

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members**  
**12 April 2011**  
**Questions and Responses**

**Question 1****Councillor Lord Palmer**

Can the Cabinet Member explain why in Barnet our parking enforcement officers allow motorists to drive off without being issued a PCN after they have been observed committing a parking offence? Why has the legislation allowing our officers to issue the PCN by post, after they have started writing it but after the motorist has driven off not been put into effect? I have been informed that "whilst the law has been revised it remains an option that has not been endorsed or adopted by this Authority and as such our procedures or systems do not cater for this aspect of enforcement."

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

Councillor Lord Palmer raises a valid issue and I have asked officers to implement with effect from 15<sup>th</sup> April following appropriate training for Civil Enforcement Officers.

**Question 2****Councillor Brian Gordon**

The Government is bringing in legislation to prohibit companies carrying out vehicle-clamping on private land. Would you join with me in praising the Government for this legislation and will our Council do all in its power to assist in apprehending those firms who may continue to carrying out such activity after it has become unlawful?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

I oppose clamping whether carried out by the public or private sector and I welcome the Conservative led Government's decision to outlaw private clamping.

**Question 3****Councillor Alison Moore**

Will the Cabinet Member assure me that any outsourced service will remain subject to audit by the Council's auditors?

**Answer by Councillor Robert Rams**

The remit of audit covers the whole of the organisation, not just the in-house elements of the Council's service provision. For example, at the moment, 80% of the Adults Social Care service is provided by external providers, and this does not stop audit (internal and external) from reviewing the entirety of these services in terms of finances, controls and outcomes for service users. Any services that may be outsourced in future will remain subject to audit, and it is standard for contracts to be set up to enable this to happen.

**Question 4****Councillor Jack Cohen**

At the February Council meeting, I asked you a question and a supplementary about residents parking permits and visitor vouchers. I asked you to explain the discrepancy between the figures in the current schedule of charges i.e. £12 per book of ten vouchers and £42 for a 1st permit and what residents are actually charged i.e. £10.00 per book and £40.00 for the permit. When I asked you if this meant that the Council had lost out on revenue you responded "I never knowingly undercharge."

Can you now explain why despite the decision of the Cabinet Resources Committee on the 23 April 2009 **PARKING FEES AND CHARGES (Report of the Leader/Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport – Agenda Item 8)**:

For the reasons set out in the Cabinet Member's report

RESOLVED –

(1) That the fees and charges for the parking section, as detailed in the associated appendices of the report be approved to take effect as soon as practically possible.

(2) That the relevant Traffic Management Orders and Variation Notices are made to reflect the fees and charges as set out in the relevant appendices to the report.

and whilst in the associated appendices the permits are increased to £42.00 and the vouchers increased to £12 .00 this appears not to have been implemented"

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

Sheer incompetence and inefficiency by Council Officers.

**Question 5**

**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Is it not a fact that a good number of the so-called "free parking bays" within the Borough were not originally intended as such and are bays where parking signs have fallen down or been uprooted by vandals?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

If the Member has evidence of this perhaps he could report the bays concerned to the relevant officers.

**Question 6**

**Councillor Alex Brodtkin**

What are the costs and on-going costs of the proposed closure of Church Farmhouse Museum?

**Answer by Councillor Robert Rams**

Church Farmhouse Museum closed on 31 March 2011. The closure of the Museum achieves the target saving set out for 2011 – 2012. I have set a three month window to consider the proposal by a third sector organisation to take on future operation of the museum. Revenue funding is available to maintain the site during this three month window, and maintenance and running costs (building, grounds maintenance, business rates) for this period of time are estimated to be below £5,000. I am clear that any future operation the museum or the building is intended to be at zero cost to the council.

**Question 7**

**Councillor Reuben Thompstone**

Could the Cabinet Member outline progress on the Children and Young People's Plan?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

Although there is no longer a statutory requirement to publish a Children and Young People Plan, we have chosen to continue publishing a plan in order to support partnership working in Barnet. The strategic priorities within the Children and Young People Plan were developed with input from a wide range of stakeholders including local health services, the police, the voluntary sector, schools, young people, as well as the Council, and were agreed by Cabinet for the three year period 2010/11 to 2012/13. The actions under these strategic objectives are being refreshed for 2011/12 with input from partner agencies. The updated actions of the Plan have been to the Children's Trust Board and to the multi-agency Executive Management Group that sits under the Board. The updated Children and Young People Plan will be published later this month and made available online.

**Question 8**

**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm if there are any areas which benefit from a free initial period on pay and display in Barnet?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

There are two areas that benefit from a free initial period of 30 minutes. The first is Mowbray Parade in Edgware HA 8 and the second is Hampden Square N14. No other such schemes are envisaged and I am reviewing why we have these two.

**Question 9**

**Councillor Kate Salinger**

Would the Cabinet Member outline LBB's work to ensure effective support and help for children with Special Educational Needs?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

The authority provides early support and intervention services for young children with significant needs and their parents and teachers; speech and language therapy and parenting advisors form part of children's centres and schools provision. Most children with special educational needs do not require statements and are supported by our services in schools. Of those with statements of Special Educational Need, the majority are in our mainstream schools. Barnet also maintains four special schools, which as Cllr Salinger may recall are all rated as outstanding by Ofsted, and has a number of resourced provisions in mainstream primary and secondary schools.

We provide access to educational psychologists for consultation, problem solving and assessment, and specialist advisory teachers around additional needs including hearing and visual impairment and physical needs. We also commission therapies including speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy from the health service and other providers. Barnet has 'Leading Edge' groups that bring together parents, the voluntary sector and professionals to establish good practice. Short breaks are provided to children with complex needs and their families, and some families chose to hold an individual budget. Children with Special Educational Needs in Barnet continue to do extremely well against national comparisons, although closing the gap in attainment between them and their peers remains a priority for the service.

**Question 10**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Would the Cabinet Member advise if the NCL NHS draft QIPP has been agreed and what are the implications for Barnet residents?

**Answer by Councillor Helena Hart**

The draft QIPP is still currently in the process of being agreed.

The North Central London (NCL) Sector is leading the development of the NCL Quality, Innovation, Prevention and Productivity Plan (QIPP) on behalf of its five constituent PCTs. The QIPP process is designed to deliver improved quality and outcomes for patients and to lead to financial sustainability for the local health economy.

Therefore implications for patients are generally expected to be positive. The general themes of the QIPP are:

- To improve quality in individual services and integration between services in order to improve outcomes and reduce duplication
- To increase the number of areas where the Local Authority and Health Services plan and deliver / procure services together
- To continue progress with the Care Closer to Home agenda

**Question 11**

**Councillor Alison Cornelius**

Will LBB be maintaining its Children's Trust Board?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

Although there is no longer a statutory requirement to have a Children's Trust Board, we have chosen to retain this in order to support partnership working in Barnet. In the challenging financial climate it is more important than ever that partner agencies work closely together and plan jointly to reduce any duplication, maximise resources, and ensure that services are appropriately targeted to meet the needs of the borough's children and young people.

**Question 12**

**Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb**

Does the Cabinet Member support the building of a waste transfer station on Pinkham Way?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

This is a matter for Haringey Council's Planning Committee.

**Question 13****Councillor Brian Gordon**

A Junior School of which I am a Governor has issued a ruling prohibiting pupils from being in possession of mobile telephones at school and requiring any mobiles brought to school to be handed in at the beginning of the day, for collection at the end of the day. Although the operation of such a rule is within the remit of the school itself, would the Cabinet Member like to give his endorsement to this very commendable policy?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

As Cllr Gordon rightly points out, it is up to each school to decide its own policies around issues such as mobiles phones. I support the autonomy of schools in matters such as these.

**Question 14****Councillor Julie Johnson**

Now that Barnet Council has reached a settlement with Catalyst will the Cabinet Member ensure that the West Hendon Estate Catalyst site is cleared of rubbish and fly tipping? Residents should not have had to tolerate this eyesore on a daily basis. I note that the hoarding around the site has been repaired and recently reinforced with wire mesh, but more needs to be done by the Council and Catalyst.

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

The site is owned by Catalyst and as such it is their responsibility to keep it tidy. I have asked Officers to contact them and remind them of their Community duty . Any help the Ward Councillors can give in adding pressure would be welcome.

**Question 15****Councillor Brian Gordon**

Will the Cabinet Member outline the implications of the Libraries Strategy on Mill Hill Library near my ward?

**Answer by Councillor Robert Rams**

The strategy sets out a range of improvements to the library service over coming years. I believe we will provide an even better library service in Mill Hill. There will be changes and improvements to different branches. For Mill Hill, this will include opening the library at 9.30am, buying more books and developing larger collections of books – as with all libraries. In addition, we will to provide self-service book issuing technology in all libraries, and ensure all libraries have WiFi. We will also recruit skilled volunteers to offer additional learning events and activities in libraries; and we will encourage community groups in the area to use the library for meetings, events, and activities.

**Question 16****Councillor Anne Hutton**

Will Barnet be taking part in the 'Buy one get one free' scheme to fund more police officers?

**Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides**

We do not have council funding available to purchase police officers.

**Question 17****Councillor David Longstaff**

In relation to North London Waste Authority's procurement process, will the Cabinet Member join me in condemning the anti-Israel campaign being run against Veolia?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

There has been a nasty, unpleasant, organised campaign against Veolia and their possible participation in the NLWA procurement process.

*NB: The Mayor has agreed to exercise his powers under CPR 30.9 to allow the Cabinet Member to give an oral elaboration to his answer.*

**Question 18****Councillor Alex Brodtkin**

Over the past twelve months, how many families, who were seeking three-bedroom accommodation in Barnet from the Council, were successfully moved (by the Council) into three-bedroom properties?

**Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius**

194

**Question 19**

**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

How many staff in Children's Services who were made redundant in February have returned to work with the Council as consultants in March

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

To our knowledge there has been one instance of this, in the context of 64 redundancies in the Children's Service between January and March 2011. It is not general policy to re-employ members of staff who've been made redundant on a consultancy basis. However, this was an exceptional circumstance. A part-time position was created when another member of staff reduced their working hours, and this position was offered to members of staff at risk of redundancy. However, the specialist skills and knowledge required were not readily available from existing or agency staff. In the circumstances, appointing someone with the appropriate skills on a consultancy basis was the most cost-effective short-term solution, ensuring that the Council did not commit itself to a permanent solution at a time of restructuring. A permanent solution will be sought in this new financial year.

**Question 20**

**Councillor Alex Brodtkin**

Could the Leader advise if she will support the webcasting of council meetings, as well as a firm policy to enable the public to blog, tweet or otherwise record council meetings in future, and if not, why not?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council**

The decision not to allow filming in the Council Chamber was taken, not by this Administration, but by this Council. However, we are currently looking at the options and suggestions will be brought back to this Council for full debate.

**Question 21**

**Councillor Julie Johnson**

Would the Cabinet Member please update me on the latest situation regarding Neeld Tennis Club's proposals to build in the above park as their former club buildings are in the process of being demolished.

**Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas**

The latest position is that funding to the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) from Sport England has been reduced and this has had a knock on effect for the Neeld Tennis Club's proposals to build courts and a club house in Sturgess Park. The club are in discussion with the LTA, and are pursuing other sources of funding to enable their move to Sturgess Park. Meanwhile, the club are hiring tennis courts in Hendon Park.

**Question 22**

**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Will the Leader confirm: a) what the latest position is regarding Barnet being granted priority status on frozen Icelandic deposits; b) what the financial risk is of not being granted priority status; and c) if the relevant risk reserve fully covers the Council in the event priority status is not granted?

**Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas**

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011, the Icelandic courts upheld the priority status of UK Local Authority deposits. This decision is subject to appeal. The budget report suggested that the cost of non-priority status would be approximately £14m and this is the sum that we are building up in the risk reserve for 2011/12.

**Question 23****Councillor Julie Johnson**

Could the Cabinet Member advise if there are any 20mph speed limits within the London Borough of Barnet. Several residents have requested this traffic calming measure be implemented on rat runs and near some schools in West Hendon. Ward councillors have been advised that this is not current Barnet Council policy.

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

There are 9 distinct areas in the borough where a 20mph speed limit is in place. There are no plans to introduce additional areas and I am reviewing the operation of the current zones which the Police are not interested in enforcing and are widely ignored.

**Question 24****Councillor Alison Moore**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm what the status is of the implementation of the new revenues and benefits system?

**Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas**

The new system went live on 18.2.11, it then had to close down for another week in order to recast benefits and set up the 2011/12 billings etc. The system came back on line 14.3.11. We are working with the various partner organisations to clear the issues that inevitably occur with a complete change of systems.

**Question 25****Councillor Geoff Johnson**

At the Hendon Area Forum on 15th March 2011 in answer a question on footway parking in Hillfield Avenue, Woodfield Avenue and Silkfield Road, the resident was advised that all parking enforcement for this area has been deferred pending further investigation. Can the Cabinet Member please advise when this decision was made and implemented?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

As I understand some residents have continued to complain about wheels of vehicles parked on the pavements, the policy followed in this Borough of enforcing the Highways Act where there are complaints will continue, in this and other areas. Consultation with the Ward Councillors will also continue.

**Question 26****Councillor Geoff Johnson**

As the Cabinet Member will be aware, a fatal car accident took place recently in Colindeep Lane NW9. Can I ask what Barnet Council proposes to do to stop this type of accident happening. Over years there have been several serious accidents in this stretch of road and some traffic calming measures need to be implemented to prevent this happening again.

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

I understand individuals have been arrested on suspected dangerous driving as a result of this incident. As so often no amount of so called "traffic calming" will prevent some people behaving like idiots when behind the wheel.

**Question 27****Councillor Claire Farrier**

Would the Cabinet Member please explain why parking tickets have been issued in roads in Burnt Oak, including Blundell Road, and Edwin Road, for parking with wheels on the pavement? Tickets have never been issued in these roads before, and in both Blundell Road and Edwin Road there is a concreted area that was created specifically for cars to park. Would the Cabinet Member please issue instructions that any outstanding tickets for these areas are cancelled?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

It is clearly in breach of the Highways Act to park with wheels on the pavement. It is also clearly NOT within the remit of individual councillors, even the Cabinet member, to issue instructions to cancel parking tickets. If individuals feel tickets have been issued incorrectly there is a statutory appeals process.

**Question 28****Councillor Claire Farrier**

Would the Cabinet Member please confirm that there is an agreement with out of borough allotment holders, that they pay the same charge for allotments in Barnet as Barnet residents. Would he please confirm the date of this agreement, and that it has not been rescinded.

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

The new charges for allotments which will be in effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 include an increased charge for non-Barnet residents. This in line with charges for other services in the borough where residents are charged less than non-residents. I think it is right and proper that Barnet Council tax payers should receive a better deal on allotments than those residents of other Boroughs whose authorities have often sold their allotments for development.

**Question 29 Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Could the Cabinet Member comment on Michael Gove's broken promise of more money for school repairs whereas research by the House of Commons library reveals the average for secondary schools has fallen from £105,400 to £19,500 and primary schools from £32,900 to £6,600?

**Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper**

Michael Gove's statement about the school funding announcement for 2011-12 included the following two paragraphs:

*"10. Even where funding is tight, it is essential that buildings and equipment are properly maintained, to ensure that health and safety standards are met, and to prevent a backlog of decay building up which is very expensive to address. Therefore, in 2011-12, £1337m will be available for capital maintenance for schools, with over £1bn being allocated for local areas to prioritise according to maintenance need. The voluntary-aided sector will receive its fair share of this as I have decided to retain the Locally Coordinated VA Programme for a further year.*

*11. In addition, £195m will be allocated directly to schools for their own use. This is a much lower rate than previously. The Audit Commission criticised the allocation of large amounts of funding to schools that was not targeted to building need. Therefore, in view of the need to prioritise, I have balanced the bulk of maintenance funding to local authorities, to support local prioritisation and larger projects, with coordinated and efficient procurement".*

In line with the Secretary of State's announcement, the Devolved Formula Capital for schools in 2011-12 has reduced substantially from the allocations in 2010-11. Capital maintenance has slightly increased.

School repairs can also be funded from revenue, and for 2011/12 revenue funding per pupil at local authority level is the same as for 2010/11. Barnet Council welcomes the emphasis on local prioritisation, as do our schools.

**Question 30****Councillor Alison Moore**

What's happened to Leader Listens? The budget is still there, but what is it being spent on?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council**

Proposals for the replacement of Leader Listens are set out in a paper submitted to the Special Committee (Constitution review) by the Conservative Group. This will be considered at their meeting on 14 April 2011. When the budget for Leader Listens was created it was incorporated into the overall budget for Democratic Services. The budget reductions in the Democratic Services budget for 2010/11 and 2011/12 exceed the allocation for Leader Listens. Further reductions in the Democratic Services budget for 2012/13 and 2013/14 were set out in the Financial and Business Planning report approved by the Cabinet on 20 October 2010.

**Question 31****Councillor Alison Moore**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm exactly how much money has been lost to the Council as a result of the failure to advertise the correct charges in statutory notices about parking charge increases?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

It is estimated that £93,000 of income will not be achieved due to the delay. The service will need to recover this sum through other efficiencies during the coming year.

**Question 32****Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Following the government announcement that Barnet will receive around £420,000 towards the pothole fund, will the Cabinet Member confirm that he will reduce the proposed parking charge increases in proportion?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

No, because the Government's grant on potholes ( four times greater than that given to us by the last Labour Government) is an entirely separate matter to the need to return the Special Parking Account to the budgeted surplus.

**Question 33****Councillor Gill Sargeant**

What facilities will be co-located at Grahame Park library when it is redeveloped?

**Answer by Councillor Robert Rams**

A new library is to be designed and built within the Grahame Park regeneration programme. There is clear demand for a library service which better meets the needs of local communities in Grahame Park. The library strategy consultation (2010) indicated: there is a significant demand for additional public services or information to be provided through Grahame Park library (96.4% of respondents indicated a desire for these services – well above the borough average); there is a need to improve services for children and young people; and the current site was recognised not able to meet the needs of the community.

We have a long track record in providing additional services through Grahame Park library – from Barnet College ICT sessions, to a new homework club programme. The next stage of consultation asks residents which services they would like provided from Grahame Park library, so that we can investigate options to meet this need.

Over coming months, we will engage with local partners and community groups to assess opportunities to co-locate services in a new, accessible, and well designed Grahame Park library

**Question 34****Councillor Gill Sargeant**

What will be happening to the site allocated to Barnet College on the Colindale hospital site?

**Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius**

The Council understands that the college still intends to re-locate there.

**Question 35****Councillor Gill Sargeant**

What measures will be put in place to improve road safety on Colindeep Lane?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

If Ward Councillors feel measures are required it is open to them to propose them within the Council's agreed policy guidelines

**Question 36****Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

Would the Leader consider setting long service staff awards from 25 years rather than 30 years?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council**

The long service award is a blunt way of recognising employee contribution concerned solely with length of service. We are currently drawing up a scheme that recognises contribution and performance which I feel is much more appropriate in the present climate.



**Question 37****Councillor Geof Cooke**

Following the Council's failure to renew the bond for the pensions of Connaught workers - can the Cabinet Member tell me assure me that bonds covering all other admitted bodies were paid on time?

**Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas**

A report was submitted to the Pensions Committee on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2011 which set out the position on bonds for all admitted bodies. It confirmed that bonds were in place for all admitted bodies, with the exceptions of Housing 21, for which the contract is being renegotiated, and Greenwich Leisure, for which bond discussions were ongoing. A bond has now been put in place for Greenwich Leisure, and the Housing 21 contract negotiations are continuing. A report into these issues will be submitted to the Pension Fund committee every quarter to ensure that proper controls remain in place.

**Question 38****Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Will the Cabinet Member be pressing ahead with plans to make pay and display payment totally cashless?

**Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman**

Yes

**Question 39****Councillor Alison Moore**

Will the Leader confirm that speaking rights for all councillors at Council will be maintained?

**Answer by Councillor Lynne Hillan, Leader of the Council**

No. The Special Committee (Constitution Review) is currently considering council procedure rules on the rights of speakers and we await their recommendations.

**Question 40****Councillor Alison Moore**

Does the Cabinet Member's publicly stated prejudice towards the private sector compromise the integrity of the options appraisal process in the One Barnet programme?

**Answer by Councillor Robert Rams**

No