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Council Questions to the Leader
15 July 2014
Questions and Responses

AGENDA ITEM 5

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Full Council Procedure Rules 19.1, the Leader may delegate the responsibility for answering to any Chairman of a relevant committee.

Question 1

Councillor Brian Salinger

Can the Leader or the Chairman of the appropriate committee please tell Council how much money the council has received from the Government under the New Homes Bonus in each year since it was introduced? Can he please break down the figure by monies attributable to genuinely new homes and to homes brought back into use after being empty for 6 months or more? How have the monies been spent? How much has the council budgeted to receive in 2014/15?

Answer by the Leader

1. Actual figures of NHB allocations:

Financial Year	NHB Income
2011/12	£1,517,737
2012/13	£3,130,519
2013/14	£6,181,453
2014/15	£8,236,314

2. Breakdown of source of NHB income:

a) Due to rounding differences, the Council's NHB model produces slightly different outputs to the official government allocations. But the data and calculated benefits are accurate

b) It is also important to remember that NHB is a 6-year benefit, so the allocation from 2010/11 is repeated for the subsequent 5 years as well. This is the reason for the increasing value of the annual allocation until the scheme has been running for a period of 6 years, at which point it will approximately level off in terms of the annual income, provided the Council is delivering at approximately the same level.

	Council Tax Band	NHB Bonus	2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2013/14	
New Housing (completed units)	A	£963	97	£93,387	193	£185,811	412	£396,653	684	£658,521
	B	£1,124	51	£57,309	135	£151,701	255	£286,546	196	£220,247.16
	C	£1,284	184	£236,195	55	£70,602	381	£489,078	345	£442,866.15
	D	£1,444	206	£297,491	272	£392,803	487	£703,291	386	£557,434.18
	E	£1,765	86	£151,794	52	£91,783	167	£294,763	-31	£-54,716.55
	F	£2,086	99	£206,511	74	£154,362	37	£77,181	60	£125,158.20
	G	£2,407	13	£31,289	48	£115,530	31	£74,613	-15	£-36,103.20
	H	£2,888	33	£95,313	64	£184,849	31	£89,536	21	£60,653.46
	TOTAL:		769	£1,169,289	893	£1,347,440	1801	£2,411,662	1634	£1,974,060
Affordable Units Bonus		£350	0	0	385	£134,750	661	£231,350	355	£124,250
Empty Homes (no. brought back into use)	A	£963	-28	£-26,957	37	£35,622	34	£32,734	-13	£-12,516
	B	£1,124	69	£77,536	16	£17,979	22	£24,722	-25	£-28,093
	C	£1,284	19	£24,390	70	£89,857	122	£156,608	6	£7,702
	D	£1,444	47	£67,874	-3	£-4,332	71	£102,533	8	£11,553
	E	£1,765	4	£7,060	52	£91,783	25	£44,126	-30	£-52,952
	F	£2,086	19	£39,633	6	£12,516	16	£33,376	-9	£-18,774
	G	£2,407	43	£103,496	-34	£-81,834	1	£2,407	2	£4,814
	H	£2,888	21	£60,653	-9	£-25,994	4	£11,553	20	£57,765
	TOTAL:		194	£353,686	135	£135,596	295	£408,058	-41	£-30,500
Gypsy and Traveller Bonus		£350	0	£0	0	£0	0	£0	0	£0
			£1,522,975		£1,617,786		£3,051,070		£2,067,811	

3. Allocation of income

Some of this money has been spent to support past infrastructure projects, some is being spent on supporting current infrastructure projects and some money will be spent on supporting infrastructure projects in the future.

Supplementary Question

The Leader will recognise the importance to the council's budget of the New Homes Bonus which includes a substantial sum from homes brought back into use that have been empty for six months. Will the Leader ensure that the council retains the ability to identify those properties and to ensure that the valuable sums of money due to the council are able to be collected from the government?

Supplementary Answer

It is of vital importance we do this whilst this scheme is running and also particularly get on with it before it starts to be top-sliced by the Mayor of London and the government has its eyes on it as well.

Question 2

Councillor Alison Moore

Does the Leader think it is right to reverse funding cuts to some organisations providing short breaks services to children with severe and complex disabilities and their families and not others, and if so why?

Answer by the Leader

As part of the budget planning round last year, there were individual negotiations with each provider and different levels of reductions and efficiencies were agreed with each provider. Each provider was treated individually, and carefully. We have continued to follow this policy in relation to further representations made.

Supplementary Question

Can the Leader explain why having made a pre-election promise to the parents of Mapledown School pupils to restore after-school funding, those parents were left with no confirmation of that for weeks, once the election was over ?.

Supplementary Answer

Sometimes the wheels of bureaucracy move slowly.

Question 3**Councillor Mark Shooter**

We recently had the welcome news that Barnet has the fourth lowest percentage of young people classed as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in the whole country. Can the Leader provide an assessment of how this has been achieved and how important working across both policy areas and with our public and private sector partners has been to this success?

Answer by the Leader

The reduction in the number of Young People who are NEET has been achieved through a wide range of actions including:

- We have established partnerships with schools, colleges and training providers in order to improve the collection of data and to monitor young people, who leave a programme of study before completion.
- The Placement and Participation team have followed up these young people and supported them back into Education, Employment and Training. In addition we have held regular events for those that are NEET in different venues across the borough. This has involved collaboration with a number of voluntary sector organisations.
- We have worked with schools to identify those at risk of becoming NEET during year 11, and have supported these young people during their transition. Those deemed most at risk were provided with volunteer mentors, supported through a voluntary sector organisation.
- The Local Authority Platforms programme has provided funding for motivational programmes for those most disengaged. Over 50% of this group has progressed into employment. The Platforms Programme was delivered in partnership with RE.

The Council's work on this matter has been identified as an area of good practice and shared across London Councils.

Supplementary Question

How do we ensure all NEET percentages continue to fall in the future?

Supplementary Answer

It is very important that we continue the good work and make sure that we retain our good record on this. I suggest that both national and regional government will continue to put money into this and it is up to the council to ensure any gaps are filled to minimise this.

Question 4**Councillor Ammar Naqvi**

How would the Leader define a pecuniary interest?

Answer by the Leader

Chapter 7 of Localism Act 2011 sets out what constitutes a pecuniary interest. I am happy with that definition.

Supplementary Question

Chapter 7 of the Localism Act, 2011 refers to a description specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State. I presume that the Leader also accepts this?

Supplementary Answer

Yes.

Question 5**Councillor Mark Shooter**

What was the trend in the last quarter of 2013/14 with regards to the council's spend on agency workers?

Answer by the Leader

There was a 12% reduction in agency staffing expenditure. Agency staff costs incurred during 2013/14 was £3.276m lower than in 2012/13.

Supplementary Question

Can the Leader confirm that these figures are correct?

Supplementary Answer

By one definition, these figures are correct. However, overall, they do not give the full picture and this will be communicated in writing.

Question 6**Councillor Amy Trevethan**

Would the Leader provide an update on the ratio of pomp to pomposity in Councillor Rayner's mayorship so far?

Answer by the Leader

The Mayor and Mayoress are working hard and are well received by the public. The right ratio is being achieved.

Supplementary Question

At the last meeting the Mayor was insistent that respect should be shown not to him as an individual but to the office that he holds. In view of the serious allegation surrounding his business dealings, can the Leader please tell us if it due to pomp or to pomposity that the Mayor has not done the honourable thing and stood down whilst the allegations are being investigated?.

Supplementary Answer

I suggest that neither is a factor.

Question 7**Councillor Anthony Finn**

Does the Leader welcome the news that the care worker strike is off as negotiations continue?

Answer by the Leader

Yes.

Question 8**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

It was recently the first anniversary of the wilful destruction of the Bravanese Centre on Coppetts Road. I know the Leader has been supportive of the re-building of the centre. Could he up-date Members on the current position and future plans to ensure this promise is implemented?

Answer by the Leader

The work of the Bravanese community has been supported from the start of this incident and alternative accommodation has been made available at Barnet House.

The council has been pursuing options to provide a new community hub for the benefit of the community generally whilst at the same time providing a new modern facility for use by the Bravanese community.

Having accepted that a re-provision on the existing site may not meet all the aspirations of either the Council or the community a number of alternative options have been considered. These have now been pared down to two possible options which will be worked through to arrive at a preferred solution by August.

Design and Construction will then follow to conclude in the autumn of 2015. The council will deploy monies received from insurers together with funding from the council to ensure a satisfactory conclusion is achieved.

Question 9**Councillor Anthony Finn**

Does the Leader welcome the fact that the requirement for the council to make budgetary savings of £72m by 2020 was agreed unanimously by both Conservative and Labour members at the inaugural meeting of Policy and Resources Committee last month?

Answer by the Leader

Members of all parties will recognise that the last decade has been difficult in terms of the economic situation and very high levels of public spending. If the tax payer is hammered the economy will not continue to grow. There is a need to control national spending which then affects Barnet spending. Councillors will recognise the reality of the situation, whilst lobbying through both parties to make sure that our borough is not disadvantaged. We can be sure that early planning will make for smoother implementation of what will have to be done.

Question 10**Councillor Nagus Narenthira**

Would the Leader explain to me why only crossing islands have been put on Aerodrome Road when S106 for a controlled crossing was secured? How much money was spent on the islands versus the cost of the controlled crossing, and when will the controlled crossing actually be delivered?

Answer by the Leader

I do not believe there was S106 for a controlled crossing. Traffic islands will be constructed as part of the regeneration.

Supplementary Question

Will the Leader assure that the crossing agreed at the Hendon Area Environment Sub-Committee on the 16th October 2012, will be installed as soon as possible?

Supplementary Answer

If something was agreed and budgeted, it should be installed if it is still needed and I hope the committee will look at it again.

Question 11

Councillor Anthony Finn

What work is the council undertaking to investigate or tackle social isolation in the borough and how significant could such work be in reducing demand for care in the long term?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput (Chairman of Adults and Safeguarding Committee)

The council commissions a number of activities within the borough to help older people overcome loneliness. A neighbourhood model of services led by Age UK Barnet commenced in April 2013 and in its first year of operation has doubled the number of older people to nearly 3,000 taking part in these activities in 17 venues across the borough. Over 250 volunteers, many of these older people themselves, support these activities. An evaluation at the end of the first year has identified that attendees feel less isolated as a result of being part of the neighbourhood services.

The council has also undertaken significant analysis to develop a social isolation toolkit which identifies where isolated older people live in the borough. Ethnographic research has been carried out to identify why older people are lonely and what would help older people overcome feelings of loneliness. An action plan to tackle the key issues is being developed in conjunction with the Health and Well-Being Board and the Older People's Partnership Board.

National evidence suggests that lonely older people can enter residential care four years earlier than people who do not identify themselves as lonely. Initial analysis suggests if we delay the admission of people aged over 75 into residential care for one year by tackling loneliness then we could save over £1 million. (2.7% of people who are aged 75 and over in Barnet are currently placed in residential care).

There is however, a lack of robust evidence in what is the most effective way to tackle loneliness and save money in long-term care. We are liaising with the Campaign to End Loneliness who are developing an evaluation tool that commissioners and services can use to measure the effectiveness of services.

Question 12

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

How much has been spent on highways (roads and pavements) in (a) the whole of Golders Green ward, (b) the NW11 part of Golders Green ward and (c) the NW2 part of Golders Green ward in 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen (Chairman of Environment Committee)

Golders Green Ward	NW11 & NW2	Funding source	Notes
Year	Spend (excluding fees)		
2010/11	£16,662.30 £17,355.95 £124,589.61	Borough Borough LIP/TfL	Split road with Childs Hill
2011/12	£101,471.51	LIP/TfL	
2012/13	£242,588.35	Borough	
2013/14	£964,805.76	Borough	

Golders Green Ward	NW11	Funding source	Notes
Year	Spend (excluding fees)		
2010/11	£16,662.30 £17,355.95	Borough Borough	Split road with Childs Hill
2011/12	-		
2012/13	£202,745.83	Borough	
2013/14	£889,368.93	Borough	

Golders Green Ward	NW2	Funding source	Notes
Year	Spend (excluding fees)		
2010/11	£124,589.61	LIP/TfL	
2011/12	£101,471.51	LIP/TfL	
2012/13	£39,842.52	Borough	
2013/14	£75,436.83	Borough	

Supplementary Question

Can Cllr Cohen explain why three times as much money has been spent in the NW11 part of Golders Green Ward compared with the NW2 part? And can he also explain why the figures here differ from those that he gave in the answer to Cllr Coleman back in January?

Supplementary Answer

As Cllr Schneiderman knows the NW2 part of Golders Green is a much smaller than the NW11 part of the ward. The figures given were £16,662.30 which was the figure provided by officers and that

was the correct figure. What has been added is the split road with Childs Hill and the LIP funding by TfL.

Question 13

Councillor Wendy Prentice

Would the Leader comment on the situation at Wolverhampton City Council and indicate what lessons Barnet and other authorities can draw from its experience?

Answer by the Leader

Wolverhampton City Council has recently announced that well over 500 staff have been approved for voluntary redundancy, with a further 1,500 jobs to go to meet their target of cutting 2,000 posts (a third of their workforce). Because of previous inaction and unwillingness by the Labour councillors to accept and deliver cost savings, they now must find £123m by 2018 – a much greater challenge than we face in Barnet. As a result, library opening hours have been significantly scaled back, the majority of youth clubs been closed and parking charges been introduced in the evenings and on Sundays to raise income. This shows the very real repercussions if councils fail to set out a robust savings programme, fail to accept that they need to change how they work and fail to take tough and sometimes unpopular decisions early. The job losses and the impact on frontline services far eclipse anything seen in Barnet.

Early planning and not burying one's corporate head in the sand avoids panic cuts.

Question 14

Councillor Alison Moore

The Pavilion in Cherry Tree Wood is in a dreadful state and works on it appear to have ground to a halt. Could the Leader explain why this building has been allowed to get into such a state and what is being done to ensure that the works being done by the new lessee are completed swiftly, and please could the Leader explain why, after multiple complaints from residents and councillors over recent years, the gentleman's toilet was still closed and unusable on the day of the day of the East Finchley Festival?

Answer by the Leader

The pavilion in Cherry Tree Woods had stood vacant for a number of years as it was surplus to requirements, had no operational service delivery functionality and required significant levels of investment that was not available due to other priorities. The property was identified as a commercial letting opportunity for a park café and/or other uses, but the progression of expressions of interest to develop the property and bring it back into use have previously been hampered by some local opposition and funding requirements.

We have been fortunate enough to find a tenant who is willing to improve the property and redress the outstanding work and repairs. All the relevant planning permission and authorisations have been achieved and the tenant is on site progressing with the refurbishment works.

However, the works will need to be progressed at a measured and affordable pace. At the moment a plan of work to address the technical issues affecting the structure and fabric of the building are being worked through. The Council is supporting the tenant to progress these issues and arrive at a sustainable business model for the future, it was originally hoped that the café would be operational by the end of the summer, but unfortunately the structural repairs have proved to be much more

involved than originally anticipated.

The public toilets at Cherry Tree Wood have undergone extensive internal and external refurbishment works, which were completed in time for the East Finchley Festival. All toilets were operational, but we understand from the event organisers that they closed the gents toilets as they were unable to cope with the demand, instead gentlemen were redirected to use the portaloos provided for the event and this ensured the ladies toilets were available. The provision of sufficient portaloos to service the event is a requirement of the booking and should provide enough provision to service the event without the use of the normal park toilets.

Supplementary Question

I declare a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the organising committee of the festival. I am clear that the men's toilets were not open on the day of the festival and it was not the decision of the organising committee to leave them shut. They were not open at the very beginning of the day. Will the Leader write with an explanation as to why that was the case, despite assurances?

Supplementary Answer

Yes. I agree it was a matter of some concern.

Question 15

Councillor Bridget Perry

What does the Leader think will be the advantages of giving the Area Committees an annual fund of £100,000 to spend in their local areas?

Answer by the Leader

The idea adopted by all parties in the last council was to give ward members a limited pot of money to spend at their discretion in their constituency. The idea was not to spend a big proportion on administration. I was supportive of the proposal.

Question 16

Councillor Adam Langleben

Does the Leader think that landlords renting to tenants in receipt of housing benefit should be charging closer to the upper limits of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates or at significantly lower market level rates?

Answer by the Leader

Local Housing Allowance is based on rental levels. It is for Landlords to decide what they should set as a rent.

Question 17

Councillor Bridget Perry

Does the Leader welcome the planning consent given for the redevelopment of the Spires in High Barnet and does he feel it can further boost local trade in the area?

Answer by the Leader

Yes, the proposals recently afforded planning consent represents a significant investment in the Spires which will improve its attractiveness as a key local shopping facility and increase footfall and spend in the town centre generally.

Question 18**Councillor Philip Cohen**

Does the Leader agree with me that too many people in Barnet have been either killed or injured in road traffic accidents and that therefore it is time for a robust Borough Road Safety Strategy to be developed and implemented?

Answer by the Leader

Any death on the road is a tragedy and we should strive to make sure the roads are as safe as possible. One can't, however, stop accidents caused by stupidity or carelessness.

Supplementary Question

Does the Leader agree that the number of people either killed or injured on Barnet's roads is unacceptably high and that further action is needed by the council?

Supplementary Answer

Any death or injury is a tragedy and we should all work to make sure the roads are as safe as possible. But it is not possible to 'legislate against stupidity and carelessness.'

Question 19**Councillor Val Duschinsky**

Would the Leader or the Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board like to comment on the success of the 'Get to know cancer' pop-up shop and the importance of raising awareness and providing early information in the battle to improve patient outcomes across the borough?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart (Chairman of Health and Well-being Board)

Cancer is an issue that will affect an estimated four in ten Londoners at some point in their lives and we all know someone who has been afflicted by this terrible disease and the devastating effect it can have on both sufferers and their families. That is why it is so important to get across that with early diagnosis Cancer is treatable even beatable. If people are more aware of the signs and symptoms of Cancer and know to see their GP as soon as they notice an unusual change then Cancer can be detected sooner.

Equally important is the fact that in approximately 40% of cases in the UK, Cancer is actually preventable. Changing certain lifestyles – giving up smoking, eating more healthily, not having too much alcohol and tackling obesity – even taking more physical exercise – can make all the difference.

Barnet has been one of only 6 London Boroughs so far to host a 'Get to Know Cancer' (GTKC) Pop up Shop to get these messages across to local residents. The Shops are staffed by nurses who offer advice and information and volunteers called 'cancer activists' who introduce visitors to the Shop and help direct them to relevant information and support. In Barnet, our Shop also offered free BMI tests.

Well over 1000 people were reached by the presence of the GTKC pop up shop in Barnet - either as visitors to it or by being approached and talked to by cancer activists, reached by leaflets which were given out, or simply made more aware of the Campaign through advertising. In addition, there were 700 one-to-one nurse consultations and the staff were able to signpost people to other services, including their GP, the Stop Smoking Service, Healthy Walks, Outdoor Gyms, Drugs and Alcohol programmes and Breast, Bowel and Cervical Screening programmes. GP visitor forms have also identified that visitors went onto primary care services as a result of these one-to-one consultations.

Supplementary Question

While we all recognise that early diagnosis is important, how much did it cost, where did the funds come from and was this considered to be good value for money?

Supplementary Answer

The entire £25,000 cost of setting up the Cancer Pop Up shop was funded from the increased public health allocation, something like so many other initiatives which would never have been done had these funds been under the egis of the PCT. Working with the shared health and wellbeing strategy premise that 'prevention is better than cure', what better way to support the 1000+ visitors to the pop up shop into changing their lifestyle, thereby helping to prevent the 40% of cancers caused by poor lifestyle choices. That was done through one-to-one support at the shop. As early detection not only saves lives but the earlier a cancer is detected, the drastic and traumatic the treatment to eradicate it, the fact that the first 50 visitors in the afternoon it was opened, seven were referred to their GPs for further help, speaks volumes. If this £25,000 saves just one life from dying from cancer and one family in the borough from the trauma and fear that cancer brings with it, then it is money well spent.

Question 20

Councillor Reema Patel

Please would the Leader provide me with an update on school places for children in Coppetts?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone (Chairman of Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee)

There are 150 Reception school places within the Coppetts Ward. All children that applied for a Reception place on time have been allocated a school place. Late applications will of course continue to be received.

Supplementary Question

Everybody is increasingly aware of the pressure on primary and secondary school places across London. Would the Leader agree that serious action is needed to address this serious demographic pressure and advise what he is going to do, not just in Coppetts but also across the borough of Barnet.

Supplementary Answer

I keep a watching brief on school places within the local authority because there are pressures that change over the demographic within the area and in particular there is an unpredictability about those entering reception years which put to challenge the provision to make sure those places are met. The last update received, the borough have continued to make sure that places have been given to all those who applied within time. For those who applied out of time, of course, every endeavour to make sure that everything that can be is done for them but it is a matter of great importance for the council.

Question 21

Councillor Val Duschinsky

Was there an increase or decrease in the numbers of older people being placed into residential care in the last quarter for which figures are available?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput (Chairman of Adults and Safeguarding Committee)

At the end of April 14, the number of older people in residential and residential nursing care was 719. This decreased by 25 over the financial year 2013-14, from the March 2013 number of 744

placements. In the first quarter of 2014-15 financial year, the total number of residential and nursing care placements has increased by 2 to 721. Barnet Adult Social Care's approach is to support people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible through the use of home based care, equipment and adaptations; and to place people in residential care only when they can no longer stay safe and well in their own home, and alternatives such as extra-care / sheltered housing are also not suitable for the individual.

Question 22

Councillor Gill Sargeant

Would the Leader explain why he thinks it is okay to allocate £1m of highways spending to his own ward and allocate Colindale nothing?

Answer by the Leader

I would very much like £1m for Totteridge ward, but Colindale is having more than this spent on highways as part of the regeneration works.

Supplementary Question

People always associate Colindale with the 10,000 new homes and with the huge amount of highway spending that is going to be needed there, of which very little has been done so far. There is another part of Colindale which is not being regenerated and that also got no money. Please could the Leader investigate what we could do for the rest of the ward to ensure that some of the highways money is spent on the other part of Colindale as well.

Supplementary Answer

I suggest that the Environment Committee and the Area Committee will look into this issue.

Question 23

Councillor Stephen Sowerby

It has been muted that the cross-rail extension could include New Southgate Station. What are the Leader's views on this and what representations will the council make on this issue?

Answer by the Leader

We will not be mute. Barnet has a view and that will be developed. I would expect that all members will welcome faster communications with the rest of the UK but be concerned that the ensuing development be carefully managed.

Question 24

Councillor Ammar Naqvi

The Members' Code of Conduct sets out the high standards expected of anyone aspiring to public office in the London Borough of Barnet. The London Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS) has a Code of Conduct which requires of a good landlord many of the same qualities demanded of a Barnet councillor, such as integrity, openness and honesty. What message does the Leader have for private landlords who fail to comply with the LLAS Code of Conduct and yet want to be councillors in Barnet?

Answer by the Leader

Members of the council are expected to show high standards. Landlords are expected to have the same.

Supplementary Question

Although the given answer is an interesting observation, it doesn't seem to address the question. Does the Leader think that individuals who contravene the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme's code of conduct are fit to be councillors in the London Borough or Barnet?

Supplementary Answer

Very high standards are required for all public offices which go well beyond that required for a landlord.

Question 25

Councillor Stephen Sowerby

Would the Leader like to comment on the recent Bravanese event held at North London Business Park (NLBP) and reaffirm the importance of the council working alongside all of Barnet's diverse communities to foster good-relations and ensure the council delivers for all residents.

Answer by the Leader

It was a successful and enjoyable event with many members of the community present. I hope the arsonists who burnt down the previous centre are furious at how the rest of the community has supported the victims of the attack.

Question 26

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

How much money has been spent on sourcing an alternative site for the black bin depot; how many sites have been considered; how many are still under consideration and when will a new site be decided upon?

Answer by the Leader

Our plans for a new depot are unchanged and we await the decision of Haringey planning in due course.

Question 27

Councillor Gabriel Rozenberg

What percentage customer satisfaction was achieved in Quarter 4 of 2013/14 with regards to the Customer Support Group and how did this compare with its target?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn (Chairman of Performance and Contract Management Committee)

Customer satisfaction improved steadily throughout 2013/14, having been made a Key Performance Indicator in the CSG contract with our partner Capita, with performance in the final quarter (*Quarter 4*) standing at 74% (against a target of 65%).

Supplementary Question

Does Cllr Finn agree that a pragmatic approach to outsourcing, which means using business as a partner on a case by case basis, is the best way to keep Barnet's tax payers satisfied with council services at a time of austerity?

Supplementary Answer

I agree and invite Cllr Rozenberg to all future business management forums and contract management committee meetings where he will see the continuing increase in customer satisfaction with the Capita contract and also the savings which are on target and which are continuing to be made under the Capita contract.

Question 28

Councillor Alison Moore

Does the Leader think that it was acceptable to allocate a significant proportion of the £4m funding for roads and pavements spent in 2013/14 contrary to the reserved schemes agreed at public committee and to then report those works and allocations retrospectively to the area environment subcommittees in March 2014?

Answer by the Leader

We used to operate a Leader and Cabinet decision making process. I am not aware of any impropriety. So the short answer is yes.

Supplementary Question

Can the Leader clarify if it was legitimate for the former cabinet member to take decisions to allocate hundreds of thousands of pounds to his own ward, potentially in private and within six months of crucial local elections but only report those retrospectively.

Supplementary Answer

Cabinet members' decisions are not reported retrospectively. They are reported at the time.

Question 29

Councillor Caroline Stock

Does the Leader welcome the Government's special pothole fund for local authorities and how much extra funding will Barnet benefit from as a result?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen (Chairman of Environment Committee)

Barnet has successfully received Government funding of £313,844 to help repair potholes over the local road network which will be utilized during 2014/15.

Supplementary Question

Will investment in highways continue to be a high priority for this council?

Supplementary Answer

I confirm that investment in highways will continue as a key priority of this council.

Question 30

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

Would the Leader explain why he didn't consult all councillors on the £4m additional highways allocations before proceeding with his proposed schemes?

Answer by the Leader

Active councillors are always campaigning for their wards.

Supplementary Question

Can the Leader confirm that 9 Tory councillors who lost the election were not active in their wards?¹⁴

Also, how could one councillor be allowed to spend such a huge amount in one ward?

Supplementary Answer

I acknowledge that Colindale received an enormous amount of money in highways spending.

Question 31

Councillor John Marshall

Would the Leader update Council with regards to our membership of the Local Government Association (LGA)?

Answer by the Leader

In a time of austerity, it is right that the Council reviews all of its expenditure, and this includes reviewing the value that we get from membership of the Local Government Association. At the meeting of Policy and Resources Committee on 10th June 2014, the committee agreed that the Council would write to the LGA informing them that we are considering terminating our membership. The notice period for leaving the LGA is one year, so this notice would need to be given by 31st March 2015 if we are to leave on the 1st April 2016.

Extract from Minutes:

The Committee considered the report.

RESOLVED

That Policy and Resources Committee recommend that the Council inform the Local Government Association the Council is minded to give notice to leave the Association, and that Policy and Resources Committee reconsider this matter again at a later date, with officers to report back to the committee on value for money of the Local Government Association.

Supplementary Question

Would the Leader agree that it is much better to spend our council tax on services in Barnet rather than membership of a national body which is of limited interest to the people of Barnet?

Supplementary Answer

It was agreed at committee that this would be looked at and reported back. Some are very keen on this particular club and officers and working up a justification for staying. I have attended many meetings and found that they are 'restful and sleep-inducing'.

Question 32

Councillor Ammar Naqvi

Does the Leader think that private landlords with social tenants, wherein Barnet Homes facilitated the placing of said tenants, should be subject to the same level of overview and scrutiny by Council as Barnet Homes?

Answer by the Leader

No.

Supplementary Question

The Leader's answer appears to support what many have suspected: that the council are abdicating responsibility here. Is this an admission that Barnet do not believe they owe a duty of care to tenants?

they place with landlords? Indeed, the Leader cares so little about the quality of life of these tenants that he can't even muster more than one syllable in response to the question.

Supplementary Answer

I have always valued brevity. A straight forward, one word answer is much better than a long torpid one. And the answer to the supplementary question is also no.

Question 33

Councillor John Marshall

Can the Leader explain what is going on with regards to corporate governance and how the council's work programme will be kept on track?

Answer by the Leader

We have appointed Claer Lloyd-Jones as the independent investigator and have asked her to establish the facts around the processes leading up to the production of reports for the Annual Council meeting on 2nd June.

The investigator is drawing towards the close of this part of the investigation. She has scrutinised a large number of relevant documents and emails and has interviewed key officers and councillors including staff from the Assurance Service and the Shared Legal Service. There are a small number of interviews left to conduct.

Recommendations for action which the Council should consider will follow in the investigator's written report, expected to be produced before the end of July.

The investigator will subsequently look at the options for strengthening Barnet's corporate governance arrangements for the future.

In the meantime, following the receipt of QC's advice, the majority of the Council's decision making processes were swiftly resumed. As some of the irregular arrangements predated the Annual Council decision, the Monitoring Officer commissioned an external legal review to identify any other areas where the Council Constitution might not be fully legally compliant. This forms part of a report to 15 July 2014 on amending the Constitution. A number of changes have been made to ensure the Council can fully meet the proportionality regulations- specifically on size of committees, and local planning committees. Both internal and external legal advice has been sought to confirm that the reports going to this meeting on proportionality and committee allocations fully comply with relevant legislation. The Council's decision making processes will therefore be entirely compliant from 15 July onwards. The Constitution Ethics and Probity Committee under Cllr Marshall has the on-going task of reviewing the Constitution and a number of further areas have been identified, either by the external review or by the practical experience of rolling out a committee system, for them to consider at their next meeting and bring further recommendations forward.

Supplementary Question

Does the Leader agree that the investigations taken since 2nd June have suggested that these problems go back a long way and pre-date the Conservative Party taking over control of this council?

Supplementary Answer

The report has not yet been delivered and issued but certainly we can all agree that no councillor was aware of this particular difficulty that developed and it is something that does need to be investigated

properly and put it right, which has been done at this meeting. Secondly, what happened has to be discovered and thirdly, to make sure this kind of thing can never happen again. It may well go back many municipal generations as suspected.

Question 34

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

When will the Council begin negotiations with Friern Barnet Community Library for a 10 year lease?

Answer by the Leader

The community property review is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2014, which will address all community lettings, and provide a policy on which to negotiate agreements with community organisations for their occupation of council buildings. This will ensure a consistent approach to community lettings and will provide a framework to address length of leases, rent, responsibility for repairs and community use. On completion, all community lettings will be addressed.

Supplementary Question

The Leader might agree that this answer was written before the latest ARG Committee meeting and would he agree that part of the vote at that committee has now agreed that negotiations can start with Friern Barnet Community Library and they can look forward to a substantial lease for the future of that library to continue?.

Supplementary Answer

By virtue of their head start, they will be one of the first to succeed.

Question 35

Councillor John Marshall

It was recently claimed in the local press that the council had purchased two new Daimler cars for £120,000. Is this true?

Answer by the Leader

Of course not!

This suggestion appeared in the letters pages of two local newspapers and it is disappointing that neither paper sought to check the veracity of the claim before publishing it.

Had they done so they might have learnt that the Daimler Motor Company, a subsidiary of Jaguar, does not seem to have produced a car since 2007, never mind sold two of them to this council.

For the record, while the council previously ran two lease cars for the mayoralty this was reduced to one car last year, with the council buying the Mayor's car at the end of its lease. So rather than buying two brand new cars, the Council is running one second hand model.

As you might expect, this will produce a cash saving this year.

Question 36

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Rather than the Council sending out an apology for the delay in issuing free parking permits to councillors, will the Leader take this opportunity to scrap this unfair perk?

Answer by the Leader

Members decide whether they require this pass. Many members are pleased not to have it. There is a real issue for members who have to visit homes in a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) where there are limited alternatives for parking.

I am advised these permits were asked for by a Labour politician.

Supplementary Question

The Leader's answer says there's a real issue for members with regards to parking. Actually there is a real issue for residents with regards to parking but why does he think the Tory councillors, who are the only ones who take these, need a parking permit to do their role as a councillor when Labour members can manage perfectly well without one.

Supplementary Answer

It depends on the nature of the ward. But it has been a mystery to me.

Question 37**Councillor Alison Cornelius**

The Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee have agreed to go out to public consultation on a new model of Early Years provision. Does the Leader agree that improving early years' services could have a huge potential both in improving the life chances of our children and saving money to the public purse by preventing issues developing that need later redress?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone (Chairman of Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee)

A wide range of national and international economic studies suggest that returns to early investment in children during the pre-birth period and up to the age of eight years old are high, but reduce the later the investment is initiated.

Positive interventions in early childhood work best when they bring together a variety of sectors including nutrition, health, education, and support for parents. Research conclusively demonstrates the impact of well-planned interventions.

Children who live in the most adverse circumstances can make the biggest gains in their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical progress if they have good nutrition, interaction, and relationships early in their lives and have access to high-quality early childhood development services. These children are healthy and ready for school, finish more years of education, get better jobs, and live longer than their parents. Investing in early childhood programmes for the most disadvantaged can and does increase social mobility and reduces dependency saving money from the public purse.

Supplementary Question

What impact will this improvement have on life outcomes for residents of Barnet?

Supplementary Answer

The opportunities that we have for young people where we have intervention, certainly starting from the age of three and in some cases younger, is that we improve those opportunities for education, for employment and for quality of life, not to mention the significant savings and costs for those that could have ended up subject to one of the care systems at a later point where the intervention didn't happen.

Question 38**Councillor Adam Langleben**

The highest rate of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) that can be claimed by a recipient of housing benefit is £1667.47 per month for a four bedroom property. Average market rent levels for four bedroom property's in many areas of Barnet are significantly below this. Would the Leader agree that charging closer to the maximum LHA rate rather than the average market rate for the area would constitute overcharging to the detriment of the public purse?

Answer by the Leader

The figure quoted is for the Outer North Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) area which is not the most expensive area of Barnet. A search on Right Move on 2 July 2014 demonstrated that there were only 12 four bed properties with a rent below the LHA rate of £1667.47 in the whole borough.

Supplementary Question

Could the Leader advise if any of the 12 properties mentioned in his answer are owed and rented out by Conservative councillors in Barnet?

Supplementary Answer

Perhaps Cllr Langleben would like to study the list of interests as published.

Question 39**Councillor Alison Cornelius**

How many children were adopted or permanently placed in 2013/14?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone (Chairman of Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee)

There were 38 children that were adopted or permanently placed in 2013/14, an increase on the previous year.

Supplementary Question

How does this impact the life chances of those in the care system?

Supplementary Answer

I am pleased that Cllr Cornelius has identified that whilst an increase in adoption, the other important dimension to exiting the care system is with other permanent placements. It is a real opportunity when young people are in a position to be able to move out of the care system and into a more permanent location, gives a much greater opportunity as evidence suggests, a much better outcome for those young people.

Question 40**Councillor Ammar Naqvi**

Does the Leader think that the status of properties, occupied by social tenants but owned by private landlords, wherein Barnet Homes facilitated the placing of said tenants, should be included in Barnet Homes' performance reports?

Answer by the Leader

Barnet Homes does not have an on-going relationship with private landlords or their tenants when a housing duty is discharged.

Supplementary Question

Why has RE been tasked with researching the number of private sector landlords in order to establish if a licensing scheme is required, if the council doesn't think it is necessary to have a relationship with private landlords. The council have instituted a policy to rehouse people in the private sector. Surely this places an ethical responsibility on the council to ensure that tenants' rights are protected.

Supplementary Answer

Tenants' rights are very important and it's right that there should be proper protection.

Question 41**Councillor Daniel Thomas**

Would the Leader join me in congratulating Mike Freer, MP for Finchley and Golders Green, on being appointed a Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Party and agree that his example in advocating equality is one we should follow across the work of the council?

Answer by the Leader

Yes. When Mike Freer was Leader he was an example to the nation in promoting real equality whilst dismantling the expensive paraphernalia of the equality business that supports so many who do so little. Finchley has a proud history in the equality world with the first Lady Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher who brought so much pride to our borough.

Question 42**Councillor Nagus Narenthira**

Would the Leader update me on what discussions have taken place with Transport for London (TfL) to provide an additional bus stop on Aerodrome Road, and whether the bus stop will be delivered and when?

Answer by the Leader

The Traffic and Development team is currently engaged in discussions with TfL's Bus Infrastructure Controller for the area regarding where and how additional and/or relocated bus stops in Aerodrome Road might be provided.

Supplementary Question

Is the Leader aware that TfL is in talks with the police to come to a mutual agreeable solution to ensure the additional bus stop in Aerodrome Road is delivered and will the Leader support a quick resolution of the problem so Colindale residents' needs are met quickly?

Supplementary Answer

Dealing with bodies like TfL is extremely time consuming but I do support a rapid assessment and delivery.

Question 43**Councillor Reema Patel**

Having completed the consultation for a 20mph limit for the roads west of Colney Hatch Lane, N10, when will this be implemented; what is the timetable for consultation on 20mph limit for roads east of Colney Hatch Lane N10; what is the timetable for consultation on 20mph limit in Friern Village and when will yellow line restrictions be implemented on Ribblesdale Avenue by the junction with Colney Hatch Lane?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen (Chairman of Environment Committee)

The 20mph limit ('west of Colney Hatch Lane (CHL)') is currently at implementation stage and the PFI (Lighting) contractor is fabricating bracket arms off-site and will. Later on, be on location to carry out advance electrical enabling works.

The consultation on '20mph limit on roads east of CHL' is anticipated to commence in late autumn once the feasibility study has been finalised and circulated (early autumn) to ward members.

Currently there are no new developments since the last update where it was reported the issue had been discussed at the Chipping Barnet Area Environment Sub-Committee and members had resolved to defer pending the formulating of a borough-wide policy on the issue of 20mph to assist the Sub-Committee in making an informed decision. The cabinet position on borough-wide 20mph is not yet finalised.

The implementation of waiting restrictions (yellow lines etc.) can only happen once the road has been adopted. At the time of writing, the adoption agreement is still with the developers for signing off.

Supplementary Question

I was privileged as a candidate to support the 'Walk Safe N10 Campaign' who effectively managed to get a number of proposals for 20 mph limits. I wanted to draw attention to Cllr Trevethan's proposal to introduce a borough-wide road safety strategy. Given the extent to which the administration has listened to the needs of residents across Coppits to date, would the administration be willing to support the introduction of a borough-wide road safety strategy. I will be pushing hard on behalf of the residents in Coppets for the introduction of a 20 mph zone.

Supplementary Answer

The strategy is being raised at the Area Environment Committee on 24th and should be discussed then. I have always been supportive of the 20 mph zone and the 'walk safe' across the borough and where there is a need for 20 mph, was decided by Cabinet, and that will be implemented if it is supported by residents in select locations and where there is a need.

Question 44

Councillor Adam Langleben

On 13 February 1941, the Welsh Harp sector of West Hendon was devastated by a high explosive SC2500 bomb, killing 85 people, injuring hundreds and making over 1000 people homeless. It was one of the most severe bombings in Barnet during the Second World War. After the war, York Memorial Park was built on the top of the destroyed homes in memory of those who had died and the lives that were destroyed on that one night. Does the Leader agree with me that it is distasteful that York Memorial Park is to be bulldozed to make way for luxury homes? Does the Leader think that this is a fitting tribute?

Answer by the Leader

Yes. I think the member might agree that housing is one of the most important issues for the borough. The re-building of the West Hendon estate, where so many residents are trapped in bad conditions, is vitally important. The new flats that will be sold are supplying the money that will enable the estate to be re-built.

Supplementary Question

Many residents have said they are not particularly happy with the destruction of York Memorial Park. Would the Leader state what memorial would be put in place to remember those who died and ... (*faulty recording*) ... meeting with the residents of West Hendon Estate to discuss regeneration.

Supplementary Answer

I would be happy to listen to a proposal and hope that Cllr Langleben will lead the fund-raising for a suitable memorial. I am always happy to meet with residents.

Question 45

Councillor Alison Moore

What is the latest update on how much Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) money has been allocated, how many people have benefitted in the last financial year, and what is the breakdown of the reason for money being allocated?

Answer by the Leader

For 2013/14, Barnet was allocated £1,998,661. The Council paid 1,513 claims totalling £1,238,327 as follows:

- 402 claims where the applicant was affected by the Benefit Cap – **£569,010**
- 227 claims where the applicant was affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy – **£110,240**
- 629 claims where the applicant was affected by LHA restrictions – **£417,994**
- 44 claims where the applicant was affected by a combination of reforms – **£27,951**
- 211 claims where the applicant was not affected by any of the above – **£113,132**

Some boroughs have applied a loose criteria to the allocation of DHPs – essentially using it to supplement income lost through benefits rather than using it in a way that incentivises people to find work or take action to reduce outgoings.

Barnet's measure of success is not how much DHP has been spent, but how many people the Council has supported into work. 31% of residents who have contacted Barnet's Benefit Cap Task Force – which brings together officers from across the Council with Job Centre Plus advisers - have moved into employment, thus exempting them from the Benefit Cap. This compares favourably with other areas in London.

For 2014/2015, Barnet has been allocated £2,013,425. So far, £322,194 has been paid and a further £131,100 committed.

Supplementary Question

It appears that £0.75m has been allocated to Barnet last year which was not used. Has that been lost to the Borough or has that been rolled forward into the 14/15 year?

Supplementary Answer

The information requested is not available. I will write to Cllr Moore

Question 46

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

What is the Leader's current assessment of the performance of the outsourced NSL parking contract?

Answer by Councillor Anthony Finn (Chairman of Performance and Contract Management Committee)

The contract has a number of clearly defined Key Performance Indicators which have been developed in order to ensure that the key aspects of the service delivery are measured on a monthly basis. These KPI's are also linked to an element of payment made to the contractor and/or deducted from the contractor if the performance is identified as not meeting the required standards.

NSL's performance against these KPI's has improved since the commencement of the contract and in recent months the maximum performance payments have been achieved as all KPI's have been met.

There are some elements of service that could be improved as was identified in a recent committee report which examined the performance of this contract since its commencement. This is in relation to dealing with Appeals and the outcome of appeals that are considered by the Parking and Traffic Appeals Service (PATAS). Actions are being taken by the Parking Client team to improve this situation.

Supplementary Question

When the NSL parking contract expires, will the Leader consider bring this issue back in-house?

Supplementary Answer

Anything is possible but unlikely.

Question 47

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Last year the Conservative representatives were the only members of the North London Waste Authority to vote for one of Europe's largest Waste Treatment Plants to be built on Pinkham Way. What is the new administration's position?

Answer by the Leader

This is not an accurate reflection of how we voted. The Labour councils decided to continue to burn the waste at Edmonton.

Question 48

Councillor Ammar Naqvi

The Government's own guide to Housing Benefit, easily found online, states that: "there's no set amount of Housing Benefit and what you get will depend on whether you rent privately or from a council." Would the Leader therefore not agree that the overall amount of Housing Benefit administered to residents of any local authority would be affected by a decision by that local authority to place social tenants in either private or council owned properties?

Answer by the Leader

No.

Supplementary Question

The government says that housing benefit levels are affected by whether the tenant is private or social. The local authority makes a decision that affects whether tenants are placed in social or private sector, therefore that decision affects housing benefit levels.

Supplementary Answer

I confirm I understood the question.

Question 49**Councillor Adam Langleben**

Would the Leader agree that landlords who use Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates rather than market rates as the basis for setting rent levels are artificially pushing up rental prices in Barnet to the detriment of all renters?

Answer by the Leader

This is a consequence of the last government's reforms. However, by definition, a market rate is what people are willing to pay. We do not tend to believe in artificially tampering with markets,

Supplementary Question

Does the Leader agree that the LHA rate has a cap but it does not mean that landlords have to charge the maximum level of that cap? They are meant to be using it for market rate levels.

Supplementary Answer

I agree that seems like a definition of a market.

Question 50**Councillor Charlie O-Macauley**

How many CCTV cameras do we have in Burnt Oak and Barnet and how many have been removed – please provide a breakdown of the wards?

Answer by the Leader

There are currently 12 cameras in Burnt Oak, 1 camera was removed over 12 months ago based on low crime recording on the camera and a further one will be removed leaving 11 cameras.

Table one (attached on a separate sheet below) shows the cameras broken down by ward.

The final camera locations (post the upgrade) are based on an assessment of the last 3 years crime and anti-social behaviour data across the borough.

Supplementary Question

Could the Leader expand more on his answer for the residents, why this was not earlier communicated and if it is an accurate fact, where are the facts and statistics when residents are complaining about crime?.

Supplementary Answer

Cllr O'Macauley is asking for more detail which I am confident can be provided.

Question 51**Councillor Reema Patel**

In Princess Park Manor, the open space to the west of the access road has been a Barnet park for several years, when will the agreement for the open space to the east of the access road be handed over as agreed?

Answer by the Leader

The open space to the east of the road, fronting Princess Park Manor is available for the public to use as public open space. Comer Homes have continued to maintain this part of the open space since its completion and the Council is currently in discussions with them to agree the handover of the maintenance of the open space to the Council.

The open space east and west of the road are held under lease by the Council as public open space and has already been handed over to the Council and available to use by the public.

The Council was recently made aware that Comer had erected signs preventing the use of the eastern side of the open space; this was rectified by Comer following discussions with Council Officers.

Question 52

Councillor Alison Moore

Could the Leader tell me whether he thinks it was acceptable for the former Cabinet Member responsible and the former East Barnet councillor, to have failed to sign off the very modest funding application from the East Barnet Festival committee during the spring despite several requests from officers? Does the Leader not agree that this put the hard working Festival Committee in an unfortunate position and has he asked the former councillor to apologise to them?

Answer by the Leader

It is unfortunate that Cllr Moore is seeking to pursue a former councillor after he lost office. There is no need as the story has a happy ending.

Question 53

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Does the Leader agree that 30 minutes free parking should be introduced in Temple Fortune - and across the whole borough?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen (Chairman of Environment Committee)

The principle of a regulated 30 minute stay already exists in Temple Fortune town centre, albeit at the moment motorists wishing to park are required to pay £1 to do so.

The Council has a responsibility under the Traffic Management Act 2004 to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic in the borough, and particularly so in this instance given TfL's interest in Finchley Road as part of the Strategic Road Network, and providing free parking does increase the risk of more spaces being utilised, which could result in motorists 'cruising' around the area looking for spaces, to the detriment of traffic flow, and resulting in increased local emissions.

The suggestion of a free 30 minute period is a proposed solution to what is currently an unclear problem as a significant number of bays in Temple Fortune are regularly in demand although it is accepted that some more remote bays are not as attractive.

Therefore until such time that the dynamics of Temple Fortune are better understood it would be premature to accept the premise – however we do envisage a comprehensive evaluation of parking needs and demands in the area and the outcome will determine what changes to the tariff should be considered.

The lessons learnt from such a review could be applied elsewhere in the borough with a view to making similar amendments elsewhere in the borough – an approach successfully undertaken over the last few years with the Town Centre and Shopping Parades review which at the time did not elicit any significant concerns being raised by traders of the Temple Fortune area.

This item is coming to the Environment Committee on 24th July and will be discussed there in more detail.

Supplementary Question

Part of the answer says that providing free parking will increase the risk of more spaces being utilised. That is what the traders in Temple Fortune want. I find it an unclear problem. Was he not listening when the traders from Temple Fortune came and spoke to the committee to explain it?

Supplementary Answer

This will be coming to discussion at the next Environment Committee.

Question 54

Councillor Ammar Naqvi

Does the Leader think that private landlords should include clauses in their tenancy agreements which they appreciate to be non-enforceable, principally because they are unfair and clearly void of common law?

Answer by the Leader

Whilst the private rented sector industry is not regulated, there are a number of safeguards in place to protect private tenants. These include the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 which governs landlord harassment and illegal eviction, and Unfair Contract Terms legislation which has been used to challenge the reasonableness of tenancy agreements particularly in relation to rent review clauses. Landlords cannot contract out of statutory legislation, for example the Housing Act 1988 which governs most current tenancies in the form of assured short-hold tenancies states that 2 months written notice must be issued to end the tenancy and if a landlord states only one month in their contract this would not be valid.

Question 55

Councillor Adam Langleben

The London Councils report 'Tracking Welfare Reform: Local Housing Allowance (2013)' states that Barnet experienced a 43% increase in LHA tenants whilst during the same period noted an average increase of £245 per month in rent levels – the second highest increase in London. Does the Leader agree that these figures are directly related and would he share my view that the increase in LHA tenants alongside landlords who know they can push up prices is what is causing this unprecedented increase in rents?

Answer by the Leader

The reforms introduced by Gordon Brown have had many adverse effects.

Question 56

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Who if anyone will be the new tenant of Church Farm museum, an A star listed building? What are the total costs (including break-down) to date that have been spent on the building, on security and work since the museum was closed by this administration and what work is outstanding?

Answer by the Leader

Negotiations are currently underway with Middlesex University to seek agreement to the grant of a lease to the University for their occupation of the building subject to the carrying out of a significant refurbishment programme. The building requires substantial capital expenditure to enable it to be brought back to a state of full repair, and maximise its potential use. It is anticipated that negotiations will be concluded shortly and a report is scheduled for the September meeting of ARG.

*A detailed breakdown of costs since 1st April 2011 is attached on a separate sheet.

Question 57

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Does the Leader agree that it is high time that we moved to a system of allocating highways funding on the basis of need and not party politics?

Answer by the Leader

That is already the means of allocation.

The Council's Highway Asset Management Plan strategic approach informed by regular national condition surveys, local highway inspection information, customer service reports and insurance claims information results in a needs-based programme of planned maintenance works which is then prioritised and agreed by committee each year commensurate with available funding levels.

Question 58

Councillor Ammar Naqvi

The 'covenant of quiet enjoyment' is a longstanding and much celebrated facet of landlord-tenant law. This covenant gives tenants the right to live in their property undisturbed and is implied as a matter of law even if it is not expressed in their tenancy agreement. Would the Leader/Housing Committee not agree that landlords, who undertake multiple ad hoc visits of a leased property, some occurring as late as 10pm, are in breach of this essential covenant?

Answer by the Leader

That is not for me to comment.

Question 59

Councillor Adam Langleben

What message does the Leader have for landlords who insert unfair and potentially unlawful clauses into tenancy agreements?

Answer by the Leader

See answer to question 54 which deals with tenancy protections.

Question 60

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

If residents object to the big brother style 'chip and bin' monitoring of their recycling bin, will they be given the opportunity to opt out?

Answer by the Leader

The microchips are there to enable any future incentivisation schemes and help the council make our service more responsive and efficient. The council is not currently collecting any individual data. If and when such collection is to begin, residents would be able to request that their recycling data is not collected and the council would seek to deactivate their microchip. The chips are not to be used for any enforcement purposes.

Question 61

Councillor Adam Langleben

Considering the importance that the Barnet Council Housing strategy places onto the private rental sector, could the Leader tell me what safeguards the Council is putting in place to protect both

tenants in receipt of LHA and those in the private sector?

Answer by the Leader

The answer to question 54 describes the tenancy protection in place for private tenants whether they are LHA claimants or not.

There are also the property standards under the HHSRS which are enforced by the Private Sector Housing Team in Re and are used to improve standards across the private rented sector. Action is routinely taken to improve standards ranging from informal advice to taking legal action against landlords for noncompliance with enforcement notices. Over the last three years the team has reduced Category 1 hazards in 428 tenanted properties and improved standards in 41 other properties.

Question 62

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

What was the highways expenditure in Woodhouse ward in 2010/11 and 2011/12?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen (Chairman of Environment Committee)

Expenditure in Woodhouse Ward in 2011/12 was £124,926.18, Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funded and excluding fees.

There was no planned maintenance expenditure in Woodhouse Ward in 2010/11.

Question 63

Councillor Ammar Naqvi

According to the 'Review of Barnet's Housing Allocations Policy' presented to Cabinet on 21 June 2010, Barnet now has more residents housed in the private rental sector than in social housing, and therefore the Council's Housing Strategy 2010-2025 is to continue this trend by housing more residents in the private rental sector. Would the Leader/Housing Committee not therefore agree that, in order to fulfil our duty of care to our residents, we should ensure that all private tenants are made fully aware of their rights? In particular their right to appeal to a Residential Property Tribunal if private landlords impose unfair rent increases?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey (Chairman of Housing Committee)

See answer to question 54 which describes the general advice available to private tenants on their tenancy rights.

Private tenants can appeal to the Residential Property Tribunal if they think their rent is too high. The tribunal is independent and can change the rent if it is found to be unfair. Tenants can usually appeal when they get a letter from their landlord about a rent increase.

Question 64

Councillor Adam Langleben

The Barnet Council Housing strategy Action Plan (2010-2012) indicates that a Landlord Forum had been created. Could the Leader tell me how many times did this forum meet during the target period in the action plan? And how many times has it met between 2012 to present. Please provide me with copies of the minutes of these meetings.

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey (Chairman of Housing Committee)

Between 2010 and 2012 there were 6 landlord forums held by the council. Minutes of the meetings

can be provided.

The Let2barnet Team took over responsibility for the Landlord Forum in 2012. There was a successful launch event in October 2012 and there have been 3 subsequent Landlord Forums to date. The Forums have consisted of guest speakers and an opportunity for networking. As there have not been any open floor discussions to date, minutes have not been taken. However agendas are available on request.

Question 65

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Are the figures for highways expenditure in Golders Green ward given out by Councillor Dean Cohen in January 2014 in answer to a question (Q64) from former Councillor Brian Coleman still correct?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen (Chairman of Environment Committee)

Comparing the figures I gave in January and those recently released is like comparing apples with pears as the figures were calculated differently. For example, the latter included TfL funding, over which we have little control.

Question 66

Councillor Adam Langleben

Does the Leader agree that councillors who are landlords should set an example to others by signing up to the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme?

Answer by the Leader

All landlords should be good landlords.

Question 67

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Why has the completion date for the Outer London Fund streetscene work in North Finchley slipped?

Answer by the Leader

In January 2012, Barnet Council was successful in its bid for £1,074,060 of Mayor of London Outer London Funding (OLF) with match funding of £379,080 to make improvements to North Finchley town centre.

Following consultation June and July 2013, the team has been working up proposals for delivery. Although originally scheduled to complete in March 2014, the works will now complete mid-summer due to contractor delays and long lead-in times for some of the more specialist materials that have been ordered. Some elements such as the Grand Arcade and Winifred Place flooring will also be resurfaced again to reflect the high quality that is expected as part of this project.

The Grand Arcade now has new lighting, freshly painted walls, and a clean glass roof with new shop fronts and entrance signage completing by the end of June. The new floor will be re-laid in the next few weeks. The North Finchley Town Team has been given a Grant to enliven three vacant units in the Grand Arcade with community, arts and business activities, with a successful community celebration and launch on Saturday 28th June.

Along the high street a series of improvements are taking place (some already complete) including:

- New trees, cycle stands, benches and bins
- New paving, up-lighting of trees, benches and historic plaques at Tally Ho Corner

- A miniature library and Gaumont cinema art installation to enliven spaces in the high street
- A more welcoming environment for Lodge Lane market with electrical points for stallholders, up-lighting of new birch trees and a widened pedestrian path
- A cherry tree, new bench, signage and improved pedestrian access at North Finchley Library
- An improved paved area and new signage at the Artsdepot
- A Horace White Memorial bench and plaque will be placed outside Sainsbury's
- Decluttering of non-essential street furniture such as old signposts and guardrails

Percy Playground will also undergo improvements with a recent successful grant through the Town Team and Barnet Council.

Along with the public realm improvements, we have also delivered a number of events, youth engagement, apprenticeships, mentoring and business support initiatives.

Question 68

Councillor Adam Langleben

As Barnet Council subscribes to the London Landlord Accreditation scheme, could the Leader tell me what action the Council is taking to ensure all landlords are signed up to it?

Answer by the Leader

The Council does not insist that landlords have undertaken the LLAS course. However, Barnet Homes does take steps to ensure that properties used meet required standards and requests that landlords sign a 'Fit and Proper Person' declaration where the council's housing duty is discharged. This term is defined in the Homelessness Suitability of Accommodation Order 2012 and safeguards tenants against landlords who are known to have committed criminal offences or who may pose risks to tenants.

In order to encourage accreditation the council has:

1. A link to LLAS through the website and this is in the process of being expanded to a full page.
2. Details of the scheme are circulated through Twitter
3. Landlords encountered by officers are encouraged to become accredited
4. There is a reduced HMO Licensing fee for accredited landlords
5. There is a reduced fee for Housing Act notices where landlords become accredited (similar to the approach used by the Police in relation to speeding)
6. There is a key performance indicator for Re linked to increasing the number of landlords accredited on an annual basis
7. The scheme is also promoted by Barnet Homes staff when speaking with landlords, on Barnet Homes email strap-lines, in local advertising campaigns and at the regular Let2Barnet Landlord Forums.

Question 69

Councillor Adam Langleben

The Barnet Council Housing Strategy Action Plan set a target of providing landlord accreditation training for up to 60 landlords per year between 2010-2012. Could the Leader tell me how many landlords received training in each of those years?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey (Chairman of Housing Committee)

20 landlords attended the 425 London Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS) landlord development course between 2010 and 2012.

Question 70

Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

How many non-secure tenants are living in Burnt Oak?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey (Chairman of Housing Committee)

There are very few non-secure tenants living specifically within the Burnt Oak area. There are no regeneration states in Burnt Oak and those placed in this area who are living in a private sector tenancy are Assured Shorthold Tenants, rather than non-secure tenants. There are 3 non-secure tenants living in Private Sector Leasing properties. These are long-term forms of temporary accommodation that are owned by private landlords but managed by Barnet Homes. These appear to be the only non-secure residents residing specifically within the Burnt Oak area.

Question 71

Councillor Adam Langleben

Could the Leader tell me how many Barnet landlords are accredited with the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme?

Answer by the Leader

As of June 2014 there are 425 London Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS) accredited Barnet based landlords.

Question 72

Councillor Adam Langleben

Could the Leader tell me how many people Barnet Homes have placed in private rented accommodation?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey (Chairman of Housing Committee)

In 2012/13, Barnet Homes placed 175 households in private rented accommodation. In 2013/14, a further 326 households were re-housed in private rented accommodation.

Question 73

Councillor Adam Langleben

How much has Barnet Council/Barnet Homes paid in housing benefit directly to landlords in 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey (Chairman of Housing Committee)

The amount for each year, and paid **direct** to landlords is as follows:

Year

2010/11

Private Landlords £31,420,690.07

RSLs / Housing Associations £32,198,404.44

2011/12

Private Landlords £42,432,721.82

RSLs / Housing Associations £33,550,130.74

2012/13

Private Landlords £40,586,656.30

RSLs / Housing Associations £34,786,275.43

2013/14

Private Landlords £33,626,064.95

RSLs / Housing Associations £28,663,875.63

Question 74

Councillor Adam Langleben

Please could the Leader please tell me how many households in each ward in Barnet are renting in the private sector and in receipt of Local Housing Allowance (LHA)? Please also provide me with the average monthly payments of LHA in each ward for 1 bedroom properties, 2 bedroom properties, 3 bedroom properties and 4 bedroom properties.

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey (Chairman of Housing Committee)

The data is neither administered nor collated by ward, nor LHA separated from old scheme Housing Benefit, nor held as 1-bed, 2-bed in a way that can be easily extracted.

The data can be extracted collated and matched to ward data, but this will take some time to separate.

Question 75

Councillor Adam Langleben

Would the Leader please tell me how many non-secure tenants (as of 1 June 2014) are living on a) the West Hendon estate b) Stonegrove estate c) Grahame Park d) Dollis Valley estate.

Answer by the Leader

As of 1st July, there are the following number of non-secure tenants living on the following estates:

West Hendon: 236

Stonegrove: 30

Grahame Park: 587

Dollis Valley: 186

Council Question No. 50 – CCTV cameras broken down by ward

Table One: Cameras by ward

	Brunswick Park	Burnt Oak	Childs Hill	Colindale	Coppetts	East Barnet	East Finchley	Edgware	Finchley Church End	Garden Suburb	Golders Green	Hale	Hendon	High Barnet	Mill Hill	Oakleigh	Totteridge	Underhill	West Finchley	West Hendon	Woodhouse		
Original Spec	2	13	11	7	2	12	8	7	1	6	3	4	9	6	7	3	2	5	11	5	7		131
Removed*		1	1			1							2						1				6
Current	2	12	10	7	2	11	8	7	1	6	3	4	7	6	7	3	2	5	10	5	7		125
To be removed	1	1	1			1					1	1		2				2	1		3		14
NEW			2	2					4				2										10
New layout	1	11	11	9	2	10	8	7	5	6	2	3	9	4	7	3	2	3	9	5	4		121

*removed over the last two years

Council Question No. 56 - Church Farmhouse Museum - A detailed breakdown of costs since 1st April 2011

Date	Description	Description	TotSum (actual)
01/04/2011	Church Farm Museum Annual Maintenance	Church Farmhouse Museum	£820.15
19/04/2011	Supply 12yard skip	Church Farmhouse Museum	£226.00
19/04/2011	5 Yearly Electrical Test 2011-2012	Church Farmhouse Museum	£249.22
24/05/2011	Confirmation - Call out 29.3.11	Church Farmhouse Museum	£221.00
23/06/2011	Confirmation Invoice No. 11828	Church Farmhouse Museum	£290.00
28/07/2011	Confirmation: reduce & prune lime trees	Church Farmhouse Museum	£395.00
15/08/2011	Lights to path not working	Church Farmhouse Museum	£0.00
04/10/2011	Investigate & report on low hot water	Church Farmhouse Museum	£45.00
31/10/2011	Fix or replace lights	Church Farmhouse Museum	£220.00
01/11/2011	Newsquest-Adverts-Times Group-2 weeks	Church Farmhouse Museum	£1,078.10
01/11/2011	Estates Gazette-Advert-online-1 month	Church Farmhouse Museum	£690.00
12/12/2011	Supply 8No. detectors as per Quote	Church Farmhouse Museum	£721.80
17/01/2012	Investigate low HWS temp	Church Farmhouse Museum	£0.00
25/01/2012	EPC-Non-domestic-Church Farmhouse Museum	Church Farmhouse Museum	£219.00
13/02/2012	RBI-E.G ads 21.2 & 4.2.12 C F Museum	Church Farmhouse Museum	£1,035.00
31/03/2012	Church Farm Museum Annual Maintenance	Church Farmhouse Museum	£0.00
10/04/2012	Investigate and report on low hws temps	Church Farmhouse Museum	£0.00
02/07/2012	Thames Wat 6.3-18.6.12-Church Farmhous M	Church Farmhouse Museum	£44.65
27/07/2012	Clear gutters and drainpipes	Church Farmhouse Museum	£450.00
13/08/2012	Clear guttering and install mesh wire	Church Farmhouse Museum	£0.00
24/09/2012	Ad Hoc-flexi guardian-Church Farmhouse M	Church Farmhouse Museum	£16,345.00
24/09/2012	Thames Water-19.6-5.9.12-Church Farmhous	Church Farmhouse Museum	£21.06

24/09/2012	Confirmation - Invoice No. 3248370	Church Farmhouse Museum	£230.48
24/09/2012	Confirmation - Callout Drain	Church Farmhouse Museum	£195.00
04/01/2013	Carry out fencing works	Church Farmhouse Museum	£2,087.00
07/01/2013	KCC-Elec 1 Oct-30 Nov 12-Church Farm Mus	Church Farmhouse Museum	£399.49
07/01/2013	Thames Water-6.9-11.12.12-Church Farm Mu	Church Farmhouse Museum	£56.93
04/02/2013	KCC-Gas Bills for Church Farmhouse Museu	Church Farmhouse Museum	£585.14
14/03/2013	Confirmation - Invoice 3583769	Church Farmhouse Museum	£232.45
27/03/2013	KCC-Elec 1.12.12-28.2.13-Chruch Farm Mus	Church Farmhouse Museum	£589.51
27/03/2013	Annual Charge period 1.5.13 - 31.10.13	Church Farmhouse Museum	£232.44
31/03/2013	CANCEL Church Farm Museum Annual	Church Farmhouse Museum	£0.00
05/04/2013	Ad Hoc-Flexi Guard Church Farm Museum	Church Farmhouse Museum	£17,255.00
24/04/2013	KCC-Gas supply-Church Farmhouse Museum	Church Farmhouse Museum	£721.87
21/05/2013	Thames Water-since 6.3.13-Church Farmhou	Church Farmhouse Museum	£73.34
21/05/2013	KCC-Elec since 28.2.13-Church Farmhouse	Church Farmhouse Museum	£1,211.40
14/08/2013	Install Boiler flue terminal guard etc	Church Farmhouse Museum	£150.00
20/08/2013	KCC-Gas Since June 2013	Church Farmhouse Museum	£139.83
29/08/2013	conf. replace missing fence panels aroun	Church Farmhouse Museum	£3,765.00
30/12/2014	Security	Church Farmhouse Museum	£44.25
08/10/2013	Confirmation - Call out 18.9.13	Church Farmhouse Museum	£12.50
28/02/2013	Utilities/ Flexi Guardian/ Nov - Feb 2014	Church Farmhouse Museum	£9,900.00
02/02/2014	Heritage Works - Clear Pigeon Waste/Gutter work/Stop Pigeons getting into the building	Church Farmhouse Museum	£940.00
01/02/2013	Grounds Maintenance	Church Farmhouse Museum	£2,608.50
01/03/2014	Security Works	Church Farmhouse Museum	£1,625.00
			£66,126.11

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