

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members
25 January 2011
Questions and Responses**

Question 1**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Can the Cabinet Member for Housing tell the Council how much the Borough is expecting to receive this year by way of its share of the surplus made by the London Housing Consortium?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Barnet Homes have not used the LHC for many years and the Council is not expecting to receive any cash this year. The surplus is only distributed to those councils who do give them business.

Question 2**Councillor Jack Cohen**

In relation to Residents Parking Permits and visitors vouchers:

How many Residents parking permits (broken down by first second and third vehicles were issued in 2009/10 and during the current financial year to date (31 December 2010). How much income does this amount to for each of the two periods?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The information is not readily available in the format requested as the records for second and third permits are combined. Taking this into account the figures are as shown in the table below:

	2009/10	2010/11 (part)
First Permits	11,249	8,915
Second / Third Permits	2,455	1,971
Total permits	13,704	10,986
Total Income	£507,964	£469,674

Question 3**Councillor Alison Moore**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm what the annual cost of the lease for the artsdepot building is, and how much of it the Council is responsible for in the event that the artsdepot as an organisation closes?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The Council holds the lease of the artsdepot space at a peppercorn rent and recharges it to the Arts Depot Trust for the same. Therefore the Council suffer the loss of only the additional peppercorn rent if the Arts Depot Trust were to cease trading or vacate the building. The Council would then either receive an additional rental income from any new occupant or make a saving itself by relocating services from another site.

With regard to service charges paid by the Trust, these vary over time and the Council would remain liable in the same way as at present. Equally, they would be recharged to any new occupant in the same way as they are now to the Trust.

The Council might also receive directly the income from the Trust's current sub-tenants, depending on how the sub-occupancies were arranged.

The Council is of course working closely with the Trust to ensure its financial viability is maintained.

Question 4**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Will you join me in congratulating Council staff for the successful road gritting arrangements that went according to plan during the icy weather in December? Will you comment on the success of the "grit bin warden scheme"?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Yes I am delighted that the supreme efforts of Council staff at all levels combined with meticulous planning and dynamic Political Leadership meant the Borough kept running during the recent winter weather. The Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Longstaff (Chairman Chipping Barnet Area Environment Committee) and I visited the Mill Hill Depot on 19 January to thank the many Council staff for their hard work.

The “grit bin warden scheme” or “Community Keeper” scheme is a pilot scheme that Environment & operations are running this winter and follows on from one of the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group that looked into the winter service provided by the Council during the previous winter.

So far the far the pilot scheme includes two Community Keepers, both in the Golders Green area, and three schools. Two further Community Keepers are being sought from other parts of the Borough.

The primary responsibility of the Community Keeper is to distribute the salt equitably amongst his fellow residents thereby eliminating the misuse of the salt. The Council will support the Community Keepers in their tasks by providing salt, wheel barrows, snow shovels, and weather forecast information.

Question 5

Councillor Jack Cohen

In relation to Residents Parking Permits and visitors vouchers:

How many books of ten visit vouchers were issued for the same two periods? And how much income does this amount to for each of the two periods and what is the current charge for a book of ten visitor vouchers?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The vouchers are available singly, or in any number, although many people find it convenient to buy them in blocks of ten. As they are currently £1 each a book of ten would cost £10.

	2009/10	2010/11 (part)
Vouchers Issued	191,073	157,384
Income	£191,073	£157,384

Question 6

Councillor Geof Cooke

Please list the items of playground equipment that have been removed from parks and playgrounds in the past year with, for each item, the location and a description of what, if anything, has replaced it including any change in the intended age group of the users.

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Please see table below:

Location	Items Removed	Items Installed in replacement	Age Range
Friary Park	Kompan Junior Swings	None	Junior
	Kompan Junior Multi Unit	Wicksteed Grizly Multi Unit	Same age range
Hollickwood Park	Toddler Multi Unit	Wicksteed Tom Thumb multi unit	Same age range
	3 Spring Mobiles	2 new spring mobiles including 1 spring see saw	Same age range
Old Court House	Round about	Wicksteed Reactions Eclipse multi unit	Same age range

Location	Items Removed	Items Installed in replacement	Age Range
Victoria Park	Kompan Junior multi unit	Wicksteed grizzly unit	Same age range
	Kompan climbing frame	Wicksteed roundabout	Same age range
	Kompan see saw	Wicksteed see saw	Same age range
Mill Hill Park	Kompan Toddler Multi Unit	Wicksteed Tom Thumb Multi Unit	Same age range
	Kompan Junior Multi Unit	Proludic Junior Multi Unit	Same age range
	Kompan Junior Swings	Wicksteed Junior Swings	Same age range
	Kompan Toddler Swings	Wicksteed Toddler Swings	Same age range
	Kompan Stand alone Slide	None	Toddler

Question 7

Councillor Brian Gordon

Will the Cabinet Member confirm that cashless parking is available throughout the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Yes, the Pay-by-Phone system which allows motorists to pay for parking without using coins is available at every location operated by the Council across the Borough.

Question 8

Councillor Jack Cohen

At the December meeting of the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting Members were informed that "Parking Enforcement" is in "melt down". Do you accept responsibility or do you blame your predecessor?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

I blame circumstances.

Question 9

Councillor Geof Cooke

What is the latest estimate for the Pension Fund loss arising from the bankrupt Connaught housing maintenance company bond being allowed to lapse?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

There is a risk that the cost to the pension fund will be £1.5m, but this figure is subject to negotiation with the administrator. The Council's actuary has confirmed that this would not impact on the employers contribution rate and therefore would not have an impact on local taxpayers. Staff benefits are also unaffected by this matter.

Question 10

Councillor Brian Gordon

Will the Cabinet Member confirm that refuse arrangements worked successfully during the Christmas period?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Yes, I can confirm that the week before Christmas when the severe weather took hold we were able to continue the refuse collection service as per normal. During the Christmas period there were two double collections which took place on 3 and 4 January 2011, to replace refuse not collected on the 27 and 28 December (both Bank Holidays). I am very grateful to our hard working staff and I am happy to explain to neighbouring Labour controlled Boroughs how we completed the task so successfully in Barnet. I am also pleased that this Administration ignored the Labour Government siren calls to introduce fortnightly refuse collections.

Question 11

Councillor Jack Cohen

When did e-recruitment commence? How many posts have been advertised? And how many filled using e-recruitment since the commencement?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

The e-recruitment project experienced various unexpected delays through the procurement process and therefore has not yet been implemented. The project is now in the implementation phase and the system development with our software supplier commenced in early January. The roll out of the newly branded "One Barnet" jobs and careers website and the recruitment administration system will take 10-12 weeks, with a launch date of Monday 28 March 2011.

Question 12

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Would the Cabinet Member advise how the Council can conduct a new relationship with citizens if democracy pages on the Council website still list former Councillors as current Councillors?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

Following the elections in May 2010, the website was updated to include information on the current Members and to delete that pertaining to retiring Members. However, whilst there was and is an up-to-date list of all Councillors on the website, it appears that some of the associated links did still have reference to former Councillors and these have now been removed from the system. Democratic Services have also recently conducted further work relating to information on the website to ensure that the information on links relating to Members is fully up-to-date. Where anomalies were evident, namely due to duplication of information and outdated information that had not been deleted (as new information was put on the website) these have been remedied as far as possible.

Question 13

Councillor Tom Davey

Please could the Cabinet Member outline how LBB is performing in handling residents' phone calls?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

This has been an area of service where the Council has struggled in the past. However, performance has been improving month on month for the last year and in the quarter to January 2011 we have exceeded our target for answering calls within 20 seconds. This is the first time that I can remember this target being exceeded and, moreover, we have achieved this during a period of very poor weather which, historically, has presented huge demands on our call centres. At the same time, residents' satisfaction with the quality of service they receive from the Council's customer services staff remains high. But I do not want us to rest on our laurels and we are increasing our target for the fourth quarter of the year.

Question 14

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

What extra services will be provided to residents by the parking department to merit a 150% increase in the charge for residents' parking permit (from £40 to £100)?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The increased revenue will ensure that the parking fund surplus can be used to improve our roads and pavements to the benefit of all Borough residents.

Question 15

Councillor Andrew Strongoulou

Could the Cabinet Member please outline what Barnet is currently doing to give local disabled people more control over their lives?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

The Council has been implementing a programme of activity to give disabled people more control over their lives, namely the 'Delivering Choice and Independence' programme since 2007.

One objective of this programme is to create a ‘consumer led Adult Social Services Directorate’. This has led to a comprehensive revision of our case management practices designed to ensure that recipients of social care maximise their control over their lives. Two key elements of this have been:

- The introduction of ‘homecare enablement’. This is the provision of time-limited packages of intensive support designed to help people learn and re-learn the skills necessary for them to live independently at home. 50% of recipients of homecare enablement are not in receipt of social care 90 days after its completion.¹ By contrast, before homecare enablement was introduced, 75% of people were still receiving traditional homecare or a direct payment seven weeks after being referred to us.²
- The introduction of ‘personal budgets’. When someone receives a personal budget, they know how much money they have to spend on their social care and can thus take control over the design and management of their package of support. By the end of 2010/11, the Council’s target is that 30% of the people Adult Social Services supports to live in the community will have taken this control of their social care funding through a personal budget or a direct payment.

The other objective of the Delivering Choice and Independence programme is to create a ‘consumer led local social care market’. Examples of recent and current initiatives to incentivise social care providers to be more responsive to the demands of disabled people include:

- The ‘Innovation Fund’: a ‘pot’ of £200,000 of small grants allocated to organisations which are developing new service models which give disabled people control over their lives.
- ‘Social Care Connect’: a online directory of social care services on which people can rate the quality of the support they receive and discuss aspects of their care with peers in discussion groups.
- ‘Transforming Community Equipment Services’: moving to a ‘prescription’ system for simple occupational therapy equipment. This allows people to cash in prescriptions for equipment at local shops (such as pharmacies) – choosing to ‘top up’ their prescription with their own money if they decide to choose a piece of equipment which is more expensive than that normally provided by the State.

In January 2010, the London Borough of Barnet, Barnet Centre for Independent Living and local offices of the Jobcentre Plus successfully bid to be one of seven ‘trailblazer’ sites for the ‘Right to Control’. This is a new legal right to give disabled people coordinated control over money and support they receive from the following funding streams:

- Social care;
- Community equipment;
- Disabled Facilities Grant;
- Independent Living Fund;
- Some Supporting People services;
- Work Choice; and
- Access to Work.

Disabled people gained the Right to Control on 13 December 2010. This places the Council at the forefront, nationally, of providing disabled people with control over numerous areas of their lives, including the support they receive for social care, housing and employment.

Question 16

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Would the Cabinet Member advise the status of any bed-blocking in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

It is assumed that this is referring to delayed discharges from hospital due to Social Services.

¹ Figure as at 5 September, 2010.

² 2008 data.

Barnet Social Services has got an excellent record in relation to preventing delays at the two acute hospitals (Barnet & Chase Farm and Royal Free Hospital) over a number of years. Delays do occasionally happen but are often due to external and exceptional circumstances including but not limited to client and relative choice and complex placements. There has been no change over the winter months to our excellent performance of ensuring no delays.

Over the last couple of years additional pressures relating to the increase in seasonal demand due to winter have been increasing nationally and there has been huge demand and pressure on the system over the past few weeks during the Christmas and snow period.

Barnet has in place systems and procedures to deal with this; indeed Barnet was green rated by the North Central London sector for its Capacity Plan (the Barnet Capacity Plan brings together our local organisational plans for dealing with a period of increased demand for unplanned health and social care) and general preparedness for winter. Barnet has a system of regular conference calls between relevant health and social care staff, so that any blockages in the system can be dealt with by the relevant managers or escalated as necessary. Barnet also participates in the North Central London daily conference calls.

Question 17 **Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

Eric Pickles and the Government say that frontline services should not face cuts as a result of the local government settlement – would the Leader advise why Barnet is proposing cuts to frontline services?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

The Council is making the majority of savings by improving efficiency and re-designing services, rather than making cuts, which is the challenge that Mr Pickles is setting local government. However, in the context of a budget gap of more than £40m, it is very difficult not to touch frontline services when delivering a balanced budget but our proposals are aimed to minimise the impact on service delivery.

Question 18 **Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

Would the Leader advise how many frontline staff have been made redundant for each year since 2002, and how many she expects will finally be made redundant as a result of the forthcoming budget?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

31 March 2011	31 March 2011	2010-09	2009-08	2008-07	2007-06	2006-05
Per the Budget Proposals – Projected Employee redundancies	Estimated front line redundancies	Frontline redundancies	Frontline redundancies	Frontline redundancies	Frontline redundancies	Frontline redundancies
345	221 ^{3*}	34	19	19	7	17

Question 19 **Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

Would the Leader advise if the Council has informed Eric Pickles yet about the number of redundancies Barnet expects to make as a result of the forthcoming budget?

³ 196 of these are estimated to fall in Children’s Service, but it is expected that this figure will reduce as budget proposals are finalised. We defined front line as being posts which are not back office, support or management according to HR data. Examples of front line posts counted in these figures are: grounds staff; street enforcement officers; customer services agents; highways maintenance; park keepers; revs and bens assistants; librarians.

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

Advance notification of potential redundancies is required from employers proposing to make 20 more employees redundant within a period of 90 days. The Redundancy Payments Service (RPS), which is part of the Insolvency Service, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, collects the information and distributes it to the appropriate Government Departments and Agencies. The HR1 form which initiates this was faxed to the Insolvency Service by the Head of Business Partnering & Change on 2 December and a transmission receipt received, a further e-mail confirmation was received from the Insolvency Service on 3 December 2010.

Question 20

Councillor Andrew McNeil

Would the Cabinet Member advise how the Barnet Museum will be able to remain open without the Council's financial support?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

These are extremely difficult times for councils and in such times we have to consider challenging proposals. Barnet Museum is expected to cost the Council £23,110 this year. It is open for 10 hours a week and has 3,087 visitors a year with a direct cost to the Council of £7.49 per visit. Given these facts, I think it is hard to justify continuing the level of funding we give to Barnet Museum when our priority has to be to protect services for the most vulnerable people in the Borough. That said, I am keen to hear any alternatives that help mitigate the impact of these proposals on Barnet Museum, and await the results of the consultation to assess whether viable alternative options have been suggested.

Question 21

Councillor Andrew McNeil

Would the Cabinet Member advise what provision is being made by the Council to ensure that the 17th Century Church Farm House retains its listed status?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

This listing is in the hands of the Secretary of State. Any change is not in the gift of the Council.

Question 22

Councillor Gill Sargeant

Would the Cabinet Member outline the details of all repairs undertaken on the district heating system in Grahame Park during December?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

At the beginning of December 2010 because of a water leak of some 24,000 gallons on the District Heating System, all heating and hot water was lost to the domestic properties on the Graham Park Estate and St James School and Barnet College.

Barnet Homes Emergency planning was implemented and the Council arranged a meeting on 2 December at St James School. This was attended by all the affected organisations, and Council officers to discuss the work needed to restore services and the risks to residents and other people.

The cause was identified by a team of Engineers from Barnet Homes as a leak on the non-domestic pipe work. This testing required isolating each part of the system in turn and also some excavation work. The defective pipes were isolated and the heating was restored very quickly to the domestic properties. Whilst repairs were undertaken, operations staff from Barnet Homes arranged for all residents to have temporary heating. Homes were visited to ensure that vulnerable customers were given appropriate support.

Barnet Homes Engineers continued in extreme weather conditions to test the piping runs in relation to the college and the school to identify the precise location of the leak and fix it. Staff worked actively with the school and college to install temporary heating and enable as many pre-planned activities and lessons to continue.

Along with the emergency work, Barnet Homes procured the services of a specialist consultant to plan for the provision of a temporary boiler house for the School and College. Fortunately, this was not needed as the leak was successfully identified as being under the Graham Park Youth Wing and was isolated and repaired to enable full restoration of heating to the School and College before the end of term.

Barnet Homes are continuing to work with the consultant team in order to develop a specific, priced contingency plan should this type of event recur in the future.

The leak was repaired fully to the Youth Wing on 17 December.

Question 23

Councillor Alex Brodtkin

Will the proposed changes to the Space Day Centre in Edgware mean that it is not guaranteed to be open five days per week? In addition, have service users been consulted about the possibility of the Space not being open for five days per week?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

It is important to distinguish between The Space as a service and The Space as a building. When we asked service users what they liked about coming to The Space, they replied that they enjoyed seeing friends, staff, taking part in activities and going out for the day. All of these things will be important features of the new service. Service users rarely mentioned the building itself. In fact, the building is often quite empty during the day even now, with lots of service users going out to activities.

The new service, incorporating both The Space and Community Support Team, is certainly intended to operate five days a week and possibly even more, with some people choosing support at weekends. The schedules, times, and locations of activities for individual service users will be informed by their plans. We expect that some individuals will prefer a more flexible timetable than a five days per week, 9am – 5pm programme.

Whilst we do expect to use The Space building less over time, we recognise that there will still be some demand for the current building – particularly in the early stages of identifying the most suitable buildings for specific activities.

At the consultation with service users we did not specifically mention, as this would have been misleading, the possibility of The Space not being open for five days a week – the new service will operate five days a week.

However, we did consult about:

- How service users would feel spending time in community buildings other than the current day centre.
*Some people said they would be sad if the day centre did not operate as a permanent base. **People raised concerns about safety and keeping warm during the winter weather if they were out and about.***
- How service users would feel having a more flexible day timetable, where for example their day starts later and finishes after an activity in the evening.
People said they would like to take part in evening activities, but some people said they did not want to be at home during the day.
- How service users would feel having a more flexible weekly timetable, where for example they do not access the service for one day during the week and are supported to get to an activity they want to participate in at the weekend.
People said different things about whether they wanted to do things every day or just on some days during the week.

We will be incorporating the views of service users (and of parents and carers) into the planning process.

Question 24

Councillor Alex Brodtkin

Given the Council's decision to withdraw funding to Church Farm House Museum and Barnet Museum, what measures will the Council take to ensure that the artefacts and materials presently housed in these museums remain available to Barnet residents?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The Council is looking at options to maintain the availability of artefacts and materials within the Borough. I would be interested to hear any proposals that help us achieve this.

Question 25

Councillor Alex Brodtkin

What is the current charge for a Barnet resident if they want to replace a wheeled bin which is stolen or has disappeared by means other than through the fault of the refuse crews?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

£57.00.

Question 26

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

What capitalisation requests have been made to the Department for Communities and Local Government over the last year and for the forthcoming budget and what is the outcome of those requests?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council made a request to capitalise costs associated with redundancy and also to capitalise losses arising from the potential impairment of Icelandic bank deposits. The Council received a £2.3m approval for capitalisation of costs of redundancy, but was refused a directive to capitalise losses from the potential impairment of bank deposits.

Question 27

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Why did the Cabinet endorse cutting the Council's internal audit service when officers believed that the proposed cut would reduce the service by an unacceptable level?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council faces tough choices on spending cuts, and no area of the Council should be exempt from reviewing their costs and coming up with more efficient ways of delivering services. Officers have been working up alternative proposals that would not reduce the level of service to the level initially indicated.

Question 28

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Is the closure of Barnet museum, which is staffed by volunteers, an example of the Big Society in action?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Barnet Museum operates with a significant Council subsidy to maintain the building and support running costs. The proposal to withdraw funding from Barnet Museum also invited comments and contributions to suggest alternative ideas to manage both Museum buildings, the collections and artefacts. I am keen to hear any cost-effective proposals that support volunteers in making the history of the Borough widely available to the public.

Question 29

Councillor Geoff Johnson

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that all school crossing patrols will be maintained, and none will be cut?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

No.

Question 30

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

What are the potential future uses for Church Farm House museum?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The building has many potential uses and I would expect it to attract interest from local organisations as well as commercial organisations.

Question 31

Councillor Alison Moore

Why wasn't the LINK contract let to Community Barnet in the first place, and could the Cabinet Member give details of how the Government grant to fund the establishment of the LINK was spent?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

BVSC (now known as Community Barnet) was one of the three organisations submitting tenders for the original contract – the others being Community Investors Development Agency (CIDA) and Parkwood Healthcare Ltd. The Tenders were reported to Cabinet Resources Committee on 22 July 2008 with 70% of the evaluation based on quality and 30% on price.

The CIDA bid was significantly ahead of the others' both in terms of price and quality. The latter evaluation included clarification and amplification through interviews and gave CIDA 251 points (out of a maximum of 280 points): Therefore, in accordance with established Council policy, as CIDA had scored highest both on quality and price, they were awarded the Contract.

A sum of £542,000 was added to Barnet's Area Based Grant over the period 2008/9 to 2010/11, which was equivalent to the Department of Health's expenditure on the PPI fora which preceded LINKS. However the point of Area Based Grant is that it is not ring fenced, giving the Council greater flexibility over how it used to support the Council's overall priorities.

The contract with CIDA was to the value of £413,000 over three years. The only expenditure outside this was staff costs of contract monitoring (which are not separately recorded) and legal matters relating to the contractual dispute with CIDA.

There was an additional one off grant of £10,000 in 2007/2008 from the Department of Health to help Local Authorities prepare for LINKS. This supported staff time in undertaking the additional responsibilities of getting LINKS started, particularly prior to the appointment of a host – and the costs of staging an awareness raising Conference in July 2008.

Question 32

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

With litigation still ongoing in the process to try and recover the £27.4 million from Icelandic banks, reported in Cabinet papers 2010 to be the 'single most important financial risk facing the Council', would the Cabinet Member please confirm what the litigation costs are to date and how is the litigation being funded?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Costs to date associated with this litigation are £91k since January 2009. Costs are included in the claim and will be repaid if it is successful.

Question 33

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

With potholes once again in evidence, when will they be repaired and how will they be prioritised?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

It is expected that pothole reports are attended and made safe within 48 hours, however, these may be programmed (in exceptional circumstances) for immediate or 24 hour response if the report identifies a serious problem or if this is deemed more appropriate. The Councillor will have noticed that thanks to the Pot Hole elimination programme our roads are in a far better condition than many neighbouring Boroughs.

Question 34

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Is the Administration's proposal to cut the grant to the 'ARTS DEPOT' confirmation of their philistine approach to arts in the Borough or will the Administration listen to the concerns of residents and reconsider funding for the next financial year?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

We will listen to the concern of residents who are worried that her Government left this country with no money and who want children and adult services protected.

Question 35

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

If prevention is better than cure why is the Administration obliterating youth services in the full knowledge that this will create huge future costs to the community by not offering support to some of our most needy and vulnerable youngsters?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Given the necessity to reduce revenue spending following the Government's spending review, savings are proposed within the youth support area. The proposed restructuring of youth support services (which would bring together six existing services) aims to ensure that resources are focused on prioritising preventative and support work with the most vulnerable young people, as well as meeting statutory requirements. Within the proposal is the creation of a new targeted youth worker who will be able to intervene at an early stage of a young person being identified as 'at risk'. Preventative work is, essentially, the core driver behind the proposed structure.

Question 36

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Is the Cabinet Member happy to be ringing the death knell on both Barnet Museums by withdrawing Council support for the volunteers who have a passion and the dedication for preserving the history of the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

I am not happy to make any budget decisions that impact on any voluntary activity in Barnet. Church Farmhouse Museum is directly funded and operated by Council, and Barnet Museum is run by volunteers with a subsidy from the Council to cover building and operating costs. The fact is that the council's priority must be to protect vulnerable people in such a tough financial environment while Barnet Museum is open for only 10 hours a week at a cost to the Council of £7.49 per visit. Church Farmhouse Museum receives just 8,000 visitors a year at a cost of £15 per visit. The consultation set out to invite alternative proposals for management and use of the buildings, and options for the future display and promotion of collections. I welcome any cost-effective proposals that could tap into the dedication of volunteers to preserve the history of the Borough, make it widely available to the public, and provide value for money for Barnet residents.

Question 37

Councillor Geof Cooke

Is any Cabinet Member in overall charge of the Council's response to the Information Commissioner's Office audit that exposed many serious failings in the Council's arrangements for protection of confidential data?

Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen

The Cabinet Member for Governance and Civic Affairs has overall responsibility for the Council's response to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) audit on Data Protection.

It is important for the Council to regularly assess how effective its DP policies and practices are, and to what extent it is meeting the statutory requirements of the Data Protection Act (DPA). To assist in this process (and in light of new powers the ICO now has to fine public authorities for non compliance), the ICO were asked to carry out an independent Data Protection Audit. This was a voluntary audit (for which there was no charge), but one that we were keen to undertake in order to have an independent and expert opinion on where we needed to focus our efforts in order to ensure we were fully compliant.

The Data Protection Action Plan that details the Council's progress against the recommendations made by the Information Commissioner's Office was agreed by the Audit Committee at the 7 December meeting, and this work is being led by the Director of Corporate Governance.

The audit highlighted a number of areas where it felt the Council needed to do more work. A key area of work focussed on training and awareness and ensuring that all staff understood their DPA responsibilities. In response to this a communications and awareness raising campaign was launched in October, part of which was a number of briefing sessions (31 in total) – aimed at all staff across the Council. Nearly 2000 staff attended these sessions, and additional briefings planned for February should raise that number further.

We are expecting a follow up audit to take place in March of this year and, whilst there is still work to do in addressing all of the recommendations, we are confident that the Council will be able to demonstrate significant progress in the key areas highlighted by the auditors.

Question 38

Councillor Anne Hutton

Different models for delivering children's centres in Barnet have now emerged as part of the Council review – which model does the Cabinet Member personally wish to see implemented?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Consultation on children's centres and related services is currently taking place and does not close until 7 February. Cabinet will be fully considering the result of consultation at the Cabinet meeting on 14 February to help us take a decision on the proposal and the most appropriate model for children's centres. Like Cabinet colleagues I will take a view when I have considered all the evidence. I think it unwise to take a view before the results of consultation are known.

Question 39

Councillor Anne Hutton

Is the Cabinet Member pleased that the Government has done a u-turn on the cuts to funding of school sports partnerships?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Barnet benefits from a range of sports opportunities provided in our schools and through other organisations. The announcement of funding to support the ongoing development of physical education and sport in schools is most welcome, especially at a time of constrained resources.

Question 40

Councillor Alison Moore

Has the Leader liaised with the local business community on ameliorating the effects of the Government's new 20% VAT on the local economy?

Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council

No.

Question 41

Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

What are residents' choices for paying for parking when parking machines are out of service? Are they required to make calls to the Parking department to pay by bank card? What if they do not have mobile phones or even bank cards?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Cashless parking is the future (and indeed the present) as Westminster City Council have proved beyond doubt. I do not know anyone who is a car driver and does not have access to a mobile phone. If Councillor O-Macauley does I suggest he refers them to the many excellent mobile phone deals available on the High Street.

Question 42

Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

Why was refuse not collected recently over the Christmas period even though the streets were not hazardous for driving?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The Councillor is incorrect, refuse collections took place as per normal in the severe weather leading up to Christmas.