

**Questions to the Leader and Cabinet
1 November 2011
Questions and Responses**

Question 1

Councillor Brian Schama

Could the Cabinet Member please inform me if Headteachers have given any active consideration of traffic monitors, at school entrances, to speed the dropping off, and picking up, of primary school pupils from parental vehicles and thereby reducing the need for street parking and making the roads outside our schools safer for children during busy periods?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

All schools in Barnet are actively encouraged to develop School Travel Plans that reduce car travel to schools and increase walking and cycling. This helps to tackle the effect of school run traffic. Virtually all schools in Barnet now have a School Travel Plan, and these have delivered reductions in car travel to school of some 12% on average.

Many Headteachers are very cooperative in dealing with issues around the School run and some frankly appear not to care less or are ignored by many parents. Enforcement around schools of the various safety measures is continuing throughout the Autumn term.

Question 2

Councillor Lord Palmer

As Government Ministers have said that they would make it easier for Councils who want to introduce 20mph limits, such as being able to paint roundels on road surface rather than erect signs, is Barnet going to action this new policy?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Whilst welcoming the flexibility which the coalition Government is giving in these matters at the moment we have no intention of introducing further 20mph zones.

Question 3

Councillor Alison Moore

What was the value of the original street lighting PFI contract, and how much has the contract cost the Council to date?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

£66 million was the original value and £26 million is the cost to date.

Question 4

Councillor Brian Gordon

Would you join me, and I am sure many other residents of Barnet, in welcoming the Transport Secretary's announcement of his desire to raise the 20mph speed limit in certain urban areas and to raise the motorway speed limit to 80mph.

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Yes.

Question 5

Councillor Lord Palmer

What action is Barnet taking following the Governments Traffic Signs Review?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The proposals support our aspirations to minimise sign clutter and develop appropriate local solutions to traffic management issues and Officers will be taking these matters forward in conjunction with me, the Area Environment Committee Chairmen and Ward Councillors as appropriate.

Question 6**Councillor Pauline Coakley-Webb**

On the closure of Church Farm House Museum artefacts and ephemera were removed. Was an inventory made of the items removed and could a list of the inventory please be provided?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Disposal of accessioned items from the museum's collection has been recorded:

- 1) One item from the museum's collection has been disposed of to rubbish – a mummified cat, minus head.
- 2) A Hendon Borough Arms carved image and two district Council signs have been relocated to the Council offices.

No other items from the collection have been removed except where loaned items are being returned to lenders. An inventory of items returned to lenders is not yet available as this action is not yet complete. Items of furniture disposed of to other sites or to rubbish and supporting items of set dressing, signage and exhibition material disposed of to rubbish have not been inventoried.

Question 7**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Would you please accept the appreciation of numerous residents in my Ward for the arrangements made by our Highways department in conjunction with British Gas to reschedule works in Hale Lane to avoid coinciding with the recent Jewish holiday period when very large numbers of synagogue - attending pedestrians were using the pavements.

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Yes, I am grateful to officers who worked on this matter and to Councillor Gordon who as ever advocated strongly on behalf of his residents.

Question 8**Councillor Lord Palmer**

Is any action proposed to curb street drinking in the Golders Green shopping centre and nearby streets?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

Current intelligence does identify a discrete street drinking population within the Golders Green Town Centre and environs. Some reports have been received from the community and indicate that by congregating, the street drinkers cause a level of fear, insecurity and intimidation. Businesses have reported shoplifting associated with the street drinking population.

The local Safer Neighbourhood Team has been using their powers to direct individuals to leave the area for up to 48 hours and disperse the groups as required. When asked to do so the group are compliant and not aggressive. They have also given advice and warnings translated into relevant languages for the population of street drinkers.

A detailed street drinking action plan is being developed with the Safer Neighbourhoods Team and other partners. This will include offering drug and alcohol services to the wider group, two of whom are already engaged with services and advice and support with regard to housing as a number are reported as being homeless. Further activity and options include:

- Use of CCTV to gather evidence and direct intervention
- Deployment and engagement with specialist outreach services such as Thames Reach
- Implementation of a voluntary agreement with premises not to sell high strength alcohol in the area
- Licensing enforcement
- Environmental improvements
- Further intelligence gathering and problem profiling ensuring this is co-ordinated with other on going projects and agencies

This is indicative and not exhaustive.

Question 9**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

What review has taken place on the equality impact of savings/reductions made to the voluntary sector as promised?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The Equalities Impact Assessment was updated on 9 February 2011 and attached to the budget papers to Council in March 2011. The review of the Equalities Impact Assessment will be based on data received from the providers for the first six months of the financial year, April to September 2011. Currently, we have headline performance data, but the underlying equalities data is not expected until November. I am happy to provide the review of the equalities impact as soon as it is available.

Question 10**Councillor Brian Gordon**

What is your view on the so-called alternative residents' forum staged recently by certain political activists under the rather nebulous title of "Barnet Alliance"?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

On the one hand it is good to see that residents are interested in discussing the services that Barnet Council provide and I appreciate the frustrations that have brought the Barnet Alliance together.

On the other hand the aims of the Barnet Alliance, as espoused on their website - no reduction or change in delivery of services by the Local Authority, the NHS and the Education Department – will make us bankrupt. The Barnet Alliance's few members want political influence on a vast range of policies, but without having any responsibility or accountability to the electorate.

Question 11**Councillor Lord Palmer**

Can The Cabinet Member provide information as to when Barnet will have a Borough-wide alcohol street drinking ban?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

There are currently four Alcohol Control Areas within LB Barnet:

- Cricklewood Town Centre
- North Finchley Town Centre
- Finchley Town Centre
- Hendon Town Centre

Alcohol Control Areas can provide a useful tool to support intervention and enforcement but the establishment of such areas has to be evidence based and proportional to the problem.

At present there is no evidence to suggest that street drinking is a problem across the whole of Barnet and to support the implementation of a Borough wide order there would have to be a good case to evidence that it would be required due to displacement. Displacement from the existing areas within Barnet has been minimal and mostly no displacement has been noted.

Tackling street drinking is a complex and multi faceted issue and the response needs to include a focus on prevention, intervention, enforcement and rehabilitation/support. Where Alcohol Control Areas have been established in Barnet, street drinking is still evident, which indicates that implementing such powers may add an intervention/enforcement tool to the box but it is not the solution to the problem in itself.

The Safer Communities Partnership will continue to monitor and evaluate the issue of street drinking across the borough. This will include the design of specific action plans for individual areas appropriate to their problem profiles, adopting a range of existing prevention, intervention and support powers and pathways.

If such methods are not adequate to tackle the issue and there is evidence to support the implementation of a new alcohol control area then this can be considered. This will include an assessment of the effectiveness of Barnet's current alcohol control areas to ensure the wider implementation of such powers is proportional, necessary and appropriate.

Question 12

Councillor Ross Houston

Following the decisions made at the Barbara Langstone House 'rapid improvement event' held in 2010 it was agreed to immediately re-locate families with children and to 'cease placing families with children forthwith'. Barbara Langstone House continues to house vulnerable adults. Can the Cabinet Member confirm that this policy of having no children is still being implemented. If it is not can the Cabinet Member confirm when and by whom this policy was changed and whether or not there are any children currently staying at Barbara Langstone House?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

Following an initial attempt to implement the approach agreed at the rapid improvement event, it was subsequently found that there is ongoing need to use Barbara Langstone House to provide short term accommodation for some households with children. This is partly because of the increased difficulties in procurement of other types of short term temporary accommodation due to market conditions and changes to local housing allowances, but also because it was found that there was a shortfall in the number of single people needing accommodation.

The lease on Barbara Langstone House is due to expire in 2013, and the Council will be considering whether to renew this over the coming months in the context of the ongoing needs of housing applicants.

NB: No formal decision was taken to depart from the policy agreed at the rapid improvement event.

Question 13

Councillor Brian Gordon

What was your reaction to the rather childish decision of the Labour Group to walk out in protest from the second part of the previous Council Meeting?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

It was regrettable that the full Council was unable to hear the views of The Labour Group and for them not to hear what turned out to be an interesting discussion on the disorder that occurred this summer.

Question 14

Councillor Lord Palmer

Can the Cabinet Member report on whether CPZ Parking Attendants are being used for reporting other matters viewed in their rounds?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Yes. Civil Enforcement Officers, as they have been called since implementation of the Traffic Management Act 2004 patrol the entire Borough and are not confined to the Controlled Parking Zones. During the course of their duties they take note of anything untoward they see, for example a trip hazard or damaged sign, and report it by radio to their base where an email message is sent to the appropriate department of the Council.

Question 15

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Barnet Council still cannot answer the phone within 5 rings. Would the Cabinet Member outline how much money has been spent or cut in the process of re-organising customer services in order to continue this poor performance?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Customer service activity for Children's Services, Planning and the majority of street-based services has been operating as part of the Council's Customer Services function since April 2011, as has the whole of the Assisted Travel Service. Reprocessing of these services to improve the customers' experience and release savings is currently underway. The next phase of consolidation

and transformation will include Revenues and Benefits, Adult Social Services, Libraries, Registration and the remaining Environment, Planning and Regeneration Services.

Expenditure on transformation so far is £473,000. The current trajectory estimates that savings generated will at least cover these costs by January 2013 and customer service will have substantially improved by that point.

Question 16

Councillor Stephen Sowerby

Would the Cabinet Member provide me with a brief update as to the progress of this year's revenue savings?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The required savings this financial year were circa £29million. I am pleased to confirm that this year's revenue budget is on target with a current overspend forecast of approximately £200,000.

Question 17

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Where are the artefacts and ephemera from Church Farm House Museum being stored? And how are they being stored?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The operating budget for Church Farmhouse remains in place as the building still belongs to the Council and must be maintained until alternative uses are agreed. The collection is currently stored in the building.

Question 18

Councillor Alison Moore

Would the Cabinet Member confirm whether he has lobbied the Mayor of London against the recently announced hike in fares, and if he hasn't would he explain why he hasn't?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

I have lobbied the Mayor directly and publically on the need to guarantee that the Northern Line upgrade takes place and that the increased Policing on the Underground is maintained both things which would disappear if an irresponsible attitude to fares such as that advocated by Councillor Moore was adopted.

Question 19

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Is the Cabinet Member aware that Barnet now has some of the highest parking permit charges in London, and is he proud of this fact?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The member is wrong, on Residents Permits where Barnet currently ranks 6th out of 23 Boroughs we have checked. Street Parking where we are 12th of 22 Boroughs we have checked and Car Parks where we are 14th out of sixteen we have checked.

Question 20

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

What is the cost of storing the artefacts and ephemera from Church Farm House Museum? And can the public access the collection?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The operating budget for Church Farmhouse remains in place as the building still belongs to the Council and must be maintained until alternative uses are agreed. The collection is currently stored in the building. There is, therefore, no additional specific cost incurred by storing the collection. The building is closed to the public.

Question 21

Councillor Anne Hutton

When will the planned upgrade to the acoustics be carried out at the Borough's Provision for Deaf Children at Summerside School?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

A feasibility study has been commissioned to see how the accommodation can be upgraded to improve acoustic performance for the school's Foundation stage pupils.

The proposed works would create a foundation stage unit with its own dedicated entrance and covered play area. They would improve acoustics in the classrooms through the use of sound-reducing walls and doors and sensory aides such as hearing loops. The unit would also benefit from improved lighting and quiet rooms. Subject to the findings of the feasibility study, it is anticipated that works could commence in April 2012.

Question 22

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

The Cabinet Member has increased parking charges so that they are now some of the highest in London, but targets to increase the income to the special parking account have not been met. Is it possible that the parking charge increases are a deterrent to visitors coming to Barnet to park and shop in our town centres?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The member is wrong on all points as my answer to question 19 explains. For the first time in years the Special Parking Account is on target. On street revenue is up about 40 per cent proving our town centres remain popular. I do wish Labour Members would firstly check their facts and secondly stop denigrating our Borough.

Question 23

Councillor Alison Moore

Can the Cabinet Member tell me how much money has been paid to bodies providing welfare benefits and debt advice and support each year from 2006 to 2011?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council has not provided funding to organisations solely for the purpose of welfare benefits and debt advice, so it is not possible to provide an exact figure in terms of funding to bodies to provide this specific support. However, we provide funding to a number of organisations who perform this function as part of their overall service. For example, we have provided funding to Barnet Citizen's Advice Bureau, Community Barnet and Barnet Law Service over recent years.

Question 24

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Would the Cabinet Member confirm that he is aware that the number of police in Barnet and London will fall by 2013/14, and will he confirm what lobbying of the Mayor he has personally done to prevent this?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

I am only aware of planned increases in Police numbers, with the number of Officers rising to 32,380 in the 2011-2012 Financial year and the number of Special Constables nearly doubling during Mayor Johnson's term in office.

No lobbying of the London Mayor has therefore been deemed necessary. If I were to write, it would be to congratulate Boris Johnson on doing a first class job and increasing the number of Police Officers during his first term in office.

Question 25

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

The new building at Colindale School is now open, and the Governors have expressed concerns over speeding traffic on Clovelly Avenue, given the absence of a school crossing patrol. Would it be possible for a zebra crossing to be installed at the junction of Clovelly Avenue and Colindeep Lane to help calm the traffic - at the moment it is quite dangerous for the pupils to cross the road there, and residents have also expressed concern?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Clovelly Avenue is a cul-de-sac giving access to the school so the enquiry presumably actually relates to Colindeep Lane. Officers will review the location to consider whether measures are

appropriate to assist with crossing the road. However no injury accidents have been recorded at the site over the last five years either before or after the school crossing patrol became vacant more than a year ago.

Question 26

Councillor Alison Moore

Would the Cabinet Member give details of the savings made so far from flexible working arrangements?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Through the introduction of flexible working, the Council has implemented a staff to desk ratio of 4:3. This has decreased organisational reliance on office buildings by 25%. To date, this has allowed the Council to vacate and rent out a number of buildings, significant examples include:

Building	Annual Rental Income
Colinhurst House	£62,400
Hendon Town Hall	£422,000*
Ravensfield	approx £70,000 pa
Fenella House	£200,000

* Lease back of part Rent payable by the council £105,500pa net saving £316,500 pa

In addition, there are properties leased by the Council that have now been relinquished. This includes 313 Ballards Lane which has resulted in a saving in rent paid of approx £15,000 pa.

The Council is also currently vacating Barnet House. Once this is complete and negotiations with the landlord have been concluded, it is forecast that this will deliver a saving of £1,100,000 per annum.

Home working and the opportunity for staff working across the borough to 'log on' in any Council building contributes to flexible working.

Question 27

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

Recently, the Chief Executive of Barratts Home said on the radio that they have changed their strategy and now they are only going to build half the number of private affordable homes that they had planned. Can the Member tell me that Barratts still plan to go ahead with building the affordable homes that they said they would in West Hendon or has there been a change of plan and if so can you please tell us what this plan is?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

No. There have been a lot of figures bandied about but certainty will not emerge until later. Barratts and the Council continue to work towards a successful outcome for this project. The property market will be the deciding factor as regards the financial viability of the project.

Question 28

Councillor Geof Cooke

Would the Leader / Cabinet Member say why the Council's presentation / report on One Barnet risks to the Pension Fund has not yet been circulated to Pension Fund Committee Members, and all Councillors, despite having been written in time for the last Pension Fund meeting?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The actuary report on the Pension Fund was drafted for the last Pension Committee meeting but was withdrawn as negotiations were still ongoing with the Unions. This report will be presented to the Pension Fund Committee at its next meeting in December.

Question 29

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Would the Cabinet Member confirm what the total value of the Cashless Parking contract now is since being let in 2009, including all extensions, additions and variations (please provide the information broken down by decision)?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

£151,992. This is made up as follows:

Payments under the original Contract (April 2009 to March 2011)

2009/10	£12,552
2010/11	£46,180

Payments under the extension (April 2011 to March 2012)

April to September 2011	£35,910
October to April 2012	£57,350

Question 30

Councillor Geof Cooke

Why are there traffic lights with hoods on them on Whetstone High Road? When and by who was the decision taken to put hoods on these traffic lights, and what risk assessment was done prior to this decision being taken?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Controlled pedestrian crossings on both Totteridge Lane and Oakleigh Road North were introduced in 2005/06 to address local concerns on the basis that the new facilities could be accommodated with minimum impact on the junction's operation.

Despite numerous timing reviews the last five years have shown that it was not possible to accommodate the large volume of traffic going through the junction and provide controlled pedestrian crossing facilities on these arms.

Therefore Officers were requested to carry out a trial, ensuring that the emergency services and local Ward Members were informed removing the crossing facilities thus reverting it back to its previous method of operation (prior to the 2005/06).

The trial started 1st of March 2011 and was planned to run for a minimum period of six months during which both traffic condition and local feedback would be collected. Having taken on board the public response following the removal of the crossing facility in Totteridge Lane, the green man was re-introduced there on April 1st. The trial has continued since then with only the green man controlling traffic entering Oakleigh Road North being suspended.

The trial has continued and officers are taking the opportunity to carry out a site specific Equality Impact Assessment taking into account the characteristics of the particular location and likely users and consultation with stakeholders representative of older people, disabled people (sight, mobility, learning disability), children and carers.

Question 31

Councillor Alison Moore

Would the Cabinet Member confirm how many emails and other enquiries he has had from local Barnet residents on the decision to increase parking permit charges and other parking charges this year?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Records maintained by the Interim Director of Environment Planning and Regeneration show that the Council has received some 160 items of correspondence on the matter of parking fees and charges in the Current Financial Year.

Question 32

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Would the Leader confirm if he supports the Planning and Environment Committee having a discussion on, and submitting their comments on Haringey Council's Core Strategy, which has an impact on the Pinkham Way Waste Plant, and is now being consulted on?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

I would not support such a discussion.

Question 33**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm how many times the Cashless Parking contract has been either extended, added to or varied since first being let in 2009?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The Cashless Parking Contract with Verrus UK Ltd has been extended once. Details of this extension are provided in Delegated Powers Report 1289 dated 24 March 2011. It has not been varied.

Question 34**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Would the Cabinet Member advise how many local voluntary sector groups that provide youth services have had their Council funding cut or withdrawn completely since 2006 - please would the Cabinet Member provide a breakdown of these including details of the funding that has been cut?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Council has supported many local voluntary sector groups that provide youth and other services since 2006, through a number of different funding streams and budgets, some of which were grant-funded by Government only for a specific time period. Examples of these include the Children's Fund, Extended Schools, Positive Activities for Young People, Aim Higher (encouraging aspiration to Higher Education), Aiming High (activities for disabled young people), Youth Opportunity Fund, Youth Capital Fund and many others. There has also been significant structural change within the Youth Support Service, which has integrated previously separate services and budgets for youth offending, advice and guidance, play, sports and arts development and support for school attendance with youth work. The Council has also varied over time how it has made grants, through both corporate and service-based funding streams. In this context, it would require significant investment of officer time to draw together separately held archive records and analyse them to provide the full detail requested.

The Children's Service works closely with the voluntary sector, investing in a post focusing on children and young people within Community Barnet. Officers meet regularly with voluntary sector groups, both individually and in meetings such as the Barnet Voluntary Partnership and the Choice Board. As part of this ongoing work, officers will review with voluntary sector partners the impact of changing levels of funding for youth services. The 2011/12 Youth Support Service budget for commissioning positive activities is £254,000. There is a comprehensive process in place, of scrutiny of bids and decision-making by young people.

Question 35**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm what lobbying of the Secretary of State for Health she has personally done against the recently announced decision to close Chase Farm A&E?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

I can confirm that this Administration has always supported the principle of having 2 fully functioning, 24 hour Consultant led and backed Accident & Emergency Departments on both the Barnet Hospital and Chase Farm sites. Our opposition to the selected Option in the BEH Clinical Strategy could not have been more robust even to the submission of our own "Barnet Option" a proposal supported by all political parties on this Council at both the Executive and Scrutiny levels.

Following the rejection of this Barnet Option, and the very clear case made by the Clinical Review Panel – again accepted by all political parties on this Council at both Executive and Scrutiny levels – regarding the possible risk to patients of continuing the A & E provision at Chase Farm, my efforts – as always – have been focussed on ensuring that there are sufficient high quality, safe and accessible Accident and Emergency services at Barnet Hospital to cope with all those patients who would have previously been seen at Chase Farm.

Question 36**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm which Children's Centres are now closed or have had their hours, services and space reduced, and what the cost of opening them in the first place was?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Council now funds full service provision at 13 Children's Centres (the Phase 1 and 2 Children's Centres), compared with 21 Children's Centres in 2010/11. These serve areas with higher levels of need and target their services to the most needy families. They also run outreach sessions in a range of venues, including all the former Children's Centre sites. This maintains the network of early years and intervention services in Children's Centres.

Each former Children's Centre is linked to a full service Children's Centre site.

Children's Centre	Linked outreach venue (former Children's Centre)
Coppetts CC	North Finchley Library
Fairway CC	Mill Hill Library
Newstead CC	Church End Library
Stonegrove CC	Edgware Library
Underhill CC	Chipping Barnet Library
Wingfield CC	Canada Villa
Bell Lane CC	Kennedy Leigh/London Jewish Family Centre
St Margarets CC	Sweets Way Community Centre
Hampden Way CC	Sweets Way Community Centre

These outreach venues are delivering up to 20 hours per week (up to 48 weeks of the year) of face to face family support and services for the local community.

The former Children's Centres total revenue allocation for the financial year 2010/11 was £835,684 and their capital allocation was £1,051,523. All of the buildings receiving this public investment are still in use for services to the public and none have closed.

Question 37**Councillor Alison Moore**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm if she believes it is right to remove A&E services from Chase Farm Hospital, and thereby make residents who use that A&E travel further in an emergency?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

The Barnet Enfield and Haringey Clinical Strategy - under which these proposals were originally put forward - has been the subject of a great deal of robust debate, scrutiny and analysis at both local and national levels. Nowhere has this involvement been more robust than in the London Borough of Barnet where, from the outset, the very strongest representations on behalf of the residents of this Borough have been made by both the Executive and Scrutiny arms of this Council as well as by the Members of Parliament. The Proposals were then subject to the Four Tests set out by the Secretary of State in July 2010 - which they were deemed to have met - and then referred to the Independent Review Panel by the Secretary of State in May 2011. The Independent Review Panel has looked extensively at this proposal and stated in a letter dated the 11 July 2011 to the Secretary of State for Health, 'The status quo (which includes A+E services at Chase Farm) has real downside risk in terms of the current safety and sustainability of local services.' The Independent Review Panel therefore concluded that change was essential to ensure high quality safe and sustainable health services for local people and supported proposals for the centralisation of A+E services at Barnet and North Middlesex Hospitals.

Local residents deserve access to the safest highest quality local health services and based on the findings of both the Clinical Review and the Independent Review Panel, reluctantly, I believe that there is no alternative other than to implement the proposals - but only with the strict proviso that

the requisite additional staff and facilities have been provided at Barnet Hospital before any services are ceased at Chase Farm Hospital.

Question 38

Councillor Ross Houston

Capacity in the private rented sector is reducing, and homelessness is increasing - will the Cabinet Member admit that the government's housing policies are a bit of a disaster for Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

Whilst it is true that the ability of the Council to access homes in the private rented sector has been affected by market conditions and changes to local housing allowances; the range of reforms that the Government has introduced which have been broadly welcomed by the Council. The reforms include self financing for council housing, tenancy reform and changes to homelessness all of which are in keeping with the council's wider housing strategy and will help us to deliver our wider objectives.

A number of actions are being taken to address the impact of reduced access to the private rented sector as reported to Budget and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 September. These include:

- Use of homelessness grant to
 - Offer support to landlords and tenants affected by benefit changes
 - Identify potential sources of PRS outside of borough
- Sub- regional working including
 - Joint procurement of short term nightly purchased accommodation with Haringey, Enfield and Camden
 - LHA transitional funding (£525k) to set up mobility resettlement service
- Sub-regional LHA impact assessment commissioned
- Implementation of new Allocations scheme
- Improvements to customer service for landlords
 - e.g. transactions via new web site, dedicated number and e-mail address for landlords

Statistics:

Housing applicants housed in the private rented sector 2009/10 – 715 , 2010/11 – 447 2011/12, Q1 – 29

Homelessness Acceptances - 2009/10 – 231, 2010/11- 252 2011/12, Q1 - 65

Question 39

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Given the increase in unemployment in Barnet and the UK that has recently been reported, would the Leader agree with Economics Nobel Laureate, Chris Pissarides that VAT should be cut back to 17.5% in order to help job creation and reduce unemployment? Would the Leader support a cross-party lobby of the government in favour of this VAT cut?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

Economists often disagree. There are other views of the economy. A reduction in VAT would have other effects, not least on the tax revenues of our Coalition Government. The disgraceful state of finances that faced the incoming government has to be dealt with. The credit rating of Britain is vital to controlling interest costs and we must not be seen to dither as we deal with the borrowing caused by the last government. I would not lobby for a reduction in VAT. In my opinion any possible reductions in taxation should be directed towards making the country more business friendly. Unemployment will only come down when business confidence increases and recruitment picks up

Question 40

Councillor Alison Moore

Would the Leader and Cabinet Member confirm that no jobs will be lost to the local economy as a result of the One Barnet 'easyCouncil' Outsourcing Programme?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The Council will continue to do everything it can to support the local economy through its partnership work but we live in difficult times caused by the previous Labour government. As the Member is aware we have had to cut our budget by 26%. This does not weaken the Council's focus

on providing good quality services to Barnet's residents. It does, however, mean that the council does need to work ever more efficiently. The best support that can be provided to the local economy is to provide those services in as efficient and cost effective way as possible.

If the council did not make these savings, it would have to raise council tax by 46.86 per cent over that three year period. This would equate to a £521 rise in council tax, which would be detrimental to the local economy.

While every sympathy is felt for the people the council has made redundant last year, its relentless drive for efficiency has led to far fewer redundancies being planned than in many other local authorities. Kent County Council in the last year has made 3,107 people redundant.

Where the council will outsource staff, its objective is to secure the best possible contract whilst balancing the needs of the various stakeholders, including our employees. The Council recognises that change can create uncertainty for staff and so it has developed a clause which exceeds TUPE requirements and will ensure that Terms and Conditions are unchanged for the first twelve months of the contract. This is a significant guarantee.

The council is not seeking to limit potential contractors' delivery proposals by specifying where services are delivered from. Over and above this, the Council under European law is not able to restrict a bidder to the delivery of services from any particular location.

Question 41

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Would the Cabinet Member advise how many local voluntary sector groups that provide adults' services have had their Council funding cut or withdrawn completely since 2006 - please would the Cabinet Member provide a breakdown of these including details of the funding that has been cut?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

Our policy document, Looking after yourself – a prevention framework for Barnet, affirms the council's commitment to preventative support, helping people to stay independent and reducing requirements for statutory social services provision. Most of these prevention services are delivered by voluntary organisations, and many have a long and valued track record of dedicated support for Barnet residents. But no area of our expenditure can expect exemption from the budget pressures that now face the council, and the council must subject all programmes to scrutiny in order to decide how budget reductions would affect Barnet residents, and how practicable and sustainable reductions might be in implementation terms and by comparison with other reductions to other programmes. Unlike the great majority of Adult Social Care and Health expenditure, funding for prevention services is mainly concerned with support for people with low or moderate need, support that we know is valued by many of the people who benefit from it, but support that nevertheless is of a different order of priority compared with statutory provision and or for those with the most significant need.

Adult Social Care and Health currently commissions 60 voluntary sector groups, including housing associations, to provide preventative support. Funding for all of these organisations has been reduced during 2010/11 following Cabinet's decisions on 14 February 2011 concerning the report of the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance on the Budget, Council Tax and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/12- 2013/14. No voluntary organisations have had their funding withdrawn completely. The table below sets out details of the reductions. Information about funding for previous years is not shown since previous reductions affecting some services will generally have reflected strategic decisions to re-model investment or operational responses to concerns regarding quality and value for money and are not therefore comparable with the budget-led reductions implemented in 2011/12.

Organisation	Service	2010-11 Baseline Contract Values	2011-12 Baseline Contract Values
Advocacy in Barnet	Advocacy	£106,153.62	£92,353.65
Age Concern	Information, Advice, Day Services	£376,849.12	£327,858.73
Alzheimer's Society	Info, advice, day care, carer support	£109,366.26	£95,148.65
ASRA Greater London Housing Assn.	Day care for Asian elders	£89,665.21	£47,457.07
Barnet African Caribbean Assn	Day Care Services	£61,568.38	£53,564.49
Barnet Asian Older People Assn	Day Care Services	£37,026.53	£32,213.08
Barnet Asian Womens Assn	Mental health project and info and support	£53,478.04	£46,525.89
Barnet Bereavement Service	Barnet Bereavement Service	£4,480.43	£3,897.97
Barnet Carers Centre	Carer support	£501,563.73	£436,360.44
Barnet Citizens Advice Bureau	Welfare Benefits Advice Service for adult social care	£48,000.00	£41,760.00
Barnet Elderly Asians Group	Community Group	£8,730.00	£7,595.10
Barnet Mencap	Info, advice, respite care, housing support, Asian family service	£453,095.10	£406,121.73
Barnet People's Choice	Advocacy and Parliament)	£63,050.00	£54,853.50
Barnet Retired & Senior Volunteer Programme	Barnet Retired & Senior Volunteer Programme	£2,134.00	£1,856.58
Barnet Voice	Mental Health Self Advocacy	£80,019.18	£69,616.69
British Red Cross	Home From Hospital	£43,650.00	£37,975.50
Central & Cecil Housing Assn	Housing Support Service	£28,739.36	£27,345.97
Chinese Mental Health Association	Floating Support	£51,886.26	£49,361.79
Chipping Barnet Day Centre	Day Care	£2,910.00	£2,531.70
Christian Action Housing Assn	Housing Support Service	£29,368.38	£10,802.31

Organisation	Service	2010-11 Baseline Contract Values	2011-12 Baseline Contract Values
CROFTE	Cultural Recreational Organisation for Tamil Elders	£1,940.00	£1,687.80
DabB	Info, advice and home visiting service	£113,366.81	£98,629.12
Day's And Atkinson's Almshouse Charity	Day's And Atkinson's Almshouse Charity	£1,986.65	£1,574.12
Dimensions	Employment Project and Floating Support	£237,497.49	£225,310.03
Eleanor Palmer Trust	Eleanor Palmer Trust	£42,269.85	£13,231.35
Friend in Need	Day care, home support and carer support	£201,620.63	£175,409.94
Good Neighbour Scheme for Mill Hill & Burnt Oak	Good Neighbour Scheme for Mill Hill & Burnt Oak	£14,768.25	£12,848.38
Habinteg Housing	Housing Support Service	£24,627.00	£18,679.07
Hanover Housing Association	Housing Support Service	£8,462.97	£4,629.64
High Barnet Good Neighbour Scheme	High Barnet Good Neighbour Scheme	£2,910.00	£2,531.70
Jewish Association Mental Illness	JAMI House Day Centre	£24,948.40	£21,705.11
Jewish Care	Day Care	£70,574.64	£61,399.94
Jewish Community Housing Association	Helpline Service	£6,604.00	£7,035.04
Lewis W. Hammerson Memorial Home	Hammerson House	£11,109.44	£4,731.26
Metropolitan Support Trust	Housing Support and Extra Care	£139,133.54	£112,605.48
Middlesex Association in Barnet	Info, advice and home visiting service	£33,820.11	£31,369.64
Mind in Barnet	Befriending, Day Services, info and advocacy	£211,681.16	£184,162.61
Monarchs Sports Club	The Monday Club	£1,940.00	£1,687.80
New Barnet Community Association	New Barnet Community Association	£19,400.00	£16,878.00
North London Eating Disorders Support Group	North London Eating Disorders Support Group	£1,591.30	£1,384.43
Norwood	Housing Support	£159,842.49	£90,369.06
Notting Hill Housing	Floating Support and Supported Living	£1,408,850.17	£1,387,590.69
Orbit Housing Association	Housing Support	£1,296.33	£1,223.49
Orchard Housing Society	Orchard Housing Society	£17,403.14	£10,153.62
Retail Trust	Sheltered Housing Service	£59,164.25	£34,338.64

Organisation	Service	2010-11 Baseline Contract Values	2011-12 Baseline Contract Values
Richmond Fellowship	Housing Support and Employment	£107,190.63	£96,522.27
Royal Mencap Society Ltd	Supported Living	£39,007.12	£37,021.99
Sanctuary Housing Association	Extra Care and Housing Support	£108,830.37	£120,989.49
Shaftesbury Housing Group	St Giles House	£7,366.25	£5,878.22
St Pancras and Humanist Housing Association	Speedwell Court	£8,448.55	£6,851.52
Self Unlimited	Housing Support	£74,976.50	£42,972.58
The Abbeyfield Society	Housing Support	£22,579.39	£11,023.13
The Royal Scottish Corporation	Bruce Gardens & St Ninians Court	£38,185.60	£24,313.38
The Thomas Watson Cottage Homes	Colgate Court	£3,835.75	£1,150.29
Umbrella	Housing Support Service	£488,523.31	£473,867.61
Viridian Housing	Housing Support Service	£37,120.81	£11,229.57
Warden Housing Association	Homestead Court	£22,481.69	£13,001.10
Westlon Housing Association	Housing Support Service	£79,643.08	£14,061.53
Willow Housing	Housing Support Service	£44,497.72	£3,691.11