced by Salt Union. Currently, the Council has some 2280 tons of salt stored in the Council's depot at Mill Hill.

At the start of the previous winter season, 2 November 2009, the Council had some 2015 tons of salt in stock.

Question 10**Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb**

Will the Cabinet Member for Environment provide the latest update on the management of Council allotment sites:

How many allotments are there in each constituency (broken down by ward)? How many vacancies are there at each site (broken down by ward)? What is the waiting list for each site (broken down by ward)?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The allotments are detailed below. Please note that the vacancy and waiting list data was last compiled approx. 6 months ago. I also refer the member to the answer I have given to question 13 from Councillor Hart.

Chipping Barnet

Site Name	Ward	No vacant plots	Length of time on Waiting List	No. on Waiting List
Hatley Close	Coppetts	0	Up to 18 months	not available
Rathbone	Coppetts	0	1 – 2 years	4
The Crescent	Coppetts	0	Up to 18 months	not available
Cat Hill	East Barnet	0	1 – 2 years	6
Byng Road	High Barnet	0	At least a year	not available
Clifford Road	High Barnet	0	Up to 2 years	16
Tudor Road	High Barnet	0	Up to 2 years	16
Barfield	Oakleigh	0	4 – 5 years	12
Simmons Way	Oakleigh	0	4 years	5
Brook Farm North / South	Totteridge	0	12 – 18 months	4
Whetstone Stray	Totteridge	0	9 months plus	not available
Bells Hill	Underhill	0	3 – 6 months	not available
Brent Place, Barnet	Underhill	0	N/A	5
Dollis Valley	Underhill	0	9 months plus	not available
Stanhope Road	Underhill	0	2 years	1
Glebeland	Woodhouse	0	Up to 5 years	12
Woodhouse	Woodhouse	0	2 – 3 years	49

Finchley and Golders

Site Name	Ward	No vacant plots	Length of time on Waiting List	No. on Waiting List
Childs Hill	Childs Hill	0	Up to 5 years	60
Needham Terrace	Childs Hill	0	10 years	22
Thornfield Avenue	Church End	0	Up to 18 months	not available
Coppetts Road (Halliwick)	Coppetts	0	12 – 18 months	not available
East Finchley	East Finchley	0	approx 8 years	70
Finchley Charities Site – Fuel Land	East Finchley	0		
Vale Farm	East Finchley	0	Up to 2 years	not available
Cherry Tree Hill	Garden Suburb	0	3 years	not available
Finchley Manor	Garden Suburb	0	2 – 3 years	not available
Hospital Fields West / East	Golders Green	0	3 month plus	not available

Site Name	Ward	No vacant plots	Length of time on Waiting List	No. on Waiting List
Brent Way	West Finchley	0	N/A	not available
Fursby Avenue	West Finchley	0	2 – 3 years	not available
Gordon Road	West Finchley	0	Up to 4 years	47
Nether Court Avenue	West Finchley	0	N/A	not available
Pointalls (Kaysland)	West Finchley	0	12 – 18 months	not available

Hendon

Site Name	Ward	No vacant plots	Length of time on Waiting List	No. on Waiting List
Abbots Road	Burnt Oak	0	6 – 12 months	not available
Montrose Avenue	Burnt Oak	0	1 year plus	5
Booth Road	Colindale	0	2 – 3 years	7
Sheaveshill Court	Colindale	0		
Meadfield	Edgware	0	Full	
Deans Lane	Hale	0	2 years	not available
Hendon Grove	Hendon	0	Two plus years	42
Archfields	Mill Hill	0	N/A	not available
Daws Lane	Mill Hill	0	1 year plus	not available
Frith Manor	Mill Hill	0	2 – 3 years	3
Lawrence Street	Mill Hill	0	6 month plus	not available
Mill Hill	Mill Hill	0	6 months plus	Not available
Sanders Lane	Mill Hill	0	2 – 3 years	11
Tretawn Gardens	Mill Hill	0	Full	not available
Wise Lane	Mill Hill		6 – 12 months	not available
Cool Oak Lane	West Hendon	0	6 months plus	not available

Supplementary Question 10

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Thank you Mr Mayor. From the information that has been provided it looks to be just below 400 people that are actually on the waiting list currently for allotment space and 23 sites where no information is being provided. I would like to know from the Cabinet Member what is being done to meet the need for additional growing spaces in the Borough and I would also ask for the missing information for all the 23 sites for which information could not be obtained be sent to me in a written reply.

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I think that the amount of people that are waiting shows how successful our allotments are in Barnet, and how keen people are. Hopefully they will be keen to take them on and run them themselves which I think is all part of the Big Society. I will ask Councillor Coleman to write to you with the 23.

Question 11

Councillor Rowan Turner

Does the Cabinet Member welcome the Mayor of London's decision to scrap the targets for Gypsy and Traveller sites as part of his London Plan review?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Yes. This decision reflects reality and allows us to assess genuine local need for these pitches and determine what to do about it.

Supplementary Question 11**Councillor Rowan Turner**

I would like to ask the Cabinet Member whether or not any efforts are or have been made to identify traveller sites in the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Mr Mayor there is not been any great evidence of a need for a gypsy and traveller site but I understand from older Councillor Members that they have looked without success for many many decades for suitable sites.

Question 12**Councillor Ross Houston**

At September's Cabinet Meeting a Council motion proposed and voted through by the Conservative Group welcoming the Government's Housing Benefit reforms was accepted, and the Cabinet Member for Policy and Performance was tasked to liaise with government to implement the policy in Barnet. Six weeks later, at October's Cabinet Meeting, the Leader of the Council published a letter from herself to Eric Pickles setting out her "concerns" about the Housing Benefit reforms and asked him to "carefully consider" them. What is the explanation for the Leader's change of heart?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I welcome the principle of the reforms to Housing Benefit arrangements. My letter to the Secretary of State set out some specific concerns around how the detailed arrangements for the housing benefit reforms would operate, and in particular the potential financial impact on Barnet of meeting our homelessness duties. It was in light of these issues that I asked the Secretary of State to consider a more flexible approach to his proposals, particularly in London. My position on supporting the overarching policy has not changed.

Supplementary Question 12**Councillor Ross Houston**

Thank you for your answer. I'm afraid Councillor Hillan is obfuscating as nowhere in the letter does she mention a more flexible approach, just talk about tenant rent arrears, evictions and homelessness. Why does the Leader of the Council write in such terms to the Secretary of State if she agrees with the proposals?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I don't think there is anybody in this Council that wouldn't support the policy in general because it is absolutely ridiculous that we've got people paying £2,500 a week in rent and why should the tax payer pay that when we have perfectly good property at a reasonable rent further down the road. So the policy is actually one that I totally 100% support, my concerns in my letter was that Barnet does have higher rents than other councils and that we felt that the Secretary of State should take that into account. Now, I understand that Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea and there are other authorities who are now saying the same thing, and that the Government is looking very closely at whether or not it should be more regionalised.

Question 13**Councillor John Hart**

Please could the Cabinet Member briefly outline plans to give self-management to allotments sites in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The proposed new management arrangements will follow the Big Society and Localism and will mean that the management of the allotment service is devolved in its entirety to the extent permitted by legislation.

Under a new management arrangement it is intended that all responsibility for infrastructure, boundary fences, hard surfaces etc that currently rest with the Council will be transferred to the allotment mutual and the associated income. The community organisations will manage all aspects of the allotments.

Supplementary Question 13

Councillor John Hart

Thank you Mr Mayor. Could the Cabinet Member please include me in his discussion about allotments as I do know about allotments? I am the liaison officer, allegedly, for the Borough allotment federation.

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I will ensure that Councillor Coleman includes you, Councillor Hart.

Question 14

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Will the Cabinet Member for Environment provide details of what plans are in place to ensure a better response to gritting the roads this winter? How many operatives will be involved and which parts of the borough will not be gritted? What measures are in place to grit around sheltered housing areas?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The Council has updated its service plan following the success of last winter and the recent scrutiny report for the provision of the winter service for the next winter. The Council's salt barn has been filled with salt and further orders of salt have been placed. There are 9 gritting vehicles dedicated to winter gritting with loading facilities and three footway gritting machines. There are sufficient drivers to operate two shifts so that winter gritting can be carried out on a 24-hour basis, should weather conditions require. During severe weather conditions and snow, the Council has access to some 300 staff that can be deployed in snow clearing operations.

All public roads in the Borough have been prioritised in three categories for salt gritting:

- ❖ Priority 1: Principal roads, class 1 district roads which are used as main commuter routes and bus routes. A total of some 238 kms of roads (or 35% of the Council's network) are included in Priority 1 and these roads are split into 8 gritting routes.
- ❖ Priority 2: Roads in the vicinity of shopping centres, Railway stations, Hospitals, public buildings and schools, roads with steep gradients. A total of some 168 kms of roads (or 24% of the Council's network) are included in Priority 2 and these roads are split into 22 gritting routes.
- ❖ Priority 3: The rest of the Borough roads.

Priority 2 and 3 are normally post treated to deal with snow accumulation. Priority 2 roads will only be treated after priority 1 roads have been treated and found to be safe and running.

No housing areas are gritted by the Highway service as these are not part of the public highway.

Supplementary Question 14

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Thank you Mr Mayor. The only thing I can take from the reply that has been given, is that the part of my question which I wanted answered, regarding elderly and sheltered housing, there is no response at all. So, I can only assume from that, that the Cabinet Member's responsibility to ensure the safety of elderly residents in the vicinity of sheltered housing during periods of ice and snow is not a priority. I would like it confirmed that he do not consider it a priority, to make sure that pavements are safely cleared from ice and snow, because if it does not happen all that happens to the elderly is that they are kept prisoners in their homes or they risk broken limbs if they venture onto pavements with ice and snow, just like last year.

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Thank you Mr Mayor. It has never been a priority of this Council or any other Council to clear all the small side roads and housing estates. You know that, you didn't do it, we have not done it for many, many years. It is enough to keep the main roads going when there is very, very heavy snow. Of course, if it is not too bad and we can get around to everything else then we would do everything else. However, we are looking at a new relationship with our citizens and we are looking at them pledging some support. So I think it is a case of watch this space and maybe pledgebank will be coming up with some good solutions very soon.

Question 15**Councillor John Hart**

Please could the Cabinet Member outline why a review of the services our libraries offer is necessary?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

There are two key reasons that I believe a strategic review of libraries is required. Firstly, to make sure that library services are relevant, high-quality and meet the needs of our residents. Secondly, in a difficult financial environment, we must consider ways to make services more effective, efficient, and lower cost.

The Council is facing significant financial pressures over coming years, as local government funding is expected to reduce by around 27% over four years. Against a challenging financial backdrop, we must make sure that we continue to provide excellent services.

A recent report showed that the numbers who go to a library every week has dropped by a third in five years, and adult book issues have also decreased by close to 10% over five years. We need to make sure that our library service is relevant, meets the changing needs of our residents, attracts new users and supports those who are disconnected from library services. It must also provide value for money in this extremely tight financial climate.

I have requested a strategic review of libraries so that we have an opportunity to involve residents in shaping services for the next few years, investigate options to reduce back office costs, consider ways to get more value from our assets – for example, by sharing buildings with other public services, build better relationships with other local partners, and meet the needs of our residents. I believe that public services are best protected and enhanced by making sure that meet the needs of residents, match changes in social trends, targeting our resources where they are most needed, and seeking efficiency in how we deliver services.

It may be that we consider the opportunities to share buildings with other Council services or public service partners, as we are doing successfully in the rebuilt Burnt Oak Library and Customer Service Centre, and five Library Children Centres. We will look at some of these options to see whether they would complement and support the library service, give good community space, make sense for customers, and provide further efficiency. In addition, we could investigate more innovative ways of working with other local library authorities to share services, develop, and reduce costs.

Our library service has been successful because it has adapted and innovated to meet needs, from offering a 24/7 online reference service and ebooks, providing book club resources, to launching early literacy projects in community settings. In times of financial constraint, this review is required to consider how we can continue to adapt and to improve service with less money.

Supplementary Question 15**Councillor John Hart**

Thank you Mr Mayor. I thank the Cabinet Member for a most compendious answer. Has he considered, perhaps, the possibility of a subscription system to the libraries and all the other services which they provide?

The books would be free, but there would be a subscription service which would pay for all the other goods and services that are under discussion and those that I believe are being discussed.

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Thank you Councillor Hart for your very interesting suggestion. We have done some basic work on it and we have PWC looking into it. It is not something that I personally think is a good idea, but in this tough financial time we might have to look at such project. But, as I said, personally I do not think that is the way we should be taking the library service. But, I totally agree that it is an idea.

Question 16

Councillor Jim Tierney

The Cabinet Member for Children has been quoted saying that he is "totally converted to the Big Society". Can he explain how Barnet's voluntary sector will be able to grow and sustain itself if his Administration's proposals to cut £505,000 from voluntary sector grants goes ahead?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Knowing that severe constraints on public funding are on the way, Barnet's voluntary sector will no doubt have already worked hard and should continue to work hard to consolidate what it delivers and who delivers it in Barnet. The Council recognises the important role the sector plays in serving the community, and will continue to support the voluntary sector in a number of ways, including:

- The funding to maintain volunteer brokerage in some form is likely to be continued;
- Local infrastructure support for the voluntary sector [currently supplied by Community Barnet] will be re-commissioned;
- The Council will put aside a substantial sum to start a three-year Big Society Innovation Fund which will prime new activity; and
- Enabling the voluntary sector to further expand the range of services provided for children and young people, by providing advice, training and expertise to organisations.

In addition, Barnet is arguing for most of the London Councils grants budget – our contribution is over £1m – to be 'repatriated' to Barnet. We are currently a net contributor to this fund. Repatriation will allow us to retain use a proportion of the funds for buying services from the voluntary sector.

Question 17

Councillor Brian Gordon

Are we anticipating more homelessness within Barnet or a greater strain on our social housing resources as a consequence of the reduction of Housing Benefit being applied by the coalition Government?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

A number of changes to Housing Benefit are proposed, the most significant of which are the introduction of caps to local housing allowance (LHA) levels from April 2011 and a shift from calculating LHA based on the 50th percentile of rents in an area to the 30th percentile from October 2011. (This means that LHA will only cover the full rent on 30% of properties available in the private sector). The full impact of the changes will be offset to some extent by an increase in the total amount of discretionary payments that can be paid by local authorities to £40 million in 2011/12 (a 300% increase on 2009/10).

Estimates from the DWP and London Councils suggest that between 440 and 680 private rented sector households in Barnet will see Housing Benefit shortfalls of between £33 and £128 a week in their benefit due to the caps. A further 7,120 households will be affected by the percentile changes from October 2011, with average reductions of between £8 and £36 a week on top of the April changes.

Households in larger accommodation will see the biggest reductions in their housing benefit. The financial impact on Barnet is not yet fully understood, mainly because we do not know how the market will respond to the changes, and how many landlords will be prepared to reduce the rents they currently charge.

The private rented sector has played an important role in helping to reduce homelessness in Barnet, providing more homes for housing applicants than the social housing sector for the last two years. Clearly, the changes could make it more difficult for households on housing benefit to access the private rented sector, whilst existing households may find their tenancy becomes unsustainable. This could lead to an increase in homelessness, and to mitigate against this the Council has identified the following actions:

- Seek agreement with other London Boroughs to limit incentives paid to private landlords to those paid by the host Borough;
- Work with local landlords through the Barnet Landlord Forum to encourage them to adjust their rents rather than seek removal of existing tenants;
- Develop a communications strategy to provide information for tenants affected by the changes;
- Target additional discretionary payments to minimise the impact of the changes on vulnerable households in the Borough; and
- Ongoing assessment of the impact of the changes.

Supplementary Question 17

Councillor Brian Gordon

Councillor Cornelius, thank you very much indeed for the very ample answer that you have given in connection with housing. Can you confirm that you are in support of Government policy as far as housing benefit and housing generally is concerned and also concur with me that what we should be doing is ensuring that people who have the benefit of social housing and indeed housing benefit itself, are really the people who need it and not the people who can afford to be self-sufficient.

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Mr Mayor, yes of course I agree that, as the Leader has said the reforms of housing benefit are long overdue and have to be done. But, we do have to watch out and mitigate the effects of the change in the meantime.

Question 18

Councillor Anne Hutton

The Cabinet Member has said that no decisions on cuts to libraries will be made until after the Strategic Libraries Review has completed. Why is he suggesting over £1.3m of cuts to libraries in the October published budget headlines?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

As a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review, local government funding is expected to reduce by approximately 27 per cent over four years. In this challenging financial climate, it is imperative that the Council develops options, targets, and projects to find ways to provide effective services with less money.

The Council has been planning for this scenario for some time, and developed a series of budget proposals to consider how we can address this challenge. All Council services have been tasked to consider options to reduce spending by 20%. In some cases, clear proposals have been developed to demonstrate how this can be achieved.

As the Strategic Library Review will report early 2011, no detailed proposals can be made at this stage. No options have been proposed. They will be developed following a major consultation programme.

To aid Council budget planning for the next few years, a high-level target has been provided. The Libraries, Museums, and Local Studies service will be asked to consider how to make savings of £1.3m, around 20% of the current service budget. Until the Strategic Library Review reports in early 2011, this remains a target and no estimated level of specific proposals or savings can be provided at this stage.

Supplementary Question 18

Councillor Anne Hutton

Thank you Mr Mayor. I thank Councillor for his reply. If the Cabinet Member is saying that no options have been proposed – why is he listing them in the budget report? And, if the savings really are just targets and not proposals – how do we know whether the budget will just have a large black hole in it?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Thank you, we are proposing a £1.3m, as it says in the answer, a 20% cut because what the Comprehensive Spending Review has meant for all services in our Council. We are having to take huge amounts of funding away from certain areas with libraries being one of them. We working hard to ensure that this does not affect front line services and I will ensure you that there will not be a black hole once we finish our review.

Question 19

Councillor Brian Gordon

Would the Cabinet Member please assist by keeping a watchful eye on the progress of the installation of play equipment at the end of Farm Road which has now been agreed to by the Council, through the Councillors in Hale?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Following confirmation that the scheme has been approved, Officers are progressing with the necessary authorisations and instructions to Contractors to facilitate the installation on the site as soon as possible. I am sure Hale ward residents will appreciate their Ward Councillors efforts on this matter.

Supplementary Question 19

Councillor Brian Gordon

Perhaps you could just confirm that if the play equipment, that is going to be installed in due course in Hale, at the end of Farm Road proves to be successful and is well-used, then perhaps you could consider this as a model to have same sort of thing in other areas of the Borough where it could be used by the children of local communities. It is much less expensive than investing in parks.

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I, too have got some in Brunswick Park, and am very pleased with this. I think it is excellent play equipment and have got some around the Borough. However, it was very much for a specific grant that we got and I am not sure we are going to have the money to spread it much further. But, certainly I shall have a look and see if there is any money at any time then we shall spread to that. In the meantime I'm sure our excellent 3 Hale Councillors will be keeping a very close eye on the play equipment.

Question 20

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

Will the Cabinet Member explain how the suggested £165k saving in the mobile library service would be realised?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The Libraries, Museums, and Local Studies service will be asked to consider how to make savings of around 20% of the current service budget. A review of the mobile and home library is planned, to help us to provide a better library service for vulnerable residents in this tight financial environment.

This review process aims to identify ways to reach a greater proportion of people who are housebound, and to support and extend access to library services for other vulnerable residents. No options have been proposed at this stage, and preferred options – indicating costs, savings, and benefits – will be developed over coming months.

A range of options could be considered, including: updating the routes of both services to better support voluntary, community, and social care infrastructure; using new delivery models to reach new groups and increase take up of the service; making improvements to hours of service, routes, stock management to improve efficiency; and updating vehicles to improve access to the service and improve efficiency.

At this stage, we have a savings target applied (£125,000 reduction in budget after three years) rather than a proposed option. Key decision-making criteria to be applied in this project will include: the ability to reach a greater proportion of those who are supported to live at home; ensuring the service is very well targeted for our most vulnerable residents; building closer links with community and voluntary groups, and social services infrastructure; and improving and extending our range of services.

Supplementary Question 20

Councillor Anusya Sodha

Thank you Mr Mayor. Given that you don't actually have any proposals would you explain exactly how are you going to expand the range of services by cutting £125,000 from the service?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Mr Mayor, I cannot help repeating myself, we are here having to make savings because the Labour Government and the way they acted. We looking to find new ways to provide the service, we will carry out a review, we will ask Members that use the service how they use the service, and we will look to make savings. Whether this is sharing with other Boroughs I am not sure at the moment until we do that review and do the work – until then it is too early to judge an outcome of the review.

Question 21

Councillor Brian Salinger

Can the appropriate Cabinet Member please advise the Council what steps are being taken to ensure that all FOI requests are fully answered within the timescale laid down by the legislation?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

The following steps have been taken to help improve the Council's performance in giving full responses to FOI requests within the statutory timescales:

- Link Officers are already established in all of the Council's Services to oversee the response to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI).
- Earlier this year steps were taken to strengthen the role of the Link Officers network and raise the profile of their work.
- A support framework has been set up to assist Link Officers (including regular forum meetings, external training, regular FOI news updates, FOI casework surgeries and intranet guidance).
- Work flow processes and templates have been created for responding to FOI requests, subject access requests (SAR) under the Data Protection Act and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests.
- Designated officers within the Corporate Governance Directorate act as a point of contact for the information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and lead on communications between the Council and the ICO.
- They also provide a central point of contact for all FOI (and SAR) related legal and procedural advice requested by Link Officers.

- Development of the skills base of Officers dealing with FOI requests.
- We have been updating and expanding the Publication Scheme (exceeding the Corporate Plan Quarter 2 target of 20% expansion).
- There are regular reviews to monitor progress on responding to FOI requests.

FOI Requests received by the Council

Calendar Years

- Jan 2009 to Dec 2009 – 641.
- Jan 2010 to Sept 2010 – 832 (3 months of the year remaining) – projected year end total of 1109.

Financial Years

- April 2009 to March 2010 – 798
- April 2010 to Sept 2010 – 547 (6 months of the year remaining) – projected year end total of 1094.

Supplementary Question 21

Councillor Brian Salinger

Thank you Mr Mayor. I am grateful to Councillor Cohen for the additional information which I suspect was given to him as a briefing note in anticipation of a supplementary question. Assuming that Councillor Cohen has been given further briefing, can he tell Members the scale of the problem is in terms of requests not met within the legislative time scale by indicating how many requests in the last 2 years either fiscal or calendar were not complied with in time?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

Mr Mayor, I do not carry that information in my head, I will arrange for the Member to be written to, but should add that of the 1100 odd requests that have been received it is 1 and 1 only that has triggered this closer look by the appropriate department. 1 in 1100.

Question 22

Councillor Anne Hutton

The Strategic Libraries Review envisages 25% of cuts to the Libraries Service. Is it really possible to cut a quarter of the services' budget without closing any libraries?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

I am committed to providing an excellent library service in Barnet. That is why a strategic review of libraries has been set up to respond to two key challenges. Firstly, to make sure that library services are relevant, high-quality, and meet the needs of those who live, work or study in Barnet now and in the future. Secondly, to investigate options to ensure these services provide excellent value for money.

The bare facts about all Councils' finances are that we will have significantly less money over coming years. Barnet is expecting to have to make savings of around 20 per cent over the next three years. To achieve a 20% reduction in Libraries, Museums, and Local Studies spending, £1.3m savings would be required. We are committed to reducing our back office costs as far as possible, and will look at a range of options to achieve this.

We cannot pretend there won't have to be savings to some frontline services, or changes to how services are provided. The challenge is to explore how providing services in a different way can bridge any funding gap, and ensure that our services are as efficient and innovative as they can be.

It may be that we consider the opportunities to share buildings with other Council services or public service partners, as we are doing successfully in the rebuilt Burnt Oak Library and Customer Service Centre, and five Library Children Centres.

We will look at some of these options to see whether they would complement and support the library service, make sense for customers, and provide further efficiency. I am keen to stress that simply to view the service as a collection of buildings is to sell it short, it is so much more than that.

Our library service has been successful because it has adapted and innovated to meet needs, from offering a 24/7 online reference service and ebooks, to providing book club resources. In times of financial constraint, we need to consider how we can continue to adapt and to improve service with less money.

Supplementary Question 22

Councillor Anne Hutton

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you for your answer, but I see that the Councillor has written to all residents telling them that he wants to expand the service. Are you able to confirm which libraries had the least number of visits per year and whether or not he is going to close any of them?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Those figures you are able to obtain from the relevant Officers. But, this review is not about closing libraries, this review is about providing the best service possible for our residents in the 21st Century with less money.

Question 23

Councillor Brian Salinger

Can the Cabinet Member for Housing tell the Council how many of the properties that have been let and are anticipated to be let this year would have been let to people attracting additional points within the new proposed banding attributable to voluntary work or employment, had the proposed system been in place?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Although applicants are asked what their income is and whether they are working, employment and volunteering are not a feature of the current housing assessment and as such are not recorded on the Council's housing database. This means it is not possible to provide the information requested.

Officers are in the process of working through a sample of higher pointed cases to test them against the proposed new bands in preparation for the transition to the new system, which is due to be implemented early in 2011 subject to Cabinet approval.

Supplementary Question 23

Councillor Brian Salinger

Thank you Mr Mayor. I think all Members are well aware of my opposition to the proposed changes which I believe will lack transparency, will erode choice and leave our Officers open to unnecessary allegations of corruption. Mr Mayor, the Leader has said that all housing vacancies in council owned properties will continue to be allocated on the basis of housing need. Can the Cabinet Member confirm to the full Council the view of the Director of Housing that no properties would have been offered to applicants in band 2 in the last year and that no more are likely to be offered in the next year which means that all the work on assessment and encouraging people to work on volunteering as a way to get up the housing list will not become a factor?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Mr Mayor, I cannot confirm the views of the Director of Housing. The Assistant Director of Housing has not spoken to me about that, but I personally believe that this is a step forward and that we building a much better Barnet by changing a dysfunctional system.

Question 24**Councillor Alex Brodkin**

Is it really right to pay a Special Responsibility Allowance of over £15k per annum to anyone for Chairing a Committee that meets only twice a year?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

It is simplistic to suggest that £15,000 is being paid for chairing two meetings a year. Members should know that there is a substantial amount of work that takes place above and beyond these two public meetings, involving Officers and Members and other meetings.

Supplementary Question 24**Councillor Alex Brodkin**

You have not actually answered the question – whether you think that £15,000 is appropriate for someone who meets twice a year to chair a Committee?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Councillor Brodkin, I'm sure that there is not one Member in this Council Chamber that only attends 2 meetings a year. Even the opposition Members who don't do a lot of work for their allowances do attend far more meetings than that.

Question 25**Councillor Anne Hutton**

How can the Cabinet Member justify suggesting cuts of over £9m to the Children's Services budget when the coalition Government has agreed to ring fence the education budget?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Government's ring fencing announcement refers only to the Schools budget; this is funding delegated directly to schools or 'passported' via the Council.

The Schools budget is not included in the Children's Service base budget. The potential savings to the Children's Service budget relate to the non-schools element, where significant reductions in Government funding are expected. This budget includes some services provided to schools by the Council, but not funding directly delegated to schools.

Question 26**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Will the Cabinet Member give me an assurance that the artsdepot grant will not be cut?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

"The budget savings proposals agreed for consultation by Cabinet last month included an option to reduce our corporate grants programme by over 40%. The grant to artsdepot constitutes a large proportion – nearly a fifth – of this budget. Therefore, I cannot guarantee that artsdepot's grant will not be cut. Indeed, I think this is very likely.

In the current financial climate, we cannot any longer sustain all of our services and we must consider to what extent we continue to fund arts provision in the Borough. We have been very clear with artsdepot that it is time to consider how they can – in the future – operate independently of the Council. To this end, we have been working closely with artsdepot to explore how they can move forward on a sound financial footing.

Supplementary Question 26**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Well, after the answer of the Leader it is clear that they can't answer questions this Council. They don't do arts, they don't do sports, they don't do housing and they don't do libraries. It doesn't even do the voluntary sector. The question is – what does this Council actually do? I feel we are getting to the bottom of what a core Barnet service is – zilch.

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

This is nothing to do with the answer to this question. But, two things this Council does, first of all its statutory duties and second to consider that Labour stays in opposition forever.

Question 27**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

What are the lower priority services that would cease in the Supporting People and Voluntary Sector section of the Adults budget proposals?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

Current budgetary provision for prevention services commissioned by Adult Social Services (AdSS) comprises £2.8M in respect of voluntary sector services and £4.7M in respect of Supporting People services. Reductions in expenditure on both programmes are specified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Council's priorities for its investment in prevention services are clearly set out in *Looking after Yourself – A prevention framework for Barnet*. The Council and voluntary sector providers worked together earlier this year to complete a review of the work of the sector. The intention was then to fulfil the Prevention Framework's commitment to publish a timetable for procurement to replace most existing provision in order to bring the sector into line with the Framework's priorities. This work is now concerned with scenario-planning based on different levels of funding reduction and will be finalised following the Council's budget decisions.

Question 28**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

What is the reduction in block contract of floating support preventative services as listed in the Adults budget proposals and how will this impact on the proposal to offer floating support to a wider client base?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

All areas of Adult Social Services expenditure including the Supporting People (SP) programme have been examined in order to inform budget proposals. The SP programme comprises services commissioned by Childrens and Housing although most are commissioned by Adult Social Services.

'Floating support' is one of the main types of SP service, and simply refers to support delivered mainly through home visits by support workers and available to anyone in Barnet who would benefit from support irrespective of where they are living. Funding for this type of service represents roughly half of current expenditure on SP provision. It includes one large contract worth £1.4M pa that supports all customer groups and several smaller specialist contracts that work mainly with specific types of need.

SP is a fully inclusive programme that provides support to a very wide customer base, including homeless people, women at risk of domestic violence, older people and people with disabilities. The Council has not identified any need to widen the customer base and has no plan to do so. If budget reductions are agreed, the Council will work with providers to ensure that support continues to be prioritised for people who would receive most benefit, in accordance with the policy directions set out in the Prevention Framework.

Supplementary Question 28**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Can the Cabinet Member clear up a confusion? When the whole reason for changing sheltered housing was that 60% of the budget was being spent on 3%, so therefore you need to widen out the number of people who would be receiving this service. In this answer you said that you have not identified any need to widen the customer base in terms of shape and support for older people. Why is there the intention to scraping sheltered housing wardens if you are not going to spread the service to other elder people? It just seems daft.

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

Mr Mayor, just briefly touch on a point made by another Member that links to this. I did attend an Overview and Scrutiny meeting yesterday, as the Cabinet Member, and Councillor Rawlings was well aware that he was in fact leading the item there on this particular topic and had ample opportunity to question me there rather than today. All I will say is, we will target resources as we said on numerous occasions to those in greatest need and whatever residual sums are left will of course be distributed as fairly as possible. I think fits in well with the answer I have already provided Mr Mayor.

Question 29**Councillor Anne Hutton**

What will be left of the Youth Service if the suggested £3.259m savings to that service go ahead?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The figure of £3.259m represents the sum of all potential budget savings to the Youth Service over 3 years; these remain options at this stage.

If it is decided to make this level of savings, a core targeted youth service would remain to meet statutory requirements to provide Information, Advice and Guidance, advice and assessment for young people with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities, and access to positive activities for vulnerable young people. The voluntary sector will help to provide more universal services to young people.

Supplementary Question 29**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you for your reply. How will the voluntary sector going to provide more universal services to young people if their budgets have been cut?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Thank you Mr Mayor. Well, for one thing, we have got some very sensible discussions going on with CommUnity Barnet at the moment and I am very hopeful that they will be coming forward with proposals. I will be going to CommUnity Barnet's AGM tomorrow night where I note that they will be holding a very interesting discussion about how they are going to make the Big Society work. But, certainly I'm determined to ensure that this Borough continues to have an appropriate level of youth service provision – exactly what that is going to look like is going to be hard to tell at the moment, but we are working on new models and new ways of delivering.

Question 30**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

What are the "less deprived areas" suggested for making cuts to teaching resources in children's centres in the budget headlines?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

A project is currently underway to evaluate potential operating models for the delivery of Children's Centre services in light of a likely reduction in Sure Start funding.

The LA makes decisions around deprivation through a national dataset known as the 'Indices of Multiple Deprivation' (IMD), which are measured at a small area level known as lower super output areas (with an average population 1500). The index takes into account several variables including income, employment, health deprivation, education, housing, crime and living environment.

Barnet has 210 super output areas, of these 44 lower super output areas (LSOA) fall within the 30% most deprived areas nationally, which are predominantly located in the west of the Borough. The 30% indicator is used to describe the most deprived areas when reviewing the most needy centres.

Supplementary Question 30**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

I would like to thank Councillor Harper for informing me that there will more than likely be cuts to Sure Start. However, will the Cabinet Member for Children Services ensure they will be no cuts in the teaching services at Sure start centres?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

I'm not at the moment in the position to go into that level of detail as Councillor Slocombe will know – what we have currently done is put out a number of options for savings over the next 3 years – those are out for public consultation that was agreed at Cabinet a few weeks ago. We have not gone down to that level of detail.

Question 31**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Why are there no proposals in the budget headlines for making savings on consultants, and what has been the spend on consultants so far this year?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

As part of the proposals in the budget headlines, savings in consultancy spend have not been specifically identified, but form part of the detailed proposals that have been put together at individual service level. For example, there are a number of budget proposals around re-organising staffing arrangements, reduction of spending on supplies and services, LEAN reviews, changes to working practices and other efficiency measures. All of these proposals involving services will involve reducing the costs of consultancy where this is the most cost effective way of running these services.

In terms of the current spend on consultancy for 2010/11, this information is not immediately available as these costs are spread across all Council departments. I will verbally update you at Council.

Supplementary Question 31**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Can I ask how much of that £3.8m¹ will be saved in the next financial year?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

We are not sure of all the savings yet, but it just not for savings as we are dependent on external skills and we do bring in consultants in for a variety of reasons. For instance, you would not expect us to take on full-time staff when we all know that we are going to have to reduce our workforce. So, it is not all about saving money.

Question 32**Councillor Alison Moore**

In light of the expectation that residents will have to grit their own streets, will the Administration be significantly increasing the number of on-street grit bins across the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The Council currently has some 295 grit bins throughout the Borough. These have already been checked and filled with salt, ready for the start of the new season. In addition there are some 38 grit bins in the town centres that are operated by the town centre keepers. The Council's provision of grit bins is amongst the highest in London and I would welcome suggestions from Ward Councillors for additional bins (budget allowing) in the Borough. I have recently scrapped the rather bureaucratic "rules" on siting grit bins and all requests will be considered on their merits.

¹ A verbal update was given by the Leader of the Council stating that £3.8m to date had been spent on consultancy.

The Winter Maintenance Task and Finish Group considered the Council's response to the cold weather and snowfall in December 2009/January 2010. The Group's recommendations, which were agreed by Cabinet on 20 October, included a pilot scheme on the concept of 'Community Keepers' of grit/salt and I am considering this.

Supplementary Question 32

Councillor Alison Moore

Clearly, we are a very big Borough with 100s miles of local roads and a significant number of town centres. 295 and 38 grit bins are really not a large numbers for that size of Borough. Therefore, if we are serious about self-service gritting I hope the Cabinet Member will appreciate that there maybe a significant number of requests for grit bins and I hope that they will be honoured within the budget.

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I think Councillor Coleman will welcome requests for grit bins – that is what he is asking for and it is all part of asking residents to actually grit their own roads.

Question 33

Councillor Alison Moore

Can the Cabinet Member tell me how many on street parking meters were out of service for more than 1 day during 2010? What percentage does this represent and which Town Centres are worst affected?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

423 on street parking meters were reported out of service for more than 1 day during 2010.

95% of the faults reported daily were dealt with the following working day.

The Town Centres worst affected are Barnet, Hendon and Golders Green.

Supplementary Question 33

Councillor Alison Moore

There are only 442 parking meters in the Borough and all of those have been out of service at some stage for more than a day at some point. It really is no wonder that you are not hitting your budget targets in terms of the parking account. You are looking at partly resolve the problem by asking people to pay by mobile phone, but, seriously, what happens to those people who don't use mobile phones – as there still are many?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

It is not quite right actually when you say 423, some are repeats going out of service obviously, and we do have some obviously been vandalised. There is no doubt about it that we do have a very old stock of parking meters so we do have to look at what we do next. We are looking at parking, we will take into account people that don't have mobile phones I can assure you that.

Question 34

Councillor Alison Moore

Can the Cabinet Member assure Council that there are no quotas for issuing PCNs by Barnet's traffic wardens?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The Council does not have any Traffic Wardens, such officers being only employed by the Metropolitan Police Service and deployed entirely on the Transport for London Road Network and not Borough roads. The Council does, however, employ Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) and these are tasked with patrolling those streets for which the Council is responsible and ensuring that motorists comply with the regulations. There are no individual quotas for Penalty Charge Notices and a CEO's performance is assessed within the Council's overall framework which takes account of aspects such as attendance, customer feedback, and diligence in carrying out a range of duties.

Question 35**Councillor Alison Moore**

Would the Cabinet Member advise why Councillors surgery details and contact phone numbers have been left off the Councillors details in Barnet First in the last edition?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Barnet First currently consists of 16 pages and has traditionally devoted two of these pages to listing details of all members in every issue which is 12.5 per cent of the information we send to residents.

Typically other Council magazines only list all Council Members immediately after elections. They do not publish a list at any other time. I am keen that we provide full information about Councillors and their activities and we have proposals to revise our website to do just that. I think this is an appropriate balance in how we use scarce resources at this time. I will also ensure that guidance is included on the Councillors' information page for residents to access the details of their individual Councillors either by calling the Council or via the Council website.

Supplementary Question 35**Councillor Alison Moore**

I think this answer is pretty inadequate, it is just unacceptable that you publish a magazine and that is the only piece of information that goes hard in copy across the Borough and you don't include details other than e-mail addresses. Quite frankly, the people that can use the web and would get in touch with you by e-mail are quick to go on the web to get the details. Those people who don't use e-mail and don't use the web need both the phone number and address in hard copy. I think you need to think about this for future editions.

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I think personally that it is totally self-indulgent that you wish to take 12% of our magazine. That magazine is there to give the residents information, give news, to tell them about our services and not to have our mugshots all over the place. However, we therefore took the decision to reduce it down to 1 page. However, if Councillor Moore and her Group would prefer to have the phone number rather than the e-mail address then I'm sure we can look at that instead. But, I certainly don't think that we should take up two pages.

Question 36**Councillor Geof Cooke**

The Council's street lighting PFI contractor customarily blocks the pavement while replacing lamp columns. On average per lamp column, for how long do pedestrians have to walk in the road and what is done by the Council to minimise that time?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

It is not possible to provide a definitive timescale per lamp column, as the works required at each location may vary depending on site circumstances and underground obstructions. It is not customary to block the whole of the pavement while replacing lamp columns. However, on those rare occasions where the whole of the footway on one side of the road is closed due to an excavation the opposite side is, whenever possible, left unobstructed at that point and signage is installed to guide pedestrians to that effect. Therefore, one would expect the general public to cross the road and use the unobstructed footway. Unfortunately, it is not possible to prevent those pedestrians who seem to prefer to walk along the road to pass the guarded excavation from doing so.

If Councillor Cooke wishes to report such cases I am sure Officers will deal with them.

Supplementary Question 36**Councillor Geof Cooke**

Is it not the case that the Council's contractors can literally go along a road digging holes around existing lamp columns and blocking off the pavement; and then leaving the road for days on end before they come back and complete the work? And isn't the absence of an answer to the last part of my written question an indication of future shape of things to come because this contract is not being supervised properly?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I'm afraid that you have 2 different contractors – you have got the contractors who go and fix the lamp post and you have got the contractor who does the electrical work. That is standard practice as I am sure you do not want people who fix lamps getting involved in electrical work and it is against health and safety. Actually, do you know what, we have replaced so many lamps around the Borough and the only one complaint that I have ever had is you, Councillor Cooke.

Question 37**Councillor Geof Cooke**

When notified by a utility of a need to dig up the road for a non-urgent purpose e.g. to fix a significant but not catastrophic water leak, what is the average delay between the Council receiving the request and the permitted date for the work to be done?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Most of these works take less than 3 days to complete and are classified as Minor Works. The notice we require (from us receiving a permit request to works starting) is 3 working days. If the works duration is between 3 and 10 days then the notice we require is 10 days. There is also the ability to shorten this time by early start request from the utility.

Supplementary Question 37**Councillor Geof Cooke**

Would you be surprised to learn that I reported a water leak to the area Water and was astonished to learn that it would take 2 weeks to fix, and eventually they did it in a bit less than that. But, when I complained or queried the delay I was told that the fault was with Barnet because of the delay in giving permission for that to happen. Have I been misinformed? And, if so by whom?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I've obviously got no idea and cannot really deal with your case whilst in the Council Chamber. Sorry.