

Minutes

OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET held at The Town Hall, Hendon, NW4, on Tuesday, 14 September 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 Brodtkin	*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

3. MINUTES (Agenda Item 1.3):

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 13 July 2010 be approved.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1.4):

Member:	Subject:	Interest Declared:
Councillor Geof Cooke	Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager Agenda Item 5.3.2 National Grid response to the Council regarding the East Barnet gas supply disruption	Personal and prejudicial interest as Councillor Cooke is an employee of National Grid and has small shareholdings. Councillor Cooke left the Chamber and took no part in the discussion or voting on this item.
Councillor Anne Hutton	Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager Agenda Item 5.3.2 National Grid response to the Council regarding the East Barnet gas supply disruption	<i>awaiting for clarification .</i>
Councillor Helena Hart	Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager Agenda Item 5.3.3 London Local Authorities Bill	Personal but not prejudicial as the Councillors are Freedom Pass Holders. The Councillors participated in the discussion and voting on this item.
Councillor Wendy Prentice		
Councillor John Hart		
Councillor Helena Hart		
Councillor Maureen Braun		
Councillor Joanna Tambourides		
Councillor Graham Old		
Councillor Sury Khatri		
Councillor Brian Schama		
Councillor Lynne Hillan		
Councillor Anthony Finn		
Councillor Melvin Cohen		
Councillor Brian Salinger		
Councillor Kate Salinger		
Councillor John Marshall		
Councillor Eva Greenspan		
Councillor Geof Cooke		
Councillor Monroe Palmer		

Councillor Susette Palmer		
Councillor Jack Cohen		

5. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS (Agenda Item 5):

The Worshipful Mayor regretted to announce the death of Sir John Gorst on 31 July 2010. Sir John served as MP for Hendon North from 27 years from 1970 until 1997. A minutes silence was held in remembrance of a departed friend and colleague. The Worshipful Mayor on behalf of the Council passed on his condolences to Councillor Charlie O-Macauley and his family on the passing of his father.

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 3.5, 3.3 and 3.9 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 3.3, 3.4 and 3.2 to be debated and voted upon in advance of votes being taken on the other Motions on the Agenda.

Councillor Barry Rawlings, duly seconded by Councillor Alison Moore, moved under Council Procedure Rule, Section 1, paragraph 14.1.2 that Standing Order be suspended to allow a member of the public to speak on a motion. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declares lost.

RESOLVED – That the Standing Orders not be suspended to allow a member of the public to speak on a motion.

9. MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR DANIEL SEAL (Agenda Item 3.5)

Motion 3.5 in the name of Councillor Daniel Seal was moved. An amendment in the name of Councillor Kath McGuirk was moved. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor McGuirk was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED - Council is pleased that Transport for London agreed in 2009 to make improvements to improve the safety and traffic flow at Henly's Corner, although Council remains adamant this should not preclude additional future improvement work.

However, Council notes that owing to the deficit left by the previous Labour Government, the current Government is looking to make savings through the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). This will include examining the funding towards transport bodies, such as Transport for London (TfL).

TfL has, Council notes, consequently put its major projects under review, including the planned work on the A406 at Henly's Corner.

Council believes that the work at Henly's Corner is of the utmost importance, not only for local safety, but also as part of the strategic road network across North London, as delays at the junction produce many knock-on effects on traffic flow on the North Circular and the A1.

Therefore, Council resolves to make strong representations for the improvement work at Henly's Corner to be safeguarded in TfL's review, and calls for the Chief Executive to write to the TfL Commissioner and Mayor of London pressing for the scheme to be protected and the reasons why.

10. MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR LYNNE HILLAN (Agenda Item 3.3)

Motion 3.3 in the name of Councillor Hillan was moved. An amendment in the name of Councillor Geof Cooke was moved. Debate ensued. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor Cooke was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED - Council notes the Audit Commission cost £200 million a year and employed 2,000 people.

Council further notes that the role of the organisation shifted over many years, ending up as an arm of Whitehall, issuing local authorities with costly diktats.

The abolished CAA Inspection regime (and the CPA before it) costing LBB over £100,000 in staff time each year formed a major part of the Audit Commission's remit, Council remembers.

Further, Council is dismayed that the Audit Commission spent taxpayers' money treating its staff to jollies such as trips to the races.

In addition, Council deplores the spending of £60,000 by that body on lobbyists in order to "combat the activities" of a senior Opposition MP in early 2010.

Council believes that local authorities should manage and audit their own spending, and that the bureaucracy of the Audit Commission has become both unwieldy and unnecessary.

Accordingly, Council welcomes the Coalition Government's abolition of the Audit Commission.

Council further requests Cabinet and the Audit Committee work to put in place a framework to ensure the requisite auditing of Barnet's finances in light of the abolition of the Audit Commission.

11. MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR GEOF COOKE AS AMENDED BY COUNCILLOR BRIAN COLEMAN (Agenda Item 3.9)

Motion 3.9 in the name of Councillor Geof Cooke was moved. Amendments in the name of Councillors Brian Coleman and Geoffrey Johnson were moved. Upon being to the vote the amendment in the name of Councillor Coleman was declared carried. Upon being put to the vote the amendment in the name of Councillor Geoffrey Johnson was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote the substantive Motion as amended was declared carried.

RESOLVED – Council is pleased that the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has rolled Oyster out onto the National Rail Network, further increasing the popularity of electronic transactions.

Council notes that as a result of Oyster's popularity just 5% of tube journeys start with a ticket office transaction and that the number of such transactions has plummeted 28% since 2006, with machine-based sales soaring 47% over the same period.

In addition, Council is delighted that the Mayor has boosted Police numbers on the Tube from 450 to 700, which will help improve passenger safety.

Council believes given the dwindling use of ticket offices, members of staff are better employed helping passengers on the platforms than enclosed behind a glass window, particularly considering limited public resources.

Council notes the plans involve no compulsory redundancies.

Council therefore supports the TfL proposals to this end.

12. MOTION 3.1 IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR JACK COHEN AS AMENDED BY COUNCILLOR BRIAN COLEMAN (Agenda Item 3.1)

Motion 3.1 in the name of Councillor Jack Cohen was moved. Amendments in the name of Councillors, Brian Coleman, Andrew McNeil and Susette Palmer were moved. Upon being put to the vote the amendment in the name of Councillor Brian Coleman was declared carried. Upon being put to the vote the amendment in the name of Councillor Andrew McNeil was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote the amendment in the name of Councillor Susette Palmer was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote the substantive Motion as amended was declared carried.

RESOLVED - Council welcomes the statement on 4 July by Secretary of State for Transport, Philip Hammond MP, that there will be no blanket reduction in speed limits to 20mph in residential areas.

Council believes that blanket 20mph zones are ineffectual, unenforceable and the limits largely ignored.

Council therefore calls on Cabinet to broadly maintain its existing levels of speed limits across the Borough, which, Council believes, have struck the correct balance between minimising congestion and maximising road safety.

13. MOTION 3.2 IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR RICHARD CORNELIUS (Agenda Item 3.2)

Motion 3.2 in the name of Councillor Richard Cornelius was moved. An amendment in the name of Councillor Jim Tierney was moved. Upon being put to the vote the amendment in the name of Councillor Tierney was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote the Motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED - Council regrets the practice of "Garden Grabbing" that occurred because front and rear gardens were classified as Brownfield under the planning rules, making it far easier to obtain planning permission to build on them.

Council notes that between 2006 and 2009, 34% of dwellings in Barnet were built on previously developed land (including gardens). This was the 10th highest rate in London, and a large jump from the 12% recorded in the three years to 1997.

Council also regrets that the old Labour Government made few changes to curtail this practice despite constant representations from this Council and local MP Theresa Villiers.

However, Council is extremely pleased that the new Coalition Government has listened and has reclassified front and rear gardens away from Brownfield land, which Council believes will serve to control building upon them.

Accordingly Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Communities Minister Greg Clark MP welcoming this move.

14. MOTION 3.4 IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR ANDREW HARPER AS AMENDED BY COUNCILLOR ANNE HUTTON (Agenda Item 3.4)

Motion 3.4 in the name of Councillor Andrew Harper was moved. An amendment in the name of Councillor Anne Hutton was moved. Councillor Harper accepted Councillor Hutton's amendment. Upon being put to the vote the substantive Motion as amended was declared carried.

RESOLVED - Council is proud of its first class schools and colleges that give the children of the Borough the best possible start in life.

Council believes that decent education and training is extremely important in building the future of Britain's and Barnet's economy.

Therefore Council is proud to note the excellent GCSE and A-Level results across the Borough, with 80% of Barnet's students receiving 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE and 71% gaining A* to B in A-Levels.

Council also congratulates students of vocational courses for their exam results.

Council warmly congratulates all the students, staff, teachers, parents and Governors responsible for these excellent results, and calls on Cabinet to ensure Barnet continues to enjoy excellence in education for years to come.

15. MOTION 3.6 IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR JACK COHEN (Agenda Item 3.6)

Councillor Jack Cohen moved the motion in his name. Upon being put to the vote the motion was declared lost.

At least ten Members rose in their places and demanded a formal division on the voting on Motion 3.6. Upon being taken the results of the Division were declared as follows:

For	Against	Absent
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Finn	Brodkin	Sargeant
Rutter	Campbell	
Braun	Coakley-Webb	
Dean Cohen	Jack Cohen	
Melvin Cohen	Cooke	
Coleman	Farrier	
Alison Cornelius	Houston	
Richard Cornelius	Hutton	

Davey	Geoffrey Johnson	
Evangelisti	Julie Johnson	
Gordon	McGuirk	
Greenspan	McNeil	
Harper	Moore	
Helen Hart	O-Macauley	
John Hart	Monroe Palmer	
Hillan	Susette Palmer	
Khatri	Rawlings	
Longstaff	Rogers	
Marshall	Schneiderman	
Old	Slocombe	
Perry	Sodha	
Prentice	Tierney	
Rajput	Zubairi	
Rams		
Rayner		
Brian Salinger		
Kate Salinger		
Scannell		
Schama		
Seal		
Shooter		
Sowerby		
Strongolou		
Andreas Tambourides		
Joanna Tambourides		
Thomas		
Thompsonstone		
Turner		
Yawitch		

For	39
Against	23
Absent	1
TOTAL	63

RESOLVED – That the motion in the name of Councillor Jack Cohen is declared lost.

- 16. MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR ROSS HOUSTON (Agenda Item 3.7)**
Under Council Procedure Rule 31.6, Councillor Ross Houston submitted a further Motion asking that his Motion at Agenda Item 3.7 be withdrawn from the Agenda and referred to Cabinet. Upon being put to the vote this further Motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED – That Motion 3.7 in the name of Councillor Ross Houston be withdrawn from the agenda and referred to Cabinet.

- 17. MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR ROSS HOUSTON (Agenda Item 3.8)**
Under Council Procedure Rule 31.6, Councillor Ross Houston submitted a further Motion asking that his Motion at Agenda Item 3.8 be withdrawn from the Agenda and

referred to Cabinet. Upon being put to the vote this further Motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED – That Motion 3.8 in the name of Councillor Ross Houston be withdrawn from the agenda and referred to Cabinet

18. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING.

In accordance with the Agenda, the Mayor adjourned the meeting. The meeting reconvened at 9.10pm.

19. ADMINISTRATION POLICY ITEM - COALITION PROPOSALS FOR HEALTH (Agenda Item 4.1)

Councillor Helena Hart proposed the item and moved that it be adopted.

Amendments in the name of Councillors Barry Rawlings and Jack Cohen were moved. Debate ensued. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor Rawlings was declared lost. 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 Policy Item was declared carried.

RESOLVED - The Coalition Government's White Paper "Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS" proposes some of the most radical and far reaching changes to the way that Health Services are planned and delivered in the UK.

Based upon and protecting the core principles of the NHS of being free at the point of use and available to everyone based on need, not ability to pay, the White Paper proposes a real transfer of choice and control to Patients and Health Professionals, with General Practitioners taking the lead in commissioning patient care.

It is envisaged that the London Borough of Barnet will play a key role in supporting and liaising between the different groups and will also have the right to object to any proposed re-structuring of local Hospitals.

The White Paper also proposes far greater influence and powers for Local Authorities, such as the London Borough of Barnet, who will take a lead in Public Health. The responsibilities for local health improvement will also transfer from Primary Care Trusts to Local Authorities and there will be an additional White Paper later in the year devoted to Public Health.

All the proposals contained in the White Paper will, of course, be subject to extensive consultation before they are implemented.

As part of this, Council requests Cabinet to:-

- **Respond carefully to the Consultation, ensuring the new relationship represents the best possible outcome for Barnet residents**
- **Liaise closely with the Secretary of State for Health, in ensuring the proposals are implemented as effectively as possible.**
- **Continue the Future Shape programme as it already involves much closer cooperation between LBB and NHS Barnet.**

- **Build upon LBB's track record of supporting and working with local healthcare providers and GPs to improve local healthcare for local people.**

20. OPPOSITION POLICY ITEM AS AMENDED BY COUNCILLOR TOM DAVEY: CUTS TO PENSIONERS' BENEFITS(Agenda 4.2)

Councillor Barry Rawlings proposed the item and moved that it be adopted.

Amendments in the name of Councillors Tom Davey and Alan Schneiderman were moved. Debate ensued. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment in the name of Councillor Davey was declared carried. Upon being put to the vote the amendment in the name of Councillor Alan Schneiderman was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote, the Policy Item as amended was declared carried.

RESOLVED - Council is dismayed that the last Labour Government made little difference to the Basic State Pension and also helped wreck Private Pensions thanks to its fiscal attack on the funds.

However, Council welcomes the Coalition Government's restoring of the link to earnings in the State Pension which will give Pensioners better support.

Council deplores the reckless spending undertaken by the last Labour Government that has bankrupted the public purse, and that this has meant changes may have to be made to a range of benefits.

Council calls on Cabinet to help ensure that any change that may need to be made thanks to Labour's past profligacy are as smooth and as painless for local people as possible.

21. REPORT OF CABINET – BARNET'S CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY (Agenda Item 5.1.1)

Councillor Andrew Harper moved reception and adoption of the report.

RESOLVED – That the Corporate Parenting Strategy be formally noted in acknowledgment that the corporate parenting role is a responsibly shared by every member of the Council.

22. SCHEME OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES (Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager – Agenda Item 5.3.1)

Councillor Melvin Cohen moved adoption of the report. Amendments in the name of Councillors Alison Moore and Brian Schama were moved. Debate ensued. Upon being put to the vote the amendment in then name of Councillor Alison Moore was declared lost. Upon being put to the vote the amendment in the name of Councillor Brian Schama was declared lost.

RESOLVED: That the Council

(1) Approve the further revisions to the Members' Allowances Scheme as stated below;

- **The adjustment of the Cabinet Member's Special Responsibility Allowance from £34,780 to £17,455**
- **The adjustment of the Deputy Leader's Special Responsibility Allowance from £41,262 to £27,429**
- **The adjustment of the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Leader of the Council from £54,227 to £34,909**

- (2) Confirm the revision to the co-opted members' allowance, so that an allowance of £127 per meeting is paid to a co-opted member for his/her attendance at any relevant committee meeting.
- (3) Approve the revised Members Allowances Scheme attached (Appendix 1), incorporating these amendments with retrospective effect from 1 August 2010.
- (4) Instruct the Officers to implement the necessary changes and the Acting Democratic Services Manager to make the necessary amendments to the Council's Constitution.

23. **NATIONAL GRID RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL REGARDING THE EAST BARNET GAS SUPPLY DISRUPTION**(Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager – Agenda Item 5.3.2)
RESOLVED – That the Council note the response from National Grid.
24. **LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL** (Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager – Agenda Item 5.3.3).
RESOLVED - That the Council
 - (1) Confirm by resolution the promotion of the London Local Authorities Bill; and
 - (2) Agree the draft resolution as set out in Appendix 4 of the Report.
25. **CHANGES TO REPRESENTATION OF THE COUNCIL ON OUTSIDE BODIES** (Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager – Agenda Item 5.3.4).
RESOLVED – That Councillor David Longstaff replace Councillor Lisa Rutter as a Council Representative on Arts Depot Trust Limited
26. **REAPPOINTMENT OF CLAREMONT SCHOOL GOVERNOR** (Supplemental Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager – Agenda Item 5.3.6)
RESOLVED – That Mr John Scott be reappointed to the governing body of Claremont School.
27. **CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP** (Further Supplemental Report of the Acting Democratic Services Manager – Agenda Item 5.3.8)
RESOLVED – The following changes were approved
Planning and Environment Committee:
 - Councillor Graham Old be appointed to replace Councillor Daniel Seal as a substitute member of the Committee**Pension Fund Committee:**
 - Councillor Rowan Turner be appointed to replace Councillor Maureen Braun as a member of the Committee
27. **COMMENTS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE CABINET** (Agenda Item 6.1)
There were none

The meeting finished at 10:50pm

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members
14 September 2010
Questions and Responses**

Question 1**Councillor Brian Gordon**

What steps are being put in place to improve upon the already high standard anti-snow measures on Barnet's roads for the forthcoming winter?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Following a review of the winter maintenance service, a revised Winter Maintenance Plan has been developed for the 2010/11 winter season. We also await the report of the Council's Response to Cold Weather Task and Finish Group who are specifically looking at the Winter maintenance provision over recent years.

Supplementary Question 1**Councillor Brian Gordon**

What I would really like to know Councillor Coleman is could you confirm that we will see an improvement in managing what maybe again bad weather conditions this year, who knows? It was very good last year, but there certainly was some room for improvement and that is something we would all seek. Can I also ask whether or not there could be a little bit more attention paid to the side roads? I realise we don't officially do side roads but some of the bigger side roads really did get quite a hammering last year and when some councillors requested that special attention be given to them this was noted and done. Could you pay more attention to that and if we have the resources to do so I think that would be very appreciated by the public.

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Mr Mayor, I'm afraid the answer to Councillor Gordon is unfortunately not. I'm grateful for his congratulations for officers for last year's service. We have to manage residents expectations here particularly in the current climate. We have never gritted side roads, never, not in the 45 year existence of this Council and it is entirely unlikely that we are going to roll out any such service in the current economic climate. What we are doing, Mr Mayor, is putting an increasing number of grit bins in and encouraging the many residents of this Borough to take part in the Big Society and be responsible for their own patch of pavement or what have you outside their premises. But, are we going to start gritting side roads? The answer afraid, Mr Mayor, is certainly not, but of course hopefully we are going to have a much milder winter this year.

Question 2**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Would the Cabinet Member give me an assurance that the eligibility criteria for Adult Social Services will not be changed by the Administration to reduce the number of people who can receive the services they need?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

Until the details of the Comprehensive Spending Review are announced on 20 October 2010, it would not be prudent to rule anything in or out at this stage. However, I can give assurance that I remain committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable in our society continue to receive the support that they need.

Question 3**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Is the Council making any concrete moves in the direction of using more "plain English" in Council documentation?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The Council publishes a style guide for staff which emphasises the importance of using “plain English” in all public communications. I have noticed this has not been uploaded to the current version of the intranet and I have asked that this be done. I will also ask for it to be widely publicised across the Council.

Accreditation from the Plain English Society, of course, comes at a price.

Supplementary Question 3**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Mr Mayor, I have to say there are quite a lot of long winded documents that emerge from the Council. We, Councillors, are faced with more than enough of them and I would like to request that we pay attention to this particular problem. Not just to talk about the theory of plain English but to try and be more brief, more concise in some of the stuff we churn out. It will certainly save money, save a lot of time and be easier for people to understand what is going on. Can we please have some kind of assurance that we'll be looking into that Councillor Rams?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Maybe Councillor Gordon would lead by example with his supplementary and keep them a lot shorter. But, I do agree and will endeavour to ensure that these things happen.

Question 4**Councillor Anne Hutton**

What lobbying has been done by the Council, Cabinet Member or Leader to secure the BSF money for those schools who were awarded funds but then had those funds withdrawn by the Con-Dem Government, and has the Administration sought an explanation from the Secretary of State as to why Barnet's BSF schemes are no longer considered viable?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Barnet's BSF schemes were stopped along with all other projects that were at a similar or earlier point in the national programme and had not yet reached Financial Close. The decision to stop the BSF projects was a blanket decision and was in no way a reflection of the viability of Barnet's schemes. Barnet will be making a submission to the Government's review of Capital spending in schools, to make the case for sufficient future investment in both primary and secondary schools.

Supplementary Question 4**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Thank you Mr Mayor, what about the lobbying part of the question? I note that Barnet will be putting a submission to the Government's review of the capital spending in schools. But, has any actual lobbying been done to try and secure BSF funding?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Mr Mayor, as Councillor Hutton knows the BSF programme is at an end. In her original question she talks about funds now withdrawn by the Government – well in fact Barnet didn't have any funds actually on the table in the first place. We made our submissions as to what we thought we might like to do; we were still a long way off being ready with an outline business case so there was no actual money on the table. I have to say it is entirely right that BSF was stopped and it is interesting that the previous Labour Government was making such slow progress with it. Maybe they knew all along that there was simply wasn't going to be the money available for that which they were promising. It is now appropriate for us to focus right down on our real capital needs – we are doing a condition survey of our school estate right across the Borough and will be making submissions to the DfE on the basis of those findings.

Question 5**Councillor Brian Gordon**

It has been announced that Councils are to be given the power to combine the roles of Leader and Chief Executive. What is Barnet's position on this idea?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I have no plans to adopt this idea in Barnet. I have absolute confidence in our superb Chief Executive.

Supplementary Question 5**Councillor Brian Gordon**

I'm pleased with the answer. Do you not agree, Leader, that the Leader of the Council is an elected person, the Chief Executive is a civil servant and there should be a clear separation of powers, that Never the twain shall meet?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Yes, I think they are two complete separate roles and as much as I would like to be Chief Executive's job I know full well that he'll hate to do mine.

Question 6**Councillor Geof Cooke**

What is being done by the Cabinet Member to ensure that Henlys Corner safety measures are fully funded and implemented?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

TfL have stated that the scheme is being reviewed in light of the Government's forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review. We are applying appropriate Political pressure as Members will see from tonight's Council meeting agenda.

Question 7**Councillor Stephen Sowerby**

Please could the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families outline the performance of Barnet's schools in the most recent OFSTED inspections?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Barnet schools continue to perform exceptionally well in inspections. During the school year 2009/10, 22 Barnet schools were inspected. Of these, 82% were judged to be either 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. This compares with just 53% of schools nationally during the same period.

Supplementary Question 7**Councillor Stephen Sowerby**

Mr Mayor, I thank the Cabinet Member for his reply. Could he please tell us how this compares to the situation in previous years?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Mr Mayor, thank you very much. I am very glad that Councillor Sowerby has asked about the Ofsted results because we have a tremendous record here in Barnet. It is fair to say that in recent years the bar has been raised but our schools have more than adequately crossed it. I think it is correct to say that in this Borough we have one of the highest proportions of schools currently rated outstanding by Ofsted of any local authority in the entire country and that is making a tremendous contribution towards our corporate priority of ensuring that every school is a good school for every child in our Borough.

Question 8**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm whether Labour's grant towards the rebuild of Finchley Memorial Hospital will be honoured by the Con-Dem Government?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

I am pleased to report that the Chief Executive of NHS Barnet has formally confirmed that – following approval by the Department of Health – the Treasury has approved the Finchley Memorial Hospital redevelopment with building work expected to commence at the end of the month.

Question 9**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Cabinet Member tell the Council how many reports have been logged by people using the 'Fix My Street' link on the Council's website? How many of those reports were fixed within 4 weeks of the report being acknowledged?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

In total, 1,295 reports have been made through fixmystreet. The Council does not record on the fixmystreet site when issues have been resolved. Residents do that for themselves. The principle of fixmystreet is one of engaging residents of Barnet in identifying problems and letting both the Council and other residents know about those problems and when they have been resolved. It is a social communication service rather than a broadcast mechanism for the Council. Of the 1,295 reports, 372 have been marked as fixed. This does not mean that only 372 have been fixed, just that those are the reports on which residents have chosen to update the site. We are currently looking at options for integrating fixmystreet with the Council's customer relationship management (CRM) technology to enable us to track what reports of been made and the speed of response.

Supplementary Question 9**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Thank you Mr Mayor. I'm not sure that I understand the sentence that "It is a social communication service rather than a broadcast mechanism for the Council". Surely, it is an online facility for reporting street based problems. Is the Cabinet Member aware that four weeks after reporting a problem the facility asks if the problem has been fixed? If a negative reply is posted you get a further e-mail through the system which suggests that you contact a Councillor even if you are a Councillor who's logging the complaint. Similar messages follow every four weeks whether or not it is been completed and totally ignoring any other messages that are left on it. Will the Cabinet Member please instigate a review in the way this facility operates?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Mr Mayor, I'm perfectly happy in the way this facility is working. This facility means that 1,300 people have reported a fault that they might not had without this facility and the Member might be aware that if he e-mails an officer directly he might get the problem resolved rather than going through this site.

Question 10**Councillor Alex Brodtkin**

Is the Cabinet Member aware of the number of applications and/or expressions of interest to be a Free School that have so far been received from within the Borough of Barnet, and if so how many have there been?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Council is not directly involved in the Free Schools process and is not automatically informed by the Department for Education about any Free School applications in the Borough. We are currently aware of two groups that have submitted an application to the DfE, one of which – for a new Jewish school in Mill Hill – was in the first batch to be given approval by the Secretary of State.

Question 11**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Cabinet Member tell the Council how many times (and dates) on which the Licensing Committee have met in the last 2 years?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

During 2008/09 municipal year, the Licensing Committee met twice (21 May 2008 and 9 September 2008). During 2009/10 municipal year, the Licensing Committee met three times (1 July 2009, 1 September 2009 and 7 December 2009).

Supplementary Question 11**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Four of the meetings that were listed have minutes on the website and from those it shows that these meetings have lasted a total of one hour and 14 minutes. Does the Cabinet Member think that this warrants a special responsibility allowance of over £15,000 per year?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

Mr Mayor, I am conducting a review of committees in this Council and indeed how business in proper Council committees work and no doubt I will be coming back to Council with some changes in due course.

Question 12**Councillor Anne Hutton**

The purpose of the ContactPoint database was so that professionals across public services could share relevant information on children at risk and this was a recommendation from Lord Laming as a result of the Victoria Climbié enquiry. Could the Cabinet Member explain, in the absence of an updated database what measures Barnet has in place to share relevant information with child protection professionals in health and other agencies in order to safeguard vulnerable children?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Professionals working with children and young people in Barnet receive a wide range of training and support to enable effective information sharing to safeguard children. All organisations that make up the children's workforce in Barnet have adopted the Government's information sharing guidance, and training is provided on this to practitioners. Information sharing is also a key element of the safeguarding training that is provided to professionals across Barnet, including the voluntary sector. Training and guidance is also provided to the children's workforce in relation to identifying children who may be at risk, for example children who are being privately fostered. There are also systems in place to share information about children who may be vulnerable, for example the NOTIFY system which alerts the children's service when a family in temporary accommodation moves into Barnet from another London Borough.

Supplementary Question 12**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you for your answer Councillor Harper, there is a long list of things here. Do you not think it would be simpler and perhaps safer just to have kept the ContactPoint?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Mr Mayor, thank you, I think the truth of the matter is that we do believe that we can manage sufficiently without it. All the information from various sources remains available on pre-existing databases and indeed is still accessible to our frontline workers, the true professionals from the relevant areas. One of the things we are leading on very strongly in Barnet is cooperation and collaboration between agencies, between those who are involved in the safeguarding of our children, very much in the spirit of One Barnet and one public sector.

So I noted that in his statement, the parliamentary under secretary of state, Tim Loughton, when he announced this change on ContactPoint, acknowledged the potential value of a system that helped practitioners working with vulnerable children and for that reason the Government is indeed exploring the practicality of what it says is going to be a new signposting service not for all children but quite properly for those who are identified as vulnerable and in need of protection from harm. I think that is the right way to go and I look forward to seeing those proposals and this Borough will be certainly working closely with them.

Question 13**Councillor Reuben Thompson**

Will the Cabinet Member join me in congratulating Barnet's schools, students and teachers on the excellent GCSE results this year?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Yes, all of our Barnet schools should be congratulated on the excellent GCSE results achieved this summer; overall results have increased from 61.4% last year to a provisional figure of 68.6% achieving 5A*-C including English and Maths.

Supplementary Question 13**Councillor Reuben Thompson**

Thank you Mr Mayor. I thank the Cabinet Member for his response, will Councillor Harper also congratulate Whitefield School in my Ward which saw an 18% increase in students gaining 5 or more higher grade GCSEs including English and Maths?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Mr Mayor, I'm very happy indeed to publicly congratulate Whitefield School and acknowledge the successes that have been theirs in recent years. Whitefield is a school that had been in the past struggling and is under new management. I believe that the results that we have seen recently are demonstrating that that school has improved almost beyond recognition. I hope that Councillor Thompson and colleagues sitting in this Chamber will assist in getting that message out to the public and getting across the perception that Whitefield now is a very well performing school and well worthy of children going there and I hope parents will recognise that.

Question 14**Councillor Alison Moore**

Have the Council done equality impact assessments for each proposal that is at full business case stage under the Future Shape programme?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out as an essential part of the production of One Barnet full business cases.

Supplementary Question 14**Councillor Alison Moore**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Councillor Thomas, given the apparent lack of effort on the part of the Con-Dem Government to actually do that sort of analysis prior to the budget cuts and the poor way it was approached to the Welfare Rights Unit a year and a half ago, can you assure me that you will take considerable care in those equality impact assessments to make sure that they really do inform the process properly?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Mr Mayor, yes I can reassure Councillor Moore of that, that business cases under going development will all have equality impact assessments for not just only staff, but for stakeholders and citizens also. Those equality impact assessments will form part of the documents available for scrutiny.

Question 15**Councillor Daniel Seal**

Will the Cabinet Member please highlight the excellent results achieved by the Borough's A-Level students this year?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Gladly, both here and in the motion I'm submitting to Council. Sixth formers in Barnet schools have performed excellently again, with the average A-level point score per pupil at 332 (provisional), compared with 322 in 2009.

Supplementary Question 15**Councillor Daniel Seal**

Mr Mayor, will Councillor Harper join me in praising Henrietta Barnett School in my Ward, which I am a Governor of, after succeeding himself, which saw a 10% rise in all the excellent A-level results and is probably one of the best schools in the country.

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Mr Mayor, I gladly join with that, we are very much on home territory here, as Councillor Seal indicated, he succeeded me after a very happy and fulfilling 6 years that I spent on the Governing Body of Henrietta Barnett School. It is indeed a fantastic success story, the A-level results this year are the best that there have ever been for that school and indeed for both A-level and GCSE results, Henrietta Barnett School tops the national league so that is tremendous. I congratulate them, the pupils, the Head Teacher and the staff.

Question 16**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm whether he will support the Labour Group in lobbying the Con-Dem Government against any cuts to pensioner benefits like the winter fuel allowance?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

The Conservative manifesto which is now being taken forward in a Conservative-led coalition Government was already clear on this point. The manifesto set out a pledge to pensioners to help tackle the rising costs of living through protecting key allowances.

Supplementary Question 16**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Thank you Mr Mayor, can I just ask the Cabinet Member, given his answer which is about supporting the Conservative manifesto, will he therefore join me in condemning the proposed cuts to housing benefit, council tax benefit and the increase in VAT? – none of which were in that manifesto.

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

No, Mr Mayor.

Question 17**Councillor Rowan Turner**

Does the Cabinet Member agree that this year's GCSE results for the Ravenscroft School represent a very positive step forward and will he join with me in offering congratulations to pupils and staff?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Yes, the results at The Ravenscroft do represent a step forward, with a 6% improvement for 5A*-C including English and Maths over last year's results.

Supplementary Question 17**Councillor Rowan Turner**

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you to the Cabinet Member for his answer. I wonder if he could perhaps tell us what he thinks were the key factors that brought about this improvement?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Thank you Mr Mayor, something of a theme developing here isn't there?! There has been an excellent Governing Body overseeing the progress of that school, ably led by Mr Andrew Harvey, as Chairman of Governors, and of course the leadership within the executive of the school itself under the Head Teacher, Paul Ferrie, who's been there I think for just a year or so now, previously at East Barnet, and they have made a tremendous difference in what has happened at that school. Of course, one must also congratulate the pupils who have worked very hard, and I am sure the parents who have supported them. Again, I hope that this will reinforce the impression of Ravenscroft as a school that really is travelling in the right direction.

Question 18**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Will the increase in VAT from January 2011 be imposed on all applicable Council fees and charges?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The increase in the standard rate of VAT will apply to all standard rated items.

Whether the Council increases its fees/charges in line with the VAT increase is a matter for each service. The increase does not affect most fees/charges as we advertise them as a net figure plus VAT.

Supplementary Question 18**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

I thank Councillor Thomas for his answer, can I ask him whether the Council intends to impose the increase in VAT on parking fees, in what then will be another blow to residents and traders?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Mr Mayor, parking thankfully is no longer part of my portfolio, what I will say is that whatever the effect VAT I will be ensuring that all Cabinet Members and all services do their best to come in on budget at the end of the year.

Question 19**Councillor Maureen Braun**

Would the Cabinet Member please join me in congratulating JCoSS on starting its first term in operation?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Yes, we welcome JCoSS to the family of Barnet schools and we have every confidence that they will become very successful in years to come.

Supplementary Question 19**Councillor Maureen Braun**

Thank you Mr Mayor. I thank Councillor Harper for his answer, but given that this is the season for celebrating exam results, does he look forward to JCoSS imparting its own results this time next year?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Indeed Mr Mayor, I have no doubt whatsoever that JCoSS students will perform extremely well if not better than the rest. I'm sure they will be top of the league and I am looking forward very much indeed to visiting the school myself later during the term to find out exactly how they intend to make progress. But, certainly again I endorse a very warm welcome to JCoSS joining the Barnet family of schools.

Question 20**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

In April this year only 58% of Pay & Display machines were working in the Borough, although this was later brought up to 72% by August. How many Pay & Display machines in Barnet are currently not working, what revenue has been lost to the Council over the last four years as a result of machines not working, why will it take until the end of the year to achieve 95% of machines as operational and how much revenue will be lost between now and the end of the year as a result of this?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

It is not possible to calculate accurately the income foregone when a machine is out of service as a motorist may move to another space, pay at another machine nearby, or more recently pay by telephone instead. We do know that overall income from such parking increased from £3.6 million to £3.7 million between 2006/7 and 2007/8 but fell to £3.4 million in 2008/9 then to £3.2 million in 2009/10 although this drop was more caused by the economic downturn.

Question 21**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What costs have been incurred by the Council as a result of the recent main server failure, what loss of data has there been, and what money has been lost by the Council as a result of lack of access to data?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The failure affected the Council's network storage where staff store their own and shared documentation.

Data loss – Backups were available in all cases although in some cases the most recent backups were up to 48 hours old and some recent changes were lost. A related knock-on impact was corruption of email storage which affected ability of staff to access their email and open attachments. Whilst no email data was lost, the process to restore integrity of email storage resulted in further downtime which was scheduled for weekends to minimise the impact.

Financial impact – Business Continuity (BC) plans were implemented to prioritise and coordinate the restoration of lost data, led by Head of IS and the BC leads for each service. There was no direct consequential loss of revenue as the storage failure did not affect financial or revenue collection systems. However, staff productivity across the Council will have been significantly impacted in some areas until data was restored, and also by the indirect effect of delays to handling of other requests to IS, such as creation of new accounts, resulting from a number of IS staff being dedicated to restoring the failed services.

Cost incurred – Information Systems incurred direct costs as follows:

- Overtime (both 2e2 and Council staff) £77.4k;
- Consultancy £2k; and
- Extension of existing storage capacity £10k (estimated).

Question 22**Councillor Alex Brodtkin**

Have the Barnet schools which have recently become eligible to apply for academy status received details about the Council services they would no longer automatically receive and the changes in how their funding from the local authority would operate if they became an academy?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

We have been in discussion with the New Academies Unit at the DfE and the schools interested in applying for Academy status in order to identify the services which LAs will no longer be funded to provide to those schools. It is difficult to draw up a definitive list of services as the centrally retained funding supports a range of local authority functions; however, these services will include school improvement support, learning networks, asset management, behaviour support, staff costs and licenses.

The DfE has provided detailed information on its website and to interested schools covering funding for Academies; this includes a 'ready reckoner' for schools to calculate the likely additional funding they would receive as an Academy.

Supplementary Question 22**Councillor Alex Brodtkin**

Thank you Mr Mayor, Councillor Harper's response begs the obvious question that if more schools rush to become academies then the local authority will provide the services he mentions in his answer to fewer schools, thereby leading to those services becoming more watered down, more ineffective and, even more worrying, might force schools who otherwise would not have wanted to become an academy to seek academy status for the wrong reasons.

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Mr Mayor, I can't help but notice the applause from the public gallery there, but I have to say that I find it hugely disappointing to hear Labour's spokesman parroting the views of the teaching unions, not least, and others who seem to be determined that this policy should fail – it will not. As I have stated in my speech on the Administration Policy Item in this Chamber back in July, this Administration very warmly welcomes the reforms being introduced in education by the coalition Government, intends to work with them and will indeed work very closely with those schools in this Borough that wish to seek academy status.

Question 23**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

The latest outturn for customer services is that only 57% of phone calls are answered by the Council within 5 rings, with only 19% in the parking department and 41% in adults social services answered within 5 rings. Why can the Council still not answer the phone?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Current telephone performance is not as we would like it to be. This is the rationale for our One Barnet work towards developing a new customer service organisation. However, the first quarter figures should not be taken in isolation and should be seen in the context of improvement. Between the last quarter of 2009/10 and the end of first quarter of this year, we improved our telephone performance overall and improved significantly in a number contact centres. Most notably, our planning and street-based services both improved by a third and the registrars service showed a 100 per cent improvement. This positive story has continued in the second quarter of the year. I do not expect an overnight transformation of performance but am confident that we are making good progress. Moreover, the programme of work that is underway to bring all customer services together in one team within the Council and the development of a new customer service organisation will ensure best practices and technology are used to best effect in the future. The improvement I have noted is testament to the progress we are making on this already.

Supplementary Question 23**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Thank you Mr Mayor, can I ask the Cabinet Member, he says in his answer that he doesn't expect an over-night transformation, but does he not agree that the way the Council deals with telephone calls has been absolutely appalling for far too long, why is this?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Mr Mayor, the fact is that demand for customer services is growing year-on-year, as the population of our Borough, our successful Borough, continues to grow. We could just employ more and more people to answer telephones or we could ensure that we provide the right customer services at the right time for our customers. This is why we are investing in web technology and working with our customers to help them make more use of online transactions. We are enabling customers to contact us at the time that they choose from wherever they happen to be as the best way forward. The fact is, though, things are improving in our phone services, customers who telephone the registrars, street based services or our planning teams recently will be able to testify that things are improving and I hope this continues. And, had Councillor Schneiderman turned up to the briefing he was invited to yesterday he would have known this.

Question 24**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

If Cabinet Members' allowances are tied to the amount of work they do, will they be reduced if services move from the Council to other forms of delivery vehicles?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Cabinet Members will retain overall responsibility for policy and decision making, so no.

Supplementary Question 24**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

I would like to ask the Leader to confirm the logic of her answer – which is if the whole Council was outsourced under Future Shape and Councillors were meeting once a month to confirm contracts, you still think a Cabinet costing over £200,000 of council tax payers money was worth it.

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

That is very hypothetical question of course because it is all ifs and buts. At the moment, and I can't see any changes we are responsible for policy and decision-making, and of course you are entitled to your own opinion. There are several Councillors that are of the opinion that Shadow Cabinet Members shouldn't be paid, but of course this Borough does so at this moment of time, although I do believe it wasn't done so under the Labour-Liberal Democrat Administration.

Question 25**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What costs have been incurred by the Council as a result of the data loss incident earlier this year?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Information Systems incurred the following direct costs:

- Additional Checkpoint encryption licenses (600) to cover all Council-owned laptops and tablets £25k; and
- Temporary staff to deal with data security related calls and backlog of other IS calls £11.3k.

Question 26**Councillor Alison Moore**

Why has the Leader apparently misinformed a local resident by suggesting to them that her July proposed members' allowance scheme results in her getting £5,000 less than under the previous members' allowance scheme?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

This is untrue. My statement referred to new adjustments before this Council tonight where my allowance is due to be reduced by £5,361 versus the old (pre-July) scheme.

Supplementary Question 26**Councillor Alison Moore**

Councillor Hillan, I have got the text in my hand and in your reply to the individual, you denied that you have voted yourself an increase of nearly £20,000, in other words you seemed to have sought to mislead the individual in the answer, why was that?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

I most certainly didn't, my increase was never going to be £20,000 that was political posturing by the opposition parties, and I am terribly sorry Councillor Moore that I really don't feel that you are entitled to my private correspondence and I certainly don't bring your private correspondence into the Council Chamber – maybe you set a precedent.

Question 27**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What plans are in place to stabilise the Council's finances?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Although we face challenging financial times, the Council's finances are stable and plans to react to the cuts to our funding are as follows:

- Currently Directors are working on medium term financial planning with a view of 25% base budget reduction over 3 years starting from 2011-12.
- Revenue income optimisation is being rolled out in services which will increase income for the Council.

- One Barnet Programme board has been set up to look at how services will be delivered in the future effectively and efficiently i.e. More for less (Future Shape programme).
- Reserves have been set up to manage risks and to facilitate the implementation of the “Future Shape” Programme.
- Council’s Severance terms are being reviewed.
- A system of ‘intelligent recruitment’ has been introduced whereby there will only be new recruitment if there is a good business case for it.
- Directors are being asked to closely scrutinise payments with the aim of stopping premium rate overtime where possible and controlling the level of ad hoc payments.

Supplementary Question 27

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Thank you Mr Mayor. The Cabinet Member in his answer refers to the “More for less (Future Shape programme)” – given the way it is going so far isn’t it more likely to be the less for more programme?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Mr Mayor, the Future Shape Programme already is bringing in £1.5 million this year, and through the budget-setting process more savings will come to light. I can assure this Council that those savings will be substantial and much needed.

Question 28

Councillor Geof Cooke

Please would the Cabinet Member provide me with details of the road safety schemes that have been removed by the Council since 2002?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

None.

Supplementary Question 28

Councillor Geof Cooke

Mr Mayor, we surely have a Cabinet Member who believes that none of the schemes that have been removed from Barnet roads since 2002 had a road safety benefit and yet officers have provided a list of nearly 100 since 2002. This would not be so bad except we have had in 2009 a statistically significant increase in personal injury road accidents in this Borough which is obviously very serious and tragic to the people involved. Now, I find it very worrying that apparently the Cabinet Member doesn’t see any connection between these facts; may I ask what investigation is taking place to see whether there is a causal link of any sort between the two?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Mr Mayor, Councillor Cooke will be well aware that when this Administration began removing these ridiculous humps, bumps, chicanes, rumble strips, mini-roundabouts and other nonsense that had been littered around the Borough by him and his Administration, deaths and injuries declined there and continued to decline. The Council should also note the vast majority of deaths and serious injuries in this Borough are sadly on TfL controlled network and not the Barnet road network.

Question 29

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Given that the Council’s IT contract is an outsourced contract, who has access to the Council’s data, and how is the risk of data loss being mitigated by those third parties?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The Council has 2 managed service contracts which involve third parties having access to Council data.

2e2 provide an infrastructure managed service in support of Council-owned infrastructure. 2e2 staff are based on site at NLBP and staff are subject to CRB checks and the same data security policy and access controls as all Council staff.

Logica provide a managed service for SAP, hosting Council-owned servers in Bridgend. Logica staff data access and security are subject to LBB internal audit to ensure that access is appropriate to the contracted support roles and that audit controls are in place, including recording of who has access to the Council's SAP system at any time. Transfer of data to and from Council sites is via leased lines and internal audit have accepted that this is secure subject to regular review.

Question 30

Councillor Alison Moore

What has happened to the Leader Listens programme?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Community Engagement is of great importance to this Administration. Leader Listens worked very well and we are considering how it can be improved in the future.

Supplementary Question 30

Councillor Alison Moore

The last Leader Listens post on the website was dated 15 February. Isn't this evidence that the Leader Listens programme was just a vehicle to promote two parliamentary candidates?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Certainly not, most certainly not, and I have indeed done a number of Leader Listens and as I say we are reviewing the programme at the moment and I hope to be putting some plans in place very shortly.

Question 31

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

Would the Cabinet Member please advise why there is still no signage on the youth centre next to Barnet College – despite repeated requests? And would he advise when this signage is going to be put in place?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

A number of clear, large, signs for the Grahame Park Young People's Activity Centre are already in place, including on Grahame Park Way, and several around the entrance to the Centre itself. Some additional signage is being installed to ensure that the centre is clearly signed when approaching from every direction.

Supplementary Question 31

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

Thank you Mr Mayor, Councillor Harper when I asked for the signage for Grahame Park I didn't mean signage from Garden Suburb to Grahame Park I meant signage in Grahame Park. There is not enough signage and people don't reach the Activity Centre and they complain to me that it very hard to reach there. I invite you to my area and ask you to find the Centre without asking anyone.

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Mr Mayor, I'm not quite sure what that extraordinary comment about signage that allows one to get from Garden Suburb to Grahame Park was all about anyway. I have been assured that there are plenty of photographs in existence of the signage to which Councillor Zubairi is referring so I invite her to, if she wishes to, come into North London Business Park and view those photographs and chat with the officers – I'm assured what is required is in place.

Question 32

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

Would the Cabinet Member clarify the Council's policy on succession rights for Barnet Homes tenants?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Succession rights following the death of a secure tenant are governed by the Housing Act 1985. The tenancy can pass to a surviving spouse or partner or a close relative who has lived with the deceased for the previous 12 months. Succession may be to a smaller property in order to release the larger home to a family.

Supplementary Question 32**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

After Mr Meacham's case, can you confirm that you'll be revising policy to ensure that elderly people are not forced to leave their family home?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Mr Mayor, of course this case has been handled very sensitively by Barnet Homes. But, there is an underlying problem of under-occupation of property and this goes back to an article here in the newspaper in 1974, it's something that has been a problem for this Council and for the allocation of social housing in Britain for many, many years. In many ways, it's the elephant in the room that needs to be discussed and looked at, and Councillor Houston's motion, that we would not be discussing tonight, will have enabled that to happen. It is a very difficult situation, we have a great shortage of large social housing properties and we need to make sure they are fully occupied. But, again we have to handle the matter sensitively as has been handled with Mr Meacham. But, it is extraordinary that the party opposite us in the Chamber which is so opposed to the principle of inheritance, is keen on inheritance in social housing.

Question 33**Councillor Alison Moore**

Did the Leader agree with and vote for the Conservative Group proposal to change Members' allowances by removing the cap preventing individual Councillors claiming Special Responsibility Allowances totalling more than twice the basic allowance?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Yes. It was a Group decision and I voted with my Group. The new scheme however removes all the problems relating to Multiple Allowances, ensuring that Members get a single allowance according to their responsibility.

Question 34**Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb**

What is the Cabinet Member doing to support local residents and community groups who are interested in maintaining an allotment to access funding from organisations like Capital Growth?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

A report will come to Cabinet shortly on the future of the allotment provision in Barnet.

Supplementary Question 34**Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb**

Thank you Mr Mayor. I am not altogether happy given the shortness of the answer to my question at the last Council meeting to the equally short reply to this question. But, it doesn't actually address or seem to give any understanding from the Cabinet Member to what Capital Growth to Borough Councils is all about. So, just to remind everyone, the Capital Growth is aiming to support 2,012 new community feed growing spaces in London by the end of 2012. And, if the Cabinet Member actually delved a little deeper he would have actually found out that quite a few of our schools are independently involved in this project. But, more to the point, is that other Boroughs are getting on board, including support from Mayor Boris, and from the likes of Rosie Boycott supporting this initiative. Islington is involved, Camden has launched a tree strategy, Lewisham has launched its community growing guide, Haringey is developing a sustainable tree strategy and I can go on. Now, just in case the Cabinet Member has not checked, the next round for claiming and actually submitting begins in September, and I would like to find out whether the Cabinet Member is prepared for Barnet to join the Councils that already on board to make sure that by 2012 there will be an additional 2,012 new community feed growing spaces over the whole of London.

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Mr Mayor, I'm delighted that in this Borough we have a significant number of allotment sites, many of which are owned and run by the Council, some of which are not. I, myself, Mr Mayor am a trustee of Finchley Charities, and we run our own allotments down in Finchley. I had a very nice perambulation the other August afternoon along the allotment and saw the variety of produce being grown by residents in this Borough. Mr Mayor, I shall not be asking my Cabinet colleagues to do any work on the feed strategy for this Borough. I think there are more important things to worry about or I should like one. But, instead, Mr Mayor, I look forward to exciting and innovative and Big Society proposals on allotments in due course.

Question 35**Councillor Jim Tierney**

What is being done to support and develop the local voluntary sector in order to achieve David Cameron's Big Society?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Civil society is already flourishing in Barnet with over a quarter of local residents volunteering once a month, compared to just a fifth of the wider London population. To support these endeavours, the Council has been providing over £200,000 annually in revenue and project funding to CommUNITY Barnet. This includes £36,000 annually towards the running costs of the Volunteer Centre. CommUNITY Barnet in turn build capacity by supporting local organisations on matters of organisational development, governance and access to funding; they run extensive networks which ensure that the local sector can work collaboratively and is linked into public sector planning; and they ensure that the sector has a strong voice. We will be consulting local organisations as to how best to provide this support in future.

The Council spends over £4m annually in purchasing and supporting services provided by voluntary sector organisations. In the past two years, the Council has greatly increased direct access to commissioners for voluntary organisations in order to increase dialogue with the sector. We have provided free training so that local organisations can compete in tender processes; and financial regulations have been changed so that smaller voluntary organisations need not be excluded from tenders by virtue of their turnover being too small. We also recently held a briefing on the Council's transformation programme specifically for the voluntary sector and will continue to engage with them about future partnership opportunities.

This year, the small grants programme has returned to exclusively funding new activities and one-off expenses to encourage organisations to come forward with new ventures that directly address local needs. The Council will be bringing Friary House back into use in the near future with offices for some smaller voluntary organisations. We continue to provide a significant amount of premises at below-market rents.

Later this week, I will be meeting local organisations myself to hear how we can best manage the changes that are necessary over the next few years of financial constraint.

Supplementary Question 35**Councillor Jim Tierney**

I thank Councillor Rams for his very full answer. Since July's Cabinet Resources Committee, the Third Sector Commissioning Framework has been in force replacing essentially the voluntary sector compact that was there at the time. Within that framework now, voluntary organisations involved with adult social care, bringing up children and young people and local advice and information services, they will now have to go through the commissioning process to get a grant from Barnet Council. That's fine it's all very streamlined in the like and the answer to the point. Nevertheless, the reality is that two short years ago, Barnet Council through the Grants Unit, that you all remember, was funding 120 different organisations, it is now down to 60. Could I just suggest to Councillor Rams that maybe the commissioning framework smooth, so this maybe is discouraging smaller groups from applying?

Because the commissioning is proactive opposed to reactive and you can't fill in a grant application anymore so that commissioning process, which I think will discourage some very small groups, certainly some I have spoken to.

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Thank you for your supplementary. What that has to do with Big Society? I'm not sure. But, the fact of the matter is that have not got as much money as we would actually like to give to those organisations. We have to find the best organisations to give the money to, to ensure the best service for our residents. It is a fact of life and it is going to be the future for the next coming years. I think the system we have in place is the best system for this, but if has specific examples that he wants to raise with me, I'll happily meet with him to discuss those specific examples.

Question 36

Councillor Colin Rogers

Why have the "slow" signs not been repainted on Church Lane, N2 and on Baronsmere Road, N2, at the corner of Summerlee Ave, after recent re-surfacing, and when will this be done?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

In answer to Councillor Rogers question about Church Lane:

"The slow marking in advance of the railway bridge in Church Lane was purposefully not re-provided during the resurfacing which accompanied the works on the bridge itself. The scheme saw the provision of a traffic island on the bridge to protect cyclists proceeding contra-flow over that section and to act as a traffic calming measure for approaching vehicles. The 20mph road marking was therefore deemed redundant and not re-provided in line with the policy to reduce unnecessary clutter and road markings in force at the time."

Following inspection the 'slow' markings in Baronsmere Road it has been identified that the markings have faded and as such an instruction has been issued to our maintenance contractor to reinstate the markings. This should have been completed prior to this meeting.

Supplementary Question 36

Councillor Colin Rogers

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you Councillor Coleman for attending to the give way markings in Baronsmere Road. With regards to Church Lane, one of us might be working under misapprehension and I would like to e-mail you in the day or two as soon as I've caught up with the minutes of the Finchley and Golders Green Area Environment Sub-Committee. Perhaps we could pinpoint the precise markings to which I refer. Will he accede to my request?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Mr Mayor, I'm always happy to help Councillor Colin Rogers with his Ward work in East Finchley and will be happy to look at Church Lane and any other roads he suggests and what may or may not need doing in these constraint financial times. But, I have to say it seems to me that Church Lane is always suffering congestion rather than traffic speeding.

Question 37

Councillor Anita Campbell

What is happening to the regeneration of Dollis Valley?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The Council is examining proposals to find a workable solution for regeneration that meets resident aspiration, provides family homes and is viable in the current financial climate.

Supplementary Question 37

Councillor Anita Campbell

We had the same answers many years ago. A lot of work was put into the meetings that took place but nothing was achieved by them. And still the residents are asking, what is going to happen to their homes? Is there any funding projection at the moment?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

There is no specific funding at the moment but this is a very difficult site. When the old Barnet Urban District Council built the flats and houses there, it couldn't really have built them in a more difficult place with the waterlogged soil and the nature of the underlying pollution on the ground there that needs to be very carefully monitored. The failure to replicate the street pattern on the other side of Mays Lane is a further problem that needs to be addressed. But, officers are working on plans which hopefully will be fundable and financially achievable. It's no good coming up with a scheme that just won't fly and I am very anxious not to raise resident expectation in anticipation of something that will ultimately prove futile. But, we are working on it, notices have gone out in the European Press and there are 5 or 6 schemes that are coming forward for discussion.

Question 38**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What will the financial impact be to the Council of the recent proposal by the Con-Dem Government to make personal searches of the local land charges register free?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council received a letter from DEFRA (dated 27 July 2010) on behalf of the Ministry of Justice and CLG advising all Councils to immediately cease charging for Personal Searches in Local Authority Land Charge services due to Freedom of Information Act requirements. The amendment to the Local Land Charge Rules revoking the £22 fee came into force on 17 August 2010. The financial impact is £150,000 on a full year basis and £95,000 in 2010/11. This loss has already been built in the PHR Directorate budget template as a pressure.

Unfortunately, the Regulations have been judged as 'wrongly charged' since January 2005 and likely to result in retrospective refunds for the charge. The fee was recently increased from £11 to £22 from 2009/10 so previous income per annum was lower at approximately £75,000 pa. If correct, that would also result in a potential refund of £450,000 over the previous 5 years. It is too early to be absolutely sure of the figure or the number of people who may seek to claim a simple £11 refund from the Council. This is a worst case scenario.

Question 39**Councillor Anne Hutton**

What costs have been incurred either by the Council or by third parties to progress Barnet's BSF bids?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

It is anticipated that the costs of Barnet's BSF programme are circa £758,000. The income and expenditure analysis can not be finally completed until all costs have been finally confirmed.

Supplementary Question 39**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor Harper for your reply. Do you know if the Government has any plans to reimburse Councils, such as ourselves, who invested a considerable amount of money in the first stages to secure BSF funding?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Well, the way it was set up under the previous Government was that Councils that wanted to submit bids for BSF funding had to make an allowance through revenue expenditure within their budget. That is what Barnet Council did and therefore those costs have been allowed for. But, I am not aware that we are going to get any further funding back from the Government.

Question 40**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Does Greenwich Leisure intend to raise applicable fees and charges from January 2011 to take account of the increase in the rate of VAT?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) is a Non-Profit Distribution Organisation which means that 95% of their fees are exempt. The impact of the VAT increases will therefore be minimal and GLL will only be applying inflationary increases in April.

Question 41**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

What is the current status of the playbuilders project in Brent Park and how did the situation arise?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The play area in Brookside Walk known as Brent Park Play Area was completed on 23 July 2010, and does not form part of playbuilders programme, it was a project that was funded by Barnet funds.

Authority was granted to build the playground in Brent Park, however, following consultation with local residents it was determined that the site at Brookside walk was more suitable. The Council was subsequently challenged and it became apparent that the authority to transfer the playground to the new site was not sufficient. The Council have conceded to this point and have agreed to rectify its position and apply for the requisite authority and retrospective planning permission.

The application for retrospective planning permission is currently going through the public consultation process.

Question 42**Councillor Alison Moore**

Did the Leader agree with and vote for each of the Members' allowances schemes since 2002?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Yes. Under various Leaders the Conservative Group took decisions and I voted accordingly.

Supplementary Question 42**Councillor Alison Moore**

If Councillor Hillan agreed with previous Members' allowances schemes, why does she feel the need to change the scheme by awarding herself and other Members of the Group huge increases?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Councillor Moore, as you say there have been various schemes since 2002. I believe the first scheme was introduced by Councillor Alan Williams and I believe that quite rightly that your Group voted for it. That was probably the biggest increase because as Councillor McGuirk said before we all went from nothing to a considerable amount, in fact, probably just about what we are all on now, because I don't think we have seen any increases. I remember the time when every single Member of the Labour Party and Liberal Democrat Party that was in the Cabinet took that increase and voted for it. Actually, if we went back to the scheme that we were on before that would mean that the Labour Party proportionally are getting far more special responsibility allowances than the Conservative Group and I'm sure you would love to do that.

Question 43**Councillor Ross Houston**

How many residents are currently in sheltered housing in Barnet as a result of trading down from a larger home?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

8 and a further 5 to alarm assisted properties in the last year.

Question 44**Councillor Andrew McNeil**

What is the latest update on the future of the site of the former Herbert Wilmott Youth Centre?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The former Herbert Willmott Centre site has been let on a temporary licence to Apollo, who are contractors for Barnet Homes. The licence may be terminated by the Council giving 6 months notice. The site is linked to the adjoining Stanley Road playing fields which has recently reverted to the Council. An options appraisal on the future options has been prepared and will be considered by the Commercial Director this week.

Question 45**Councillor Alison Moore**

Will the Cabinet Member advise what measures are being put in place by Barnet Homes to mitigate any adverse impact on repairs for Barnet tenants and leaseholders that may occur as a result of Connaught's recent difficulties?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Barnet Homes have responded to Connaught's apparently deteriorating situation by giving them notice. Rather than prolong uncertainty they are seeking to procure a new contract and managing the current situation to avoid inconvenience to residents.

Question 46**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

42 Fryent Grove has had 4 non-permitted flats (planning permission refused) since 2007, but despite the Council knowing about it nothing has been done by enforcement to date. Would the Cabinet Member explain why it has taken so long in this case, and what he is doing to ensure that non-permitted developments have enforcement action taken against them in a timely fashion?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Action has been taken in as timely a way as possible given the planning system that we have.

Question 47**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

What is the latest update on the Catalyst arbitration?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council received the final partial arbitral award on 26 July 2010. The value of the award to Catalyst is not yet finalised, but a range of £5m to £6m is anticipated, against a claim of between £12-17m. A detailed report will be considered by Cabinet Resources Committee on 19 October on the implications of the outcome of the arbitration process. The Council is seeking to enter into a renegotiation of this contract which was created by the previous Labour/Liberal Democrat administration. The renegotiation will be led by the Deputy Chief Executive and Acting Director of Adult Social Services, to manage on-going financial and service delivery risks.