

Council Questions to Cabinet Members
16 July 2013
Questions and Responses

Question 1

Councillor Brian Gordon

How many pupils within Barnet have been removed from school rolls during the past year due to being consistently absent without permission?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

The conditions under which a Headteacher can remove a pupil from the school's roll are governed by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended). There are certain circumstances when a pupil's name can be removed for being consistently absent without permission.

The removal of pupil's names from primary school rolls is monitored by the Education Welfare Team, and by the Targeted Youth Support Service for secondary schools. Neither of these teams is aware of any pupils who have been removed from the roll of a school in contravention of these regulations or their names removed for being consistently absent without permission.

Supplementary Question 1

I asked the question as a result of concerns expressed at a school governors' meeting that in various schools, particularly primary schools, parents were taking children on extended holidays without permission. Could this be something that we can keep a watchful eye on?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Schools are eligible to refuse permission for holidays and can take action against parents where they choose to do that. I hope that is not a practice that is taking place widespread. Happy to discuss the matter privately if there is a particular case that needs attention.

Question 2

Councillor Susette Palmer

Will the Cabinet Member join me in congratulating the staff and pupils who took part in the excellent and very enjoyable Barnet Schools music festival?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Indeed.

Supplementary Question 2

Could a letter be sent congratulating all the staff and children particularly for the amount of co-operation amongst schools and amongst the children in order to make this a success?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Agreed.

Question 3

Councillor Alison Moore

A High Court Judge recently ruled that London Borough of Barnet broke the law by failing to consult on One Barnet - why won't the Council consult local residents on the One Barnet programme?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Lord Justice Underhill delivered his judgement in April, finding in favour of the Council and

dismissing the application for a Judicial Review. This is now subject to an appeal hearing on 15/16 July 2013 and it would be inappropriate to comment further at this time.

Supplementary Question 3

The words that Justice Underhill used were that the council had not set out to consult. Members on the opposite side of the chamber have repeatedly, over the last three years, pushed you to consult with local residents about these projects. Why have you not done that?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

We have and that was laid out before the court. I look forward with interest to the result of the Judicial Review which finished today.

Question 4

Councillor Brian Gordon

Could the Cabinet Member look into the question of whether side roads (or some of them) can be included for gritting when there are heavy snowfalls in the winter?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Priority 1 routes consist of 35% of the road network and Priority 2 another 24% of the road network. During heavy snowfall therefore we grit nearly 60% of all the roads in the Borough. In addition to these figures we also grit some of Priority 3 roads (remaining residential roads in the Borough) in order to facilitate refuse collection. This is normally done by dedicating one or two vehicles which grit the roads in advance of the refuse vehicles.

Priority 3 roads are not normally treated but may be treated if there are resources available and only after Priority 1 and 2 roads have been completed and found to be safe and running.

Treating Priority 3 roads is rarely done because usually our 9 gritting vehicles are fully occupied in keeping the Priority 1 and 2 roads safe and running. Another problem is that Priority 3 roads would take some 2-3 days to complete and, because of problems with parking, are only done during the day.

There have been occasions when we had adequate warning of cold weather and we gritted both Priority 2 and Priority 3 roads in advance of snowfall.

Supplementary Question 4

I appreciate the detailed answer you have given to my question about gritting roads in the winter, which might not be in everybody's mind at the moment but hot as it may be, winter is only a few months away. Not wanting to sound too pessimistic, may I request again to make every effort to continue to look at side roads when possible? In my ward, I have many people complaining that their roads weren't being done and if it is possible to satisfy the public on this, particularly when a councillor puts in a request for a particular side road to be done would be a good thing.

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

I can confirm that I will do my utmost to ensure that as many roads are done but the member can also maybe recruit more residents who would like to grit their own roads as has been successful throughout the borough.

Question 5

Councillor Susette Palmer

Could the Cabinet Member update me on the apprenticeships for NEET young people provided by the Council and what work we are doing with other firms and organisations to provide such apprenticeships and job opportunities?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Barnet Council is delivering and supporting a number of projects to help Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) young people into apprenticeships and job opportunities. This includes the Council's £1 million Platforms Programme which has already been successful in creating more than 20 apprenticeships, 20 work placements in the voluntary sector and 40 internships for young people in the borough. The Platforms Programme was due to complete in May 2013, but due to its success, the most successful elements of the programme have now been extended including the funding of additional Internships both in the Council and in the private sector, and the delivery of Princes Trust schemes aimed at NEET young people who need further support.

The success of the Platforms Programme has also enabled the Council to access a grant of £20,000 from London Councils / National Apprenticeship Service to fund a Business Engagement Officer until December 2013 to support local employers in the creation of new apprenticeships within their organisations. Through the Platforms Programme, the Council has also provided seed-funding for the establishment of a Barnet Apprenticeship Training Agency in the borough. This will make it easier for companies to employ an apprentice by taking on the recruitment, employment and training of young people while they get on-the-job experience with a company. The Council also works closely with schools through our 'Apprenticeship Clubs' to support young people who are exploring Apprenticeships as their pathway of choice.

We are working closely with our delivery arms such as The Barnet Group who have a well established Apprenticeship Scheme which supports local residents, and we are working with development partners to ensure apprenticeship opportunities through our regeneration and development schemes.

Supplementary Question 5

Thank you for your reply and the detailed email and I hope that the borough will go on doing the best it can to get everybody into a paying job.

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

I was pleased to be able to attend a celebration, last week, of the Platforms Club and the Apprenticeships Club succeeding at the end of their first year and I look forward to continuing to support them.

Question 6**Councillor Charlie Omacauley**

How many youths are unemployed in Barnet and how many are on benefits? Also how many have been refused benefits and what are the reasons?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

There are no reliable figures on the number of young unemployed people in Barnet. The best available data is the number of young people claiming Job Seekers Allowance. This data is collated by the Department for Work and Pensions DWP and published on NOMIS (<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>).

The latest figures for Barnet show that there were 1,060 (3.4%) 18-24 year old Barnet Residents in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance. Job Seekers allowance (JSA) is generally only withheld from claimants refusing to undertake job seeking activity. DWP have not been able to provide figures for young people who have had their benefit refused or withheld for that reason.

Young people aged 16-17 are not eligible for benefits although we know that in May 2013 there were 329 (3.4%) 16/17 year olds not in education, employment or training. This is a slight increase from May 2012 (3.3%) but remains lower than the May 2011 figure (4.8%). The only circumstance where 16 or 17 year old may be given some form of benefit support is if they are estranged from their families (this is known as hardship). DWP are not able to provide figures on the number of young people who have applied for this hardship support and been refused.

Supplementary Question 6

Does the member feel that it is right for him not to have the correct figures of unemployed youths in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

We have now got the figures that were published and they were given in response to the original question.

Question 7

Councillor Brian Gordon

May I compliment you on the new parking arrangements on Old Rectory Gardens, Edgware which allows Monday to Saturday parking 8.00 am to 8.00 pm for free for 20 minutes, with no return for 3 hours? Could such a scheme be introduced more widely throughout the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

A section of 'at any time' double yellow line waiting restriction, outside Old Rectory Gardens Royal Mail sorting office was converted to a 'free bay' – operational Monday to Saturday between 8am to 8pm with a maximum stay of 20 minutes, to provide improved access to the post office for residents especially where larger items needed to be delivered or collected. A similar bay has also been provided in North Finchley. This type of parking change is a good example of our investigation into localised parking needs, and whilst there is no intention to introduce such a provision boroughwide, the Council are happy to investigate on a site specific basis whether such a facility might be possible and beneficial.

Supplementary Question 7

Many local residents and shoppers are happy with the short-term free bay outside the sorting office in Edgware. Would he not agree that parking is one of the most sensitive public issues and if we do our best to satisfy the public on parking, we will be well-rewarded at the ballot box next year?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

I can guarantee that I am doing my utmost to ensure that everyone is as happy as can be with the parking regime.

Question 8

Councillor Susette Palmer

In view of government encouraging activities stopping children from becoming 'couch potatoes', will the Cabinet Member please explain why primary schools are being charged to use Barnet parks even though they use no Barnet sports or other equipment?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

A small fee / charge is applied to all Barnet schools, which is part of the approved fees and charges Cabinet report. Barnet schools do and can make use of parks facilities like tennis courts and pavilions and we actively promote and encourage all schools to make use of the fantastic parks and open spaces we have. The practicalities of times, space, park suitability and facilities used by Barnet schools needs to be balanced with other and all users within the community.

Applying a small charge ensures that schools act responsibly and parks remain in the condition that all users wish to see and benefit from.

Supplementary Question 8

It is outrageous to charge children for doing PE in the parks. I would like a list of all the schools who this charge applies to and I'd like them columnised so as I can see which are private schools and which are, in some ways, Barnet maintained schools be it free, academies or whatever.

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

I can get that information but I can also let the member know that actually there are six schools in the borough that use the parks within Childs Hill and Basing Hill currently.

Question 9

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

For the benefit of all councillors, would the Leader advise the details of London Borough of Barnet's Internal Audit of compliance with the Equalities Act 2010?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The audit report contains many positives about the Council's approach to equalities. The details of the Council's internal audit of its equalities processes and compliance with the Equality Act 2010 are already in the public domain and available to Members, having been considered at the Audit Committee on 8 April 2013. The report can be found on the Council's website. <http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g6595/Public%20reports%20pack%2008th-Apr-2013%2019.00%20Audit%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

In response to the recommendations of the internal audit, the Council strengthened its procedures for measuring progress against its Strategic Equality Objective – which is set out in the Council's Corporate Plan – and reported these to Cabinet Resources Committee (CRC) on 24 June 2013. <http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s9233/Final%20Outturn%20Report%20with%20Appendices.pdf>. Both the Corporate Plan and the CRC papers setting out the Council's revised approach to measuring progress against its Strategic Equality Objective are available on the Council's website. An update on the action taken by the Council against the recommendations of the internal audit will be presented to the next Audit Committee meeting in July.

Question 10

Councillor Brian Gordon

I have received representations from temporarily disabled residents, who are upset that Blue Badge concessions only apply to those who are suffering from a "permanent and substantial disability". Can the Council lobby the Government to change the regulations so that the concession is also available for those who are temporarily disabled?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The Department for Transport is responsible for the legislation that sets out the framework for the Blue Badge Scheme. I have spoken with Mr Matthew Offord MP about this, who would be happy to discuss this issue with you.

Supplementary Question 10

I will take the matter up with Matthew Offord and would you agree that people who are temporarily disabled should be just as much entitled to blue badge concessions as those who are unfortunately permanently disabled and the law is not very fair in this respect and if I do lobby the MP on this would you be able to support me in that?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

This is a difficult issue because of the financial cost that goes with it. I need to look at the financial implications before being able to agree or disagree.

Question 11

Councillor Jack Cohen

Why am I being refused sight of a document material to the Business Management and Overview Committee on July 3 of which I am member? The said document relates to the item sale of Hendon Football Club and merely (presumably) tracks the progress of the report by date of clearance by the various Council Department. Either the Council has something to hide or the Council has no regard to Members Rights, which is it?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The request was for an item that did not exist in the form requested, there was nothing to hide and the information was duly given in the form it did exist.

Supplementary Question 11

The question referred to a document that *ought* to have existed and which I requested sight of. But instead of being told it didn't exist, I was told immediately I couldn't see it because the constitution said I couldn't see it. It then turns out this document didn't actually exist. So what I had been told I couldn't see never existed in the first place. But the real point is that councillors do have a right to access information and at the moment it seems the first response to councillors is to refuse access to information. I think I might be a good idea for the three group leaders to get together with the relevant senior directors to thrash this out.

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

It certainly needs thrashing out.

Question 12

Councillor Alison Moore

What is the latest update on residents in Barnet affected by the Bedroom Tax? Have properties been found for those who have to move, if so how many, if not what is happening to these residents?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

At present there are 1,220 Barnet Households where Housing Benefit has been reduced as a result of the new under occupancy rules. This is not a "Tax" but the removal of an inequitable subsidy.

Of the 1,220 households, 702 are Barnet Homes tenants; the remaining 516 are tenants of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) Barnet Homes' initial survey of their affected tenants shows that 25% of those affected were interested in moving.

The changes were introduced in April and we are pleased that, to date, Barnet Homes have assisted 9 affected households to move to alternative accommodation.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are available for affected households who demonstrate they need additional financial support. 28 Barnet Homes tenants affected by this benefit change have successfully applied for a DHP. Barnet Homes is also providing budgeting, skills and employment support for affected tenants.

Less is known about those tenants of Residential Social Landlords (RSL). One RSL has informed us that 20% of those affected were looking to move, but none have been able to tell us how many have moved. We are aware that RSLs are providing budgeting, skills and employment support for

affected tenants. 38 of the affected RSL tenants are also in receipt of a Discretionary Housing Payment.

A multi-agency Barnet Benefit Cap Task Force was launched at the start of July, based at Barnet House. This includes team members from Job Centre Plus, Barnet Homes and our Housing Benefit team.

Supplementary Question 12

On a quick calculation in terms of the numbers of households affected by the bedroom tax and who have expressed an interest in moving, we're looking at something like 170 households. Nine of those have so far moved and you're helping 28 with discretionary payments. Given that there is a limited amount of housing within Barnet because of the failure to build much affordable housing over the last several years, how many of those realistically are going to be housed within the borough or will they be forced to leave the borough?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

There's not been a shortage of affordable housing built in the borough in recent years and as always I repeat the answer I have given in previous council meetings, if people cannot afford to live in the borough it is not fair to ask the tax-payer to subsidise their lifestyle choice.

Question 13

Councillor Brian Salinger

Will the Cabinet Member join me in congratulating Hampden Way Nursery on its Outstanding Ofsted report, published in April this year?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Indeed.

Supplementary Question 13

At the last meeting Moss Hall Nursery School was congratulated on a similar achievement and acknowledged the importance of teachers in nursery schools. Will the cabinet member confirm that all four of our outstanding nursery schools are registered with the DfE and Ofsted as schools and will he ensure that the four schools all receive the same minimum funding guarantee as all our other schools?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Actually achieving 'outstanding' in an Ofsted report is no small feat. I certainly would like to recognise and congratulate each of them on their achievements.

Question 14

Councillor Lord Palmer

Why were no Cabinet Member and Senior Barnet Council Officer present at Granville Road Consultation event which aimed to explain a scheme which will impose 149 extra dwellings on an already crowded site? Residents did not agree this was a 'Regeneration' of the area?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The meeting in question was an estate management and design related session for the residents on the estate being led by the recently appointed Independent Resident Advisor, and the architects, Mulalley and Barnet Homes. This was the second of a series of meetings to facilitate resident engagement and to establish a Granville Road Estate Residents Group.

These meetings are for the estate residents only to enable them to better understand the changes being proposed on their estate and to have their views heard in an appropriate local forum.

Further to the concerns raised by the ward members, Senior Council Officers have and will continue to attend the future meetings with the estate residents and ward members have been invited.

In addition to these series of meetings, other consultation events have taken place where the Director of Place and the Assistant Director of Strategic Planning, Regeneration and Transport were in attendance to explain to residents the strategic context of the proposals and to respond to residents concerns. Ward members and other Councillors were invited to these meetings.

It should be noted that the proposals for the estate are still being worked on in preparation for a submission of a planning application after summer. A further consultation event for the wider community will take place in September explaining what revisions have been made to the plans following consultation. Ward and Cabinet Members and senior officers will be invited to this event.

Supplementary Question 14

Could the Leader confirm that the next consultation meeting regarding this regeneration scheme, there will be a Cabinet Member or the Leader present to explain to the annoyed residents that it is a regeneration scheme and when that means and that it is not purely an attempt to sell council-owned land and green space to make money for the Council and to increase the density of this already dense estate by nearly 150 homes. Will the Leader or senior Cabinet Member come along to the next consultation meeting which has been delayed until September in order to explain why this development is taking place?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Someone should come along and explain and I have a good record of attending these meetings.

Question 15

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Encouraging entrepreneurs and new business to Barnet is key to expanding our local economy. Can the Cabinet Member tell me what work is being done to facilitate and encourage both new and start up business ventures, what support is being given to new ventures, and are there any current council regulations which could be changed that would encourage more business to flourish?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

We are actively pursuing long lasting relationships with our local business community. Since November 2012, we have funded a two year joint Business Growth Manager post with Middlesex University to strengthen relationships with local businesses and explore ways that we can support them. The Business Growth Manager is working to create a greater level of support and signposting within the council including the council webpages:

http://www.barnet.gov.uk/info/200013/business_support_and_advice/837/business_support_and_advice.

The Council is also supporting a series of business events to encourage entrepreneurs and start up businesses which is being delivered by key partners. For example, 'Biz Know How' workshops focussed on starting a business and have proved successful with 40 individuals attending the first two workshops. The Council, via a further key partner PRIME, is delivering business training and advice to individuals over 50 years old as part of the Barnet Big Society Innovation Funding. This programme will run for the next year and will support new entrepreneurs. The Council through its regeneration team are actively pursuing opportunities to further support and facilitate growth within our extensive business base to capitalise on key growth sectors.

These efforts will build on Barnet's reputation as a good place to start a business evidenced by

the following:

- In 2012/13 Barnet had a record 1148 new company registrations, more than any other year in the history of the area. Although company closures rose slightly to 693, from 688 in 2011, net company growth increased overall (data source Companies House, ONS, and Ordnance Survey)
- The New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) programme in Barnet received 95 referrals leading to 50 new start-ups being created. This is much better performance than experienced by our neighbouring boroughs in Enfield and Haringey.

Barnet had 2440 business 'births' in 2010 and 2835 in 2011, which is the highest level in outer London.

Supplementary Question 15

I would be interested from the figures that have been given; do we break down data between what are company registration new businesses and what are essentially sole trader and partnerships and do you have any data for companies that foreclose but then often open up a few days later in a different name? My feeling is we have got some data that you have provided but I don't think that is sufficient and round enough to be able to get a full picture of small business and new business and how it is progressing in the borough.

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

I'm not sure if that data exists. The National Office of Statistics may hold that data and also the Labour Group Political Researcher should be able to get that data for the member.

Question 16

Councillor Brian Salinger

Given the changes being made to the way in which Ofsted will be inspecting childminders, can the Lead Member tell the Council what steps are being taken to advise, support and improve the quality and numbers of childminders working in the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Barnet Childminding Team offer support, advice and training and development opportunities to every registered childminder in the Borough of which there are currently 383.

The Government proposals to change the grades given at Ofsted inspections (satisfactory grade will become requires improvement) will not affect the way that the childminding team offers support to childminders. We currently offer a high level of support and training to all childminders who wish to take it. All childminders registered in Barnet are made aware of the childminding team's role and responsibility to offer support on any aspect of their childminding practice.

Support is offered in a variety of ways -

- We have a dedicated website for registered childminders - (<http://www.barnet.gov.uk/WorkingWithChildrenInBarnet/services-for-childminders>) which is used to ensure that childminders are kept up to date on national and local news and developments, including downloads on relevant documents and links to a training page.
- We send out regular emails to childminders regarding training opportunities and important news items.
- We provide ongoing training and development opportunities free of charge on many aspects of good practice.
- All registered childminders are allocated a dedicated Childminding Development Officer (CDO) according to geography.
- Childminders are able to maintain contact with their CDO by phone, email or face to face at

Children's Centres.

- Each Children Centre runs a weekly drop in group for childminders and the CDOs attend 1 group per week in order to meet up with childminders.
- CDOs also carry out home visits to assess practice and offer help and support in developing practice.
- CDOs encourage all childminders to work with FS&EI throughout their career, but particularly to contact us about 4 months before their inspection is due (if they are not already working with us) so we can help them make sure that they are prepared and ready for their inspection.
- The Childminding team manager reads all of Barnet's childminder inspection reports as they are published. The team manager or the CDO then contacts and works with any childminder who is given actions to complete, offering support and advice in completing the actions. The training plan is designed to address any issues and themes coming out of the inspection reports.
- The Childminding team offers information sessions once a month for anyone considering becoming a registered childminder, providing a clear step by step guide detailing the stages to becoming registered, together with practical information about carrying out our market research, and issues to consider before going ahead.
- The team continue to offer support after registration to help childminders provide quality care from the very start of their childminding career. We advise all potential childminders to request a home visit from us before they put in their Ofsted application so that we can ensure they are ready.
- The childminding team also run Barnet's Quality Assurance Scheme (BQAS) which is based on PACEY's (formerly National Childminding Association) Children Come First (CCF), which is a national scheme originally devised by NCMA and Department for Education (DfE) as a way for childminders to draw down free early educational entitlement (FEEE). We use our BQAS childminder to deliver places for children aged 2, 3 and 4 years on the FEEE scheme. We currently have 76 BQAS childminders, with 19 childminders who are accredited to deliver FEEE and 42 who are able to deliver the 2 year old places.

Supplementary Question 16

The bullet point talking of sending regular emails to existing childminders; can the Cabinet Member tell us what steps are being taken to get this information across to potential childminders?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

I am happy to come back to the Member with an answer to that.

Question 17

Councillor Susette Palmer

Will the Cabinet Member please ensure that unlike last Friday, relevant people are at work, or a 'back-up' facility in place, to upload surveys for voluntary organisations working with Barnet, onto the website, particularly when the urgency arises from lack of co-ordination between Council and website employees?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The Council is tightening quality control in consultations and is ensuring that they are properly reviewed before being placed online. At the same time we will revise our list of staff within each service who are able to post onto the engaged space. As ever we are working to improve quality with fewer staff. But any issues should be able to be dealt with by careful planning.

It will obviously be improved under the New Support and Customer Organisation (NSCSO)

contract and I am sorry if the councillor was embarrassed.

Supplementary Question 17

Thank you for the reply and I hope you are right, that it will be improved. Yes, I was embarrassed but I have got over it.

Question 18

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

What lessons have been learnt for other contracts from the fact that the Council and NSL have been unable to agree performance payments or penalties since the NSL contract began?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Our concern with NSL has been that performance data is not robust enough for the council to trigger payments related to performance. These have therefore been withheld.

The final contracts for New support and Customer Organisation (NSCSO) and Development and regulatory Services (DRS) will state that failure by the service provider to report Key Performance Indicator (KPI) data without the prior agreement of the Authority is a service failure and service deductions will apply. The contract also requires the service provider to provide a statement with each monthly report describing the process and methods for generating the reported performance.

Supplementary Question 18

I think no lessons have been learned from the NSL contract. He says performance payments have not been made but he makes no mention of performance penalties being imposed. Maybe he could explain why that is? And isn't it the case that this contract is just a small-scale illustration of what we can expect if Capita starts running Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The answer does say that with the NSCSO contract with the DRS, there are actually penalties for poor performance. This illustrates the point I made at the Scrutiny Committee that currently if there is poor performance or there is a problem with performance figures, we still pay the service regardless. At least under this system, the service doesn't get paid if they can't provide evidence of performance.

Question 19

Councillor Maureen Braun

What are the minimum guaranteed savings resulting from the DRS joint-venture scheme?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The guaranteed savings are £39.1m over the 10 year contract.

Supplementary Question 19

Does this £39.1m cover the cost regardless of the outcome of the Judicial Review?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

No it doesn't. It very much relies on the Judicial Review being in favour of the Council.

Question 20

Councillor Jack Cohen

On 18th July 2012, papers were served on the Council for Application for Modification Order dated 6 July 2012 in respect of the footpath which runs between West Heath Road NW3 and the Finchley Road NW11. Local residents are angry that this still remains unresolved. This footpath has been used by local residents for in excess of 20 years and provides amongst other things a

convenient shortcut to and from Golders Hill park and Hampstead Heath Extension. Will you please confirm that the Council is taking action to process the application? If not why not?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

This application is being processed although progress is slow. This is the first such application the Council has received since 2005 and there are not dedicated staff to deal with this area of work. Consequently the process generally, as well as the specific issue, needs researching and progressing alongside other demands on the service. The Council is supposed to make a determination within a year of application. The outstanding work to do so means that this will not be possible. If this does not happen the applicant can apply to the Secretary of State for the authority to be given a deadline. The applicant in this case is aware of this and officers are working to progress this matter as quickly as possible.

Supplementary Question 20

This application was made on 18th July 2012. I understand the Council has one year in which to make a decision. That year will be up in a couple of days' time. Can you give me a more definite response than the one given, which is progress is slow and officers are working to progress this as quickly as possible. Will you give me now a guarantee that this will be processed within the year and will you also tell me which department is actually responsible for this?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

I can't give that guarantee that it will be finished within the next three days but what I can do, I can guarantee that that I will drop correspondence to the relevant officer and copy in the member for him to follow-up himself.

Question 21

Councillor Alison Moore

The Council spent £28million on consultants and agency staff last year – how does this compare with other London Boroughs?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Benchmarked data is not easily available for spend on consultants and agency staff as there is no common approach across council's to the defining of consultant and interim staffing.

The Council spent £11.4m in the time period on consultancy payments and £16.6m on employing temporary staff. The latter figure is likely to be higher than the London average as the council decided, upon the approval of the NSCSO and DRS business plans to limit the hiring of new permanent staff pending the contracting of these services.

Question 22

Councillor Maureen Braun

Given that some have criticised the Council's performance in responding to Freedom of Information requests, could the Cabinet Member please tell the chamber the percentage of FOI requests responded to in time during the last reported quarter?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council's performance on responding to Freedom of Information requests was 99% over the period from April to June 2013. A total of 365 FOIA requests were responded to in the timescales out of 368. This is significantly over the 2012/13 performance of 92%.

Supplementary Question 22

Given that a few Council meetings' ago it was established that the cost of FOI questions is something in the region of £350,000, is there any way or any possibility of screening what you

might call frivolous requests. For instance, somebody needed the 'important' information as to whether I owned my own house. This is frivolous, the information is available elsewhere and that is why I am asking if there is any means of screening out this kind of FOI request?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Sometimes the response to an FOI request is that the information is already available in the public domain and signposting the residents to where that is. But there is a system in place, vetting these and on performance – we are out-performing the Information Commissioner's Office on their response times, so actually we are doing extremely well on FOIs now.

Question 23

Councillor Charlie Omacauley

How many new jobs have been created in Barnet and how many people have lost their jobs or been made redundant since the last financial year?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The Council had 3,587 substantive posts (part time and full time) in its establishment at the beginning of the last financial year (1/4/12) and 3,392 at the end of the financial year (31/3/13) – a net reduction of 195 posts. Of this reduction there were 43 redundancies, with the rest the result of general staff attrition.

Supplementary Question 23

Will the Leader confirm these are the correct figures of redundancies (43) and there were no dismissals or resignations during that period?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I have no reason to doubt the figures indicated here.

Question 24

Councillor John Marshall

Could the Leader update Council on the status of the legal proceedings surrounding the NSCSO and DRS contracts?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The judicial review appeal will be heard by the Court of Appeal on the 15th and 16th of July 2013.

Supplementary Question 24

Would the Leader like comment on the progress of the case over the past two days and given the decision of Lord Justice Underhill that Maria Nash was out of time, does he not agree that this appeal underlines the need for reforming Legal Aid?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The Leader attended the hearing and found the legal argument very interesting. The verdict of the court of Appeal will be released either at the end of July or Mid-September because the courts close in August and September. The Leader shares concerns regarding the easy access, particularly to the upper courts for hearings of this nature. But it is important to continue to have access to the courts for the ordinary citizen.

Question 25

Councillor Julie Johnson

With at least 14,000 households in fuel poverty in the Borough, why hasn't London Borough of Barnet joined the Big London Energy Switch which would help residents keep their energy bills down?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

We are working with colleagues across London and are members of the Big London Energy Switch, albeit not actively seeking to promote the scheme at this time. Whilst branded as a London scheme, it is in fact open to all residents of mainland Great Britain. Currently the Energy Regulator does not permit Energy Companies to offer energy prices below what is already advertised or in the public domain. There is therefore no financial benefit from being a member of this particular scheme above any other price comparison website commercially available. It is understood that the regulations are under review and may change in the Autumn. Once these changes are made, the full benefits of mass switching in a reverse auction can be achieved. At that point the Council will seek to actively promote this scheme.

Question 26

Councillor John Marshall

How much is the taxpayer in Barnet spending on the trade unions?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The central budget for trade unions at Barnet Council for 2013/14 is £113,000. This is budgeted to be £33,000 in the next financial year.

Supplementary Question 26

Can the Leader say whether he expects this figure to come down to zero which is what many council tax-payers would welcome?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

It would be nice to imagine that the cost could come down to zero, however reducing it to the level we have, there is always the danger that there will be ad hoc costs, as other members of our staff are required to go and represent people in employment matters. If we were to cut this further it could result in an increase in cost.

Question 27

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Why has there been a large increase in the number of Barnet Penalty Charge Notices being challenged at the Parking and Traffic Appeals Service?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Those that receive Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) have always had the opportunity to utilise the Statutory Guidance and appeal a PCN. The public are fully aware and are offered that right at every step. It is worth noting that London wide, the level of challenges to Parking and Traffic Appeals Service (PATAS) has increased and that overall the proportion for Barnet has not changed.

Supplementary Question 27

Is the real reason that the number of penalty charge notices are being challenged, the fact that the outsourced service is not actually delivering? The pressure to issue tickets is leading to incorrect tickets being issued and the state of the signs and lines is totally inadequate.

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

No, that's not the reason.

Question 28

Councillor John Marshall

Could the Cabinet Member inform us how many successful Oxbridge applications were achieved last year and how this compares to other local authorities?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Barnet had 130 offers of Oxbridge places from 408 applications last year. That equates to 46 applications and 15 offers for every 1,000 16 to 17-year-olds in the borough, according to the latest census figures. Meanwhile, Dudley in the West Midlands – with a similar-sized age cohort – had just 61 applicants and 13 offers, or seven applications and 1.58 offers per thousand.

Three London local authorities – Richmond upon Thames, Kensington and Chelsea, and the City of London – sent more than 25 students to Oxbridge per 1,000 16 to 17-year-olds in 2012, compared with an average of just over 2.5 students per 1,000 for England and Wales as a whole. The top 10 authorities – Surrey, Kent, Hertfordshire, Essex, Hampshire, Richmond upon Thames, Buckinghamshire, Barnet, Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire – won more than 1,500 of the 5,100 places in 2012.

Supplementary Question 27

I have often described education as the ‘escalator of opportunity.’ Would the Cabinet Member not agree that these figures demonstrate that and they underline why Barnet is the second best education authority in London?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

I would agree on every point except the final. I believe that Barnet is the best!

Question 29

Councillor Alison Moore

Would the Leader / Cabinet Member send me copies of all the “lessons learned” reports for each of the One Barnet projects?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

‘Lessons Learned’ reports are produced for projects which are now closed. Officers will provide copies of completed ‘lessons learned’ reports for those One Barnet projects which are now closed.

Supplementary Question 29

In terms of the ‘lessons learned’ document, I look forward to those for the projects that are closed but I would like to ask whether with long projects, such as the NSCSO and DRS projects, is there not a lessons learned document produced at the end of each phase?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I have not had sight of one.

Question 30

Councillor Stephen Sowerby

Due to the stringent financial pressures faced by the borough it is obviously vitally important that the Council overall delivers its projected savings. Is the Council, therefore, on target to meet its budget?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council has balanced its budget over the last two financial years, saving £31.105m in 2011/12 and a further £12.696m in 2012/13 in response to the spending review.

Given the delays in the contracts for NSCSO and DRS caused by the Appeal of the Judicial Review decision in April, the Council predicts it will have to take £2.7m out of reserves in order to balance the current year’s budget.

Supplementary Question 30

Does the cabinet member agree with the Justice Secretary that the practice of Judicial Review

needs reforming?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

I do. The Justice Secretary has two criticisms mainly; 1) the reason for JR given that most JR's are not successful and 2) the time it takes for a JR to actually go through the process. We have experienced that here in Barnet and, of course, I support the Justice Secretary's proposals.

Question 31

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Road safety is a current topic at Area Forum, with petitions and requests coming from various groups. Road safety is the responsibility of the boroughs as mentioned in a letter sent to the Chief Executive from the London Road Safety Council on 16th February. At the last meeting of the London Road Safety Council on 15th April it was confirmed that Barnet was one of the few boroughs which had not replied. Can the Cabinet Member tell me why they haven't replied yet, and when will a reply be sent?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The Council has received the letter. Essentially it was a letter expressing concern that many boroughs are making cuts in their road safety budgets and making the case for investment. Barnet has set itself challenging long term targets for the reduction of people seriously injured or killed and is making good progress against them.

Supplementary Question 31

Given that the other boroughs had the courtesy to reply to the London Road Safety Council will the Cabinet Member or Chief Executive now respond and inform the London Road Safety Council what Barnet is doing to ensure road safety; what, if any, targets have been set and clarify if we do have any Road Safety budget and if we do, has it been cut?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

I am happy to answer the relevant officer to note that the letter has been received.

Question 32

Councillor Stephen Sowerby

The ambition for all Councils should be to have services which are high quality and yet also offer value for money. Given this, could the Cabinet Member please tell us how Barnet now compares to other London Boroughs in relation to the number of services which are both high performing and low cost?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Barnet ranks 4th out of 32 London boroughs on the number of services rated high performing and low cost according to London wide benchmarking data.

Supplementary Question 32

If the Council is already performing at maximum efficiency, is it not the case that the council should do something radical to ensure that we continue to perform well but using less money?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

It is the case that we need to do something radical and that's why we are coming up with innovative plans such as the DRS, the NSCSO, Local Authority Trading Company, etc. Yes, we do have to do something very radical because we just can't go on. We are operating as efficiently as we can. We are one of the low-cost back offices in London and we can't just carry on taking more cost out without change. We do need to change to save costs.

Question 33**Councillor Charlie O'Macauley**

Regarding Charities that are funded by London Borough of Barnet, what are the guide lines and checks and balances to make sure that they are working according to the rules set out in their constitutions?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

All organisations, including charities, under contract to the Council are subject to selection processes which look at the viability of the organisation. Contract monitoring arrangements will identify any issues with an organisation that affects its delivery against the contract. This will include addressing any alerts or complaints.

The Adults and Communities Delivery Unit has moved to a lead provider model for the majority of its voluntary sector commissioning, meaning that key organisations within the sector contract with and offer peer support to, other voluntary sector organisations, offering opportunities for consistent service delivery and increasing capacity in the sector.

Fundamentally, charities are autonomous organisations, often attracting multiple funding streams, and are not directly accountable to the council. CommUNITY Barnet, as the local council for voluntary services, has an advisory and support, but not an enforcement, role. The Charity Commission is the regulator of the sector, although charities which are very small may be excluded from the need to register with the commission.

Question 34**Councillor Stephen Sowerby**

What was the outcome of the recent survey conducted into the satisfaction of users with our libraries?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Between April and December 2012, library customer satisfaction surveys indicated that 88% customers rated libraries as good or very good. The next library customer satisfaction survey closes end of July. The library customer satisfaction survey is conducted every quarter.

Question 35**Councillor Andreas Ioannidis**

Would the Cabinet Member acknowledge that she has completely failed to influence and bring about the reopening of the Brunswick Park Health Centre?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

On the contrary, this Administration has done absolutely everything in its power to facilitate the re-opening of the Brunswick Park Health Centre following the fire in 2010. In every area from Planning to Building Control to giving the official support requested by the then Barnet PCT Borough Director for the re-opening of this much needed facility, we could have not been more helpful and supportive.

This pressure, once the building was complete and ready for occupation by the GPs, has continued with extremely strong representations being made to both Carolyn Taylor of NHS NCL and - since 1st April 2013 - to NHS England which is now the responsible body.

I also had assurance from Mr. Paul Bennett the Delivery Director for North Central and North East London for NHS England when I raised this matter at the last Health & Wellbeing Board Meeting that NHS England has plans in place around relocation in order to support the CCG Recovery Plan.

However, I must point out yet again that the underlying issues relating to the delays in the reopening of Brunswick Park Health Centre are emphatically not within the purview of the Local

Authority. They are strictly legal and financial matters to be decided between the NHS and the GPs concerned.

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

I am beginning to find the tone of the questions on this item and the completely erroneous conclusions he insists on drawing, rather tiresome. Let me repeat, yet again. The underlying issues relating to the reopening of the Brunswick Park Health Centre are not within the purview of the Local Authority. They are strictly legal and financial matters to be decided between the NHS and the GPs concerned. Something, which was emphasised even further by Dr Lakhani stating that he had only wished to purchase the new centre and had no desire to move in to it if he was not able to do so.

Question 36

Councillor Lisa Rutter

Did the Council meet its target for Council Tax collection at the end of the financial year?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council exceed our Council Tax collection target last year. Our target for 2012/13 was to achieve 96.5% in year collection. We achieved 96.59% as at 31 March 2013, an increase of 0.59% compared with the previous year.

Question 37

Councillor Alison Moore

What is the latest update on the number of empty shops in Barnet high streets – including those properties owned by the Council?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

The Council conducts surveys of Barnet's town centres on a regular basis. Since 2003 we have carried out five surveys of Barnet's town centres providing a good insight into how our town centres are changing. According to our 2012 survey the average vacancy rate is 5%. More details are set out in the recently published Authorities Monitoring Report for 2011/12

http://www.barnet.gov.uk/downloads/download/1171/authorities_monitoring_report

Another survey of town centres is currently underway as part of the Greater London Authority (GLA) Town Centre Health Checks. The results of the GLA Health Checks will enable peer comparison across London. The GLA are expected to publish their Health Checks later this summer.

With an average vacancy level of 5% in 2012 Barnet's high streets are doing better than the national average which stands at 14% (Local Data Company). Vacancy levels across London town centres stand at 7.1% (Local Data Company).

We are working to improve the vitality and viability of our town centres through the creation of town centre strategies or frameworks such as those recently adopted for Chipping Barnet and Edgware as well as supporting our emerging network of town teams in several town centres such as North Finchley and Cricklewood.

Question 38

Councillor Lisa Rutter

How many posts paying over £100,000 per annum have been removed in the Council's structural reorganisation?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

There were a total of 15 posts with a salary of over £100,000 prior to the reorganisation. In the new structure, there are 10 posts with a salary over £100,000.

Supplementary Question 38

Given that the posts have been reduced, can you tell me how much we have saved?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Together with the next tranche down of employees, the saving is £1.2m a year.

Question 39

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

When did the Cabinet make the decision to scrap the fee for closing roads for street parties?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Following the popularity of street parties during the Queens Jubilee year, I discussed with officers how we could help this continue. I agreed at my theme meeting in early April that we would not charge for street parties again this year as I recognise their value in bringing communities together. I therefore agreed that we would launch this via a press release alongside "The Big Lunch" in May".

Supplementary Question 39

The decision to charge for street parties was notified to several residents in April being justified on the basis that these costs were in accordance with the Council's fees and charges structure approved by Cabinet. So I am surprised to hear that Councillor Cohen unilaterally changed this at a theme meeting and I would be grateful if you could send me minutes of that meeting.

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

My answer stands; the decision was made at the theme not before.

Question 40

Councillor Graham Old

What has been the outcome of corporate contract renegotiation in the last year?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Last year there was £750,000 of corporate contract savings against the target of £840,000.

Question 41

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

What is the road safety strategy in Barnet, who is leading on it, and when was a road safety audit last undertaken?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The overarching approach to road safety is set out in Barnet's Local Implementation Plan. This includes targets for a reduction of 33% in casualties Killed or Seriously Injured by 2020 against the 2004-08 average and a reduction of 10% in total casualties. There is not a current borough level road safety plan document sitting below that. However the new London Road Safety Action Plan document has just been launched which will doubtless influence activities going forward. Planning of Road Safety Engineering and Education proposals sit within Traffic and Development. Road Safety Audits are independent examinations of a road scheme that help ensure that operational road safety experience is applied during the design and construction process in order that the number and severity of accidents is kept to a minimum. The most recent undertaken of a Barnet scheme was undertaken by Transport for London staff.

Supplementary Question 41

I think the public will be a bit surprised to find that Barnet does not have a borough-level road safety action plan. Are there any plans to work on such a document and, if so, who would lead on it and what would be the time-scale?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

We are working with officers on this.

Question 42

Councillor Graham Old

How has the Children's Service performed against its Corporate Plan targets, namely in terms of placing children in care with an adopted family within 12 months and also in terms of the number of children subject to Child Protection Plans?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

In the 2012/13 financial year 13 out of 17 (76%) adoptions took place within 12 months following the decision to place for adoption. This exceeds the corporate target of 75%.

Child Protection Plans provide an indication of the number of children who are judged to be at risk of significant harm. Child Protection Conferences review the plans and are a key element in ensuring the provision of good quality interventions. The indicator measuring the number of child protection plans within timescale is a proxy for the measurement of the effectiveness of the interventions provided to children with a Child Protection Plan. We have maintained the target for reviewing child protection plans at 100%.

Our target was to reduce the number of children between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2013 subject to a Child Protection plan by 5% (from 258 to 246). We exceeded the target and achieved a reduction of 20% (from 258 to 206 children).

Question 43

Councillor Andreas Ioannidis

What are the reasons for not having pressured NHS Property Services Ltd enough to get Brunswick Park Health Centre reopened as soon as possible?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

In addition to the measures outlined in my answer to question 35, the Council, through the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has also examined the issues relating to the Brunswick Park Health Centre. On the 8th of May the Committee resolved that NHS England and NHS Property Services should provide an update report on the Brunswick Park Health Centre at the next meeting of the Committee which was on the 4th of July 2013. Given that NHS England and NHS Property Services Ltd have only been in existence since the 1st of April 2013, the fact that this item has been included in both Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings since that date is evidence that the Council is seeking to apply the appropriate challenge and scrutiny on this matter.

Furthermore, as this matter is essentially an NHS Estates issue, it was agreed that further progress on this and the other Estates issues which are so crucial to the delivery of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Recovery Plan are dealt with at a future meeting of the Health & Wellbeing Board.

Supplementary Question 43

I just want to ask why the Cabinet Member is still not accepting her responsibility for the failure of

the opening the health centre and is instead blaming someone else.

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

I have no desire to waste Council's time, yet again, repeating the same thing over and over. So apart from referring the Councillor to the answers I have given both in writing and earlier this evening, I will tell him again – it is a financial matter between the GPs concerned and the NHS.

Question 44

Councillor Graham Old

What has been the long-term trend in self-reported health in the borough, revealed by the most recent census data, and are there any wards which have seen a decline in health?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

In short, self reported health has improved significantly right across the borough.

In the 2001 census, there were 3 categories for self reported health: good, fairly good and not good. In 2011 census, there were 5 categories: very good, good, fair, bad and very bad. We have combined the good and very good categories from 2011 and compared with the 2001 good category. We have also combined bad and very bad and compared with the not good category from 2001.

All of the wards in Barnet had increases in people reporting good health in the 2011 census compared to the 2001 census, with the biggest increases in West Hendon and Colindale. The smallest increase was in Totteridge, yet this was still an impressive 10% increase in self reported good health.

There has similarly been a decrease across all wards in people reporting their health to be poor. The largest decreases in reported poor health were seen in Colindale and West Finchley.

Question 45

Councillor Alex Brodtkin

When will the Council be in a position to update Councillors about whether any (and, if so, which) bids have been made / accepted in relation to the Pavilion Way facility over the course of the past several months?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The site was advertised as a sports facility and seven bids were received. It was intended to let the site on a short term lease. The site was then identified as a potential site for a school to be funded by the Government's new one off fund for school places. The Council will be in a position to consider all options pending Department for Education input which is expected imminently.

Question 46

Councillor Hugh Rayner

There is a problem in Hale ward, which I am sure is repeated throughout the borough, where grass verges – between footpaths and the road and adjacent to crossovers – are damaged by vehicles leaving ruts in which water collects. Can the Cabinet Member address this problem and bring forth some solutions?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

When appropriate and with evidence, contractors and developers are approached to remedy any issues that have been clearly caused by inappropriate construction traffic. Outside of recovering costs from contractors there is not sufficient budget to remedy damaged verges so it is necessary to prioritise those areas which provide a real risk to the public such as pavement trip hazards and pot holes.

Question 47**Councillor Gill Sargeant**

How many residents of Barnet have undertaken Work Capability Assessments?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Work Capability Assessments for applicants of Employment and Support Allowance are undertaken by a private company on behalf of Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Data on the numbers of people undertaking work capability assessments at a borough level is not provided to London Borough of Barnet by DWP as a matter of course nor is it publicly available.

Supplementary Question 47

I am surprised that it is not possible to acquire this information because if people fail work assessments which they are given from ATOS, their council tax and benefit is immediately altered, causing great distress. How long is it before Barnet Council is informed of this and any appeal that would change this decision?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I can't actually give a clear answer other than that I share the councillor's ambition to have accurate statistics from the DWP.

Question 48**Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner**

How many trade union representatives does the council employ?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The Council employs a number of staff in substantive roles who also carry out duties as trade union representatives. For some of these they have pre-agreed time to carry out these duties and this time is funded from a central budget. In total for 2013/14 this equates to 3 full time equivalent staff to represent predominantly non schools based staff.

Supplementary Question 48

Does the Leader agree or not that this seems like a lot of time and money in the context of the economic situation?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I am not sure that we haven't got down to the minimum number that we can get to now, given the great raft of legislation which people can have a representative to assist them.

Question 49**Councillor Andreas Ioannidis**

In the Council meeting on 6th of November, the Cabinet Member on my question about consulting 20mph in Brunswick Park said that "The Council is not consulting on 20mph zones in Brunswick Park Ward." Does the Cabinet Member know that in the last residents' forum they were several petitions for 20mph zones throughout Barnet, and at least two of them included areas of Brunswick Park, with one already having over 1300 signatures? Furthermore, according to the BBC even Boris Johnson had to accept that he needs to double the amount of money he spends for road safety, (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-22794987>). When will this administration start listening to the desire of residents for safer roads?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Whilst there has been no undertaking to date to consult on a 20mph limit in Brunswick Park, should it be determined after engagement with the local community in this area that consideration of a lower speed limit may be appropriate then this will be considered moving forward.

Supplementary Question 49

What steps has the Cabinet Member taken to engage with the local community in the area, that the consideration that a lower speed limit may be appropriate.

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

I am quite happy to accept any correspondence and consider it accordingly but the best way to bring this forward is through the Area Environment Committee.

Question 50**Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner**

How many people employed by the unions are there in the borough's schools?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The borough's schools employ a number of staff in substantive teaching and non-teaching roles who also carry out duties as trade union representatives. For some of these they have pre-agreed time to carry out these duties and this time is funded from a central budget. In total for 2013/14 this equates to 1.6 full time equivalent staff to represent schools based staff.

Supplementary Question 50

Does it seem fair to the Leader that the Borough should pay for representatives of a politically motivated organisation to be carrying duties in our schools?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

That question is phrased very skilfully to illicit the answer 'no' but I can't actually say that in that there are issues where an employee does require assistance in dealing with authority and I looked at the numbers employed here and I thought it was astonishingly low.

Question 51**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What will happen if NSL fail to maintain the weekly collection rate for the parking contract in line with budget expectations?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

There are no collection rates in the NSL contract. NSL are carrying out enforcement, dealing with correspondence and accepting payments. The Parking Team is monitoring the performance of NSL as set out in the contract. There are 15 KPIs that are to be measured under the contract, these are phased over the initial 3 years of the 5+2 year contract.

Question 52**Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner**

Both the Council's planned and progressing regeneration projects, and further new home building schemes, are of vital importance in the growth and improvement of the housing stock in Barnet. For the 2012/13 year, how many new dwellings were built on regeneration estates and how many affordable homes were built overall?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

There were 469 new homes built on the regeneration estates in 2012/13. For affordable housing a total of 298 affordable homes were built in Barnet in 2012/13 (236 of these homes are rented homes where the Council has nominates suitable households for these homes). Both of these exceeded the Councils projected targets of 404 for new homes on the regeneration estates and 264 new affordable homes.

Question 53**Councillor Arjun Mitra**

What representations have the Council made to Transport for London (TfL) about bus services to

Finchley Memorial Hospital?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Cllr Hart has written to the Mayor on 3rd July requesting that TfL consider a bus route into the hospital. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the issue of transport to Finchley Memorial Hospital as agenda item 9 on 4 July 2013.

<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=179&MId=6562&Ver=4>.

A public question has also been asked in relation to this by FoRAB.

Agenda item 9 - Lack of buses to Finchley Memorial Hospital.

The NHS are to be commended on the foresight they showed by building in provision at the new hospital for TfL buses to access and egress the site easily to meet the needs of the elderly, young mothers with pushchairs and all ages suffering from mobility or respiratory ailments attempting to access the hospital by public transport and thus reducing private car use.

The intransigence being showed by TfL is unacceptable as is their failure to engage with the Council and others lobbying for buses to access the site.

A). Will the Council make personal representations to the Mayor to instruct TfL to provide a service without further delay?

and

B). If this is unsuccessful to ask the three MPs to raise the matter in Parliament to expose the unreasonable uncaring approach of TfL to a reasonable request?

and

C). make appropriate representations to the London Assembly investigation into bus services in London?

Question 54

Councillor Andreas Ioannidis

Having revealed that the cost of security for keeping Brunswick Park Health Centre closed every year is £104,244, please would the Cabinet Member say for how much longer does she expect the tax payer to foot the bill?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

As already stated in my answer to question 35, the underlying issues relating to the delays in the reopening of Brunswick Park Health Centre are emphatically not within the purview of the Local Authority. They are strictly legal and financial matters to be decided between the NHS and the GPs concerned

I have nothing further to add on this matter other than the very full responses which I have given to questions 35 and 43. The latest update from NHS England developed with NHS Property Services to the Health OSC on the 4th of July 2013 can be found on the web.

<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s9498/Appendix%20-%20NHS%20England%20Briefing.pdf>

Question 55

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Which local authorities are using the 'joint-employment' contracts as Barnet will be for some employees carrying out statutory functions under the Development and Regulatory Services Joint Venture contract?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The Council are not aware of other local authorities using joint employment contracts but these contracts are widely used across other organisations including:

1. Charities and not for profit organisations,
2. Housing Associations in their group structures, including Sunderland City Council
3. NHS and Universities

Question 56

Councillor Alex Brodkin

When was the last time that residents in Silkstream Road were specifically consulted about the introduction of a controlled parking zone in Silkstream Road, and what was the outcome of that consultation?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Silkstream Road was consulted as part of a wider area based proposal to introduce a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ), operational between 10am to 11am and 2pm to 3pm Monday to Friday, within a numbers of roads in Burnt Oak. This was done by way of statutory consultation, which was undertaken in June 2008. Comments received were given due consideration and due to the conflicting concerns raised by the local community it was ultimately decided that the Council would not proceed with a CPZ at the time whilst the Council looked into other options and assessed other types of parking improvement measures, such as reducing the tariff in and resurfacing Watling Avenue car park in order to encourage improved patronage.

Question 57

Councillor Arjun Mitra

How much money has so far been spent on the Sports and Physical Activity review?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The review of Sport and Physical Activity incurred costs of £48,445 in 2011/12 and £90,171 in 2012/13. The review is projected to spend £59,385 in 2013/14 giving a total planned of £198,000 on this project.

Question 58

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Have all aspects of all the Key Performance Indicators for the DRS contract now been agreed?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Yes.

Question 59

Councillor Alex Brodkin

Why has there not been an introduction of a controlled parking zone, say for example including a one hour restriction to non-residents, in Silkstream Road?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

We are happy to review the area but this can only happen if there is sufficient support for such action from residents over a wider area as we would not investigate one or two roads. A decision is typically taken to do this after consideration of a petition or similar presented for discussion at the local Area Environment Sub-Committee.

Question 60

Councillor Arjun Mitra

Why has it taken so long to implement the 20 mph zone on Church Lane?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The introduction of a 20mph limit on Church Lane was agreed as part of a package of measures in the area following engagement with the local community that included improved signage in the area, and a Zebra Crossing on Creighton Avenue. The Zebra crossing has been introduced along with all other aspects of the scheme and it is regrettable that the reduced limit on Church Lane is still to be completed. Introduction of such restriction involves coordination of a number of

elements including opening of the highways and electrical installations to accommodate new signage, that sometime have to be refined whilst implementation takes place. However, I am pleased to be able to say that all necessary posts are now installed and awaiting connection (this is due w/c 8 July) Isolators in columns have been upgraded ready for fitting of the Vehicle Activated Signs which are being erected on the 17th July.

Question 61

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

When the new recycling system is introduced, will the Cabinet Member offer the option of a smaller wheelie bins to residents who either do not need a larger bin or who do not have the space?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The Council is making changes to the waste and recycling services to increase participation in recycling and decrease the amount of residual waste that is collected for disposal. There is the potential for residents to recycle approximately 70% of their household waste, compared with the current rate of 33%. The new wheeled recycling bins will provide the same capacity for residents to recycle as the standard sized refuse bins, make it easier for residents to recycle more material, and will also help to reduce litter on Barnet's streets.

The Council is working on a survey of roads in the borough to identify properties that may not be able to accommodate the new recycling bins. The Council will provide a suitable alternative container to the standard new recycling bins for these specific properties when the new service is rolled out. Once the new service has been introduced, the Council will review the provision of containers and consider any outstanding issues concerning space at specific properties. Until this review has been undertaken it is not intended to provide an alternative container by request.

Question 62

Councillor Agnes Slocombe

How many weeks does it take to collect green bags after the litter pickers and sweepers have done a good job - it is left week after week before it is collected plus a pile of blue bags that have been flytipped for four weeks have been left outside the bus stop / Sunderland House?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

It is accepted that, in some areas, green bags remain for longer on the street than the service would like or expect. As part of the new Street Scene Delivery Unit we are currently reviewing and remodelling the street cleaning provision across the borough including residential roads. Prompt collection of bags will be a priority within the new setup. We have looked into customer service requests and have been unable to locate any reports for blue bags at Sunderland House but we are confident that they will have been removed proactively by now.

Question 63

Councillor Gill Sargeant

What academic provision is made for Year 11 pupils who move into Barnet midway into year 11, and what options are available for pupils to take GCSE in Year 12?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Year 11 pupils who arrive in the borough from September – December are offered a school place. Year 11 pupils arriving after December are individually assessed to identify the most appropriate pathway for their continued education. For example a pupil arriving with evidence of having completed a GCSE course to date, would be offered a school place in order to finish the GCSE course. Alternatively a pupil arriving with no previous educational history and with little or no

command of the English language would be referred to the Targeted Youth Support Team (TYS). The TYS Team would work with the pupil to identify appropriate courses that would support their educational aspirations for Y12 and beyond.

Question 64

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

Would the Cabinet Member please provide an update with the roll-out of the Boroughwide Alcohol Free Zone?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

Please see the answer to Q68. Please also note that Barnet is not an alcohol free zone.

Question 65

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

Rushgrove Park again lacks maintenance. Residents have complained that green branches are falling on pathways and the grass is not cut – what is the maintenance programme for the park each year?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Rushgrove Park's grass is cut on a cyclical basis during the growing season and when ground conditions are suitable. It will be receiving its sixth cut within the next 48hrs which is in line with all other Parks cut by our two mobile grass cutting teams. In the last month we have collected fallen branches, although these have mainly fallen on the grassed areas. A Supervisor is due to inspect the site today (04/07/2013).

Question 66

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

Residents in Grahame Park call the bend in Heybourne Crescent the 'Death Bend'. Will the Cabinet Member consider road safety measures for this street?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Heybourne Crescent is a new road constructed as part of the Beaufort Park Development but the road is not yet adopted as Public Highway – this is likely to take place some time during 2015. Accordingly the developers are currently responsible for the day to day maintenance of this road. As part of the road adoption process, road safety audits will be undertaken and additionally the Council will closely liaise with the developer to address any safety issues prior to road adoption.

Question 67

Councillor Brian Coleman

Could Councillor Cohen explain the traffic chaos that hit parts of the Borough, particularly Mill Hill, Totteridge and High Barnet on May 29th and what is he doing in conjunction with Traffic for London (Tfl) to prevent it happening again?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

It was identified that the problem was caused by Traffic Lights under the control of TfL being faulty at the A1 junction with Barnet Road. Once these had been adjusted the problem was resolved. As, with most technology, it is vulnerable to becoming defective and hence requiring attention from time to time and as such no guarantees can be given in respect to possible future problems.

Question 68

Councillor Brian Coleman

How effective does the Cabinet Member consider the "Borough wide street drinking ban" to have been? Can he provide figures on enforcement action? Will he accept the numerous reports from residents that the ban is being entirely ignored in areas including North Finchley and Finchley Central?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

The borough-wide Designated Public Place Order (DPPO) came into effect in December 2012 and gave police additional powers to tackle alcohol-related public nuisance and/or anti-social behaviour in the borough.

This move was an extension of our three existing DPPOs, which covered much smaller areas and brought us into line with neighbouring boroughs.

The police, supported by Council Community Safety and Priority Intervention Teams (PIT), placed an emphasis on raising awareness and delivering advice and education, with stronger enforcement action (such as seizure) used where initial efforts to ensure desistance were ineffective.

In the last 6 months there have been 13 alcohol seizures across the borough and the police are confident that this is as a result of the effectiveness of the work to raise awareness and give advice in the initial stages.

The on-set of summer, when instances of alcohol-related public nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) tend to increase, coincides with phase two of the DPPO implementation and will see a more stringent enforcement policy adopted. This is also in line with a series of planned activities to tackle ASB head-on in the borough, including the launch of the Commissioners Summer Initiative.

In relation to resident concerns regarding specific locations, the police and community safety partners continue to treat these as a matter of priority and remain committed to responding at the earliest opportunity; including a pledge to target resources on a ward by ward basis, where residents feel alcohol-related crime is a problem.

In the last 6 months the council's Priority Intervention Team has received fewer reports of alcohol-related issues. The two recent reports at Golders Green and at Finchley Church End were responded to immediately the team were notified (actions included litter removal, issuing of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, post-operational canvassing of local residents and businesses etc).

Question 69

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will the Cabinet Member report on action taken in regard to the Licensed premises "Gogu" in Finchley Central following reports of a mass brawl and stabbings on May 21/22?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

Following an incident at La Gogu, 5 Ballards Lane, Finchley, the decision was made by the Metropolitan Police to request an expedited review of the premises licence. This hearing was held on 28 May 2013 and the Licensing Sub-Committee made the decision to suspend the licence pending the full review.

However, the applicant made representations in relation to this suspension and a further hearing was held on 7th June 2013. The Sub-Committee then decided to allow the premises licence to be in effect pending a full hearing. A number of conditions were placed on the licence at this time, in particular in relation to CCTV.

The full review hearing was held on 20th June 2013 and the Sub-Committee held that the interim conditions placed on the licence should remain in place, as well as adding further conditions relating to CCTV.

Question 70

Councillor Brian Coleman

Following the well documented problems of the Co op Bank, has Councillor Thomas asked for a review of the Council's banking arrangements?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

In May, I asked for a review of the council's banking arrangements to ensure that its treasury strategy remained prudent. The following issues were already being managed by officers when I received an update on 31st May:

- The Council only uses the Co-operative Bank for overnight deposits, and is not exposed to longer term deposits, so all funds held have immediate access. This was a key failing during the Icelandic Banks crisis, where deposits were locked up for longer periods of time.
- Many schools held quite large sums on deposit with the Co-operative Bank, and these have been reduced down to a maximum of £50,000 per school. The balance of these funds will be fed back into schools bank accounts as and when this is needed for the remainder of the financial year.
- The Council is receiving regular advice from its treasury advisor, Arlingclose, on banking arrangements, and is keeping the situation under close review.

Question 71

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will the Leader update the Council on the "Diamond Jubilee Gates project" on the Committee of which he sits and is he happy to endorse the design?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The design for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Memorial Gateway has been chosen and a planning application will be forthcoming. The project is currently at the fundraising stage, with regards to which I believe steady progress is being made. Whilst the design may not have been what I expected, I am more than happy to endorse the Committee's decision.

Question 72

Councillor Brian Coleman

Could the Leader list the Councillor who took advantage of the "drop in sessions" on the proposed DRS contract?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Councillors (in alphabetical order of surname) were:

- Cllr Brian Coleman
- Cllr Richard Cornelius
- Cllr Anthony Finn
- Cllr Helen Hart
- Cllr Sury Khatri
- Cllr David Longstaff
- Cllr Arjun Mittra
- Cllr Alison Moore
- Cllr Graham Old

- Cllr Barry Rawlings
- Cllr Hugh Rayner
- Cllr Alan Schneiderman
- Cllr Jim Tierney

Question 73

Councillor Brian Coleman

What date is envisaged for the appeal hearing on the so called "One Barnet" JR?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The appeal hearing will take place on the 15th and 16th of July 2013.

Question 74

Councillor Brian Coleman

Many street lamps in Hertsmere are now switched off after midnight. What energy savings have been calculated if Barnet followed a similar policy in residential roads?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

19,200 new columns have been installed in Barnet since April 2006. The Central Management system (CMS) installation commenced on the 29th April 2013, facilitating remote management of the street lights, it enables a cheaper rate of electricity consumption and controlled electricity usage and will be installed to all street lights in Barnet by August 2014. The current estimated electricity cost for 2013/14 was 1.55m. The unit rate for electricity is increasing at about 11% per annum. Therefore combined estimated energy savings could be up to 30% p/a, with anticipated annual budget savings of up to 400,000 p/a and carbon reduction contribution of 2.5 Tonnes p/a of carbon. This saving is already declared as part of the Medium Term Financial Saving.

Question 75

Councillor Brian Coleman

Does the Leader welcome the Mayor's statement at the Annual meeting that he would not tolerate long winded supplementary questions or answers? Does the Leader think that the same attitude should be followed with regard to sycophantic questions?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I always value brevity. Sycophancy is always unattractive and questions should be submitted to elicit information.

Question 76

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will the Leader instruct the Cabinet to end the practise of drafting questions to themselves and then asking backbench councillors to table them?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

As the Member will well know it has been practice for many years that Cabinet Members sometimes suggest topics upon which non-executive members may wish to ask a question. However, questions still act as a vehicle for eliciting information – both favourable and unfavourable to the administration – and should remain so.

Question 77

Councillor Brian Coleman

How much has the Council spent during the last ten years at the Grove Hotel Watford?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

In each of year the council spent:

2005/6 - £31,265.53
2006/7 - £8,047.28
2007/8 - £15,121.56
2008/9 - £9,193.34
2009/10 - £0
2010/11 - £0
2011/12 - £0
2012/13 - £1,069.20*
2013/14 - £1,101.28*
Total - £65,798.19

* Booked by the Council on behalf of a Maintained School.

Question 78

Councillor Brian Coleman

Never mind the ownership issues of the former Hendon Football Club, will the Cabinet Member use his powers to clear the site of the tonnes of rubbish which are a complete health hazard and nuisance to local residents?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council and the Leaseholder very recently engaged with an extensive operation with the Police and Borders Agency to clear the site of the illegal occupants and to prevent its reoccupation. We are now working with the Leaseholder to effect clearance of the site, a vast majority of the waste on the site is inert builders waste. The Council will use its enforcement powers should this prove to be necessary.

Question 79

Councillor Brian Coleman

What are the future plans for the newly built but empty cafe building at Scratchwood Open Space?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The tenant for the cafe has been marketing the property for an operator, following which the internal area of the building will be fitted out and the facility opened. This operator has recently been secured and the contracts are in the process of being completed. It is anticipated that the cafe should be operating during August. The recent squatters have been served a notice and will be removed.

Question 80

Councillor Brian Coleman

What is the Cabinet Member doing to end the damage caused to Scratchwood Open Space and Moat Mount Open Space by "mass picnics" and illegal Barbecues taking place on Summer weekends and what efforts has the Council made to encourage the Iranian Community to behave in a responsible manner?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The use of these spaces for barbecues is not permitted and does generate large volumes of litter and unfortunately an element of scorching to the grass. It is encouraging that the sites are being well used on nice days and that residents use the parks and open spaces for the purpose of recreation and socialising is something that we aim to achieve. While the Council considers options, the existing practices are being managed to ensure the site is being utilised in a positive but considerate way. To prevent the use of the site could at this time impact adversely on the new cafe, so the intention is to establish the cafe operation and then review and develop options for the site. The cafe will have a key role to play in this.

Question 81**Councillor Brian Coleman**

Could the Cabinet Member outline what discussions he has had on the restructuring of Neighbourhood Policing in the Borough?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

A series of meetings have been held with the Borough Commander on the development of Barnet's Local Policing Model covering a broad range of issues arising from the initial consultation phase through to implementation. Key areas discussed include police stations and front desk availability (in line with the views expressed through the public consultation), the establishment of the four new police contact points in the borough (at Golders Green, East Finchley, Friern Barnet Road and Cat Hill), the rationale behind these changes (since 2006/07 Barnet has seen a 44% reduction in the number of crimes reported via front-desk), the number of sectors and number of Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) within each sector, the increased number of warranted officers in SNTs and the benefits of warranted officers over Police Community Safety Officers (PCSOs), number of PCSOs in SNTs, transport for officers, the risks around abstraction, dates for implementation of changes, how sector Inspectors will manage SNTs and ensure they interact within each sector, the importance of intelligence-led policing and the Borough Commanders policies of 'Go Nowhere Twice' and 'Treat each victim of crime as if they were a member of your own family'.

In order to ensure wider awareness of the Local Policing Model and the potential impact of the planned changes, and as Board Chairman, I have also arranged with the Borough Commander that he present on this topic at the next Safer Communities Partnership Board on July 19th.

Question 82**Councillor Brian Coleman**

Would Councillor Tambourides agree with me that high of residents "wish list" is that the Borough should increase Planning Enforcement activity? Is she satisfied with the target outlined in the DRS contract and can she outline the process that would be undertaken to improve this target under the contract?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

It is accepted that residents would like to see more planning enforcement activity. It is important however, resident expectations on planning enforcement action are balanced with the Councils duty to ensure that any planning enforcement action taken against breaches of planning control are commensurate with the breach of planning control. In other words, planning enforcement action should only be taken against a breach of planning control if demonstrable planning harm is identified. It is also important to note that in most cases it is not an offence to breach planning regulations and only in exceptional cases can the Council take action requiring immediate cessation of a breach of planning control.

There are a number of cases where the Council have served planning enforcement notices against breaches of planning control but the breach remains and this frustrates officers, councillors and residents. In order to improve the time taken to resolve breaches of planning control, a budget has recently been made available to employ contractors to demolish structures which remain in breach of the requirements of an effective enforcement notice. A report will be presented to the Planning & Environment Committee meeting being held on 11 September 2013 seeking authorisation for officers to proceed with direct enforcement action on a number of outstanding cases. Assuming authorisation is given to proceed, officers are of the opinion that demolition operations will commence in October.

In respect of enforcement targets set out in the form of key performance indicators (KPI's) and

performance indicators (PI's) in the DRS contract, the targets set exceed current and historic planning enforcement performance. This demonstrates the new service provider is committed to improving planning enforcement performance. The council has the ability to amend targets on an annual basis in negotiation with the service provider. In addition, in years 4 and 7 there is a requirement for external benchmarking of all the services to be carried out in order to ensure high standards of service.

Question 83

Councillor Brian Coleman

Does Councillor Thomas think paying £3,400 of Council Tax payer's money to the Claddagh Ring Public House is best use of limited resources?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

No. This was an exceptionally poor use of public resources. Action has been taken against the manager who authorised this expenditure. The money has been recovered and there will be no loss to the public purse.

Question 84

Councillor Brian Coleman

How many Barnet Primary Schools have decided to become Academies? What Political pressure will the Cabinet Member bring to ensure that Barnet's Primary Schools follow Barnet's Secondary Schools in taking advantage of this excellent Government Policy?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

To date, three Barnet Primary Schools have decided to become Academies and a further three schools are in the process of seeking Academy status. The Council has actively supported and will continue to support those schools who seek to become Academies. The decision to become an Academy rests with the governing body of the school and there is no role for the Council in the decision making process.

Question 85

Councillor Brian Coleman

What duties has the Assistant Cabinet Member, Councillor Mrs Alison Cornelius undertaken or been allocated?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Since taking on the post, Cllr Alison Cornelius attended briefings on 23rd May 2013 and 3rd July 2013, attended Barnet Safeguarding Children's Board 19th June 2013 and the Jack Petchey awards on the 3rd July 2013 in connection with her role as an Assistant Cabinet Member.

Question 86

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will the Cabinet Member join me in welcoming plans by the Avanti School to move to Barnet and agree that this will add to the diversity and richness of Education available in this Borough?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

As set out in our Education Strategy, the Council is supportive of the development of free schools to meet local requirements where there is evidence of demand, a robust business case and available property. We are proud of the diversity of the educational offer in Barnet and the educational offer of the Avanti school would add to this diversity.

Question 87

Councillor Brian Coleman

It is reported in the press that you have taken a public position opposing plans by the Avanti School to move to the London Borough of Barnet. Would you accept that there are many in the Hindu Community who feel let down by this attitude and the position taken by several members of

your Administration in opposing plans for the permanent site in the Edgware Ward and the temporary site in the Hale Ward and welcome the comments of Boris Johnson at Mayor's Question Time on June 19th?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I am fully supportive of the Avanti School and would gladly welcome it to the London Borough of Barnet; however the site does have to be suitable. In relation to a proposal for a specific location of a school, each application is subject to the planning process and the factors influencing the outcome of that process will vary depending on the particular circumstances. I understand that Mayor Boris Johnson has been frequently misquoted on this matter and I do not believe his position is radically different from that of most councillors here.

Question 88

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will the Cabinet Member join me in welcoming the appointment of Mrs Teresa Tunnadine as a Companion of the Order of the British Empire in Her Majesty's recent Birthday Honours List? Does he recognise the huge success of the Compton School under the Leadership of Mrs Tunnadine and her predecessor Mr Andrew McAlpine and is he grateful for those who had the vision to establish the Compton School in 1992 especially Councillor the late Mrs Barbara Langstone and Councillor Mrs Helena Hart?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Indeed.

Question 89

Councillor Brian Coleman

Does the Cabinet Member welcome the impending opening of the Archer Academy which will provide first class education for children in East Finchley but would he join me in regretting that the new school uniform does not include a tie? Does he agree with me that not wearing a tie for formal occasions is a sloppy habit and that the Prime Minister sets a poor example in this matter?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

The Council has from the outset supported the parents who wished to set up the Archer Academy.

With regard to the specific question about the school uniform and the fact that a tie does not form a part of the uniform: the wearing of a school uniform is not governed by legislation but falls to schools to determine. It is a school's Governors who decide the policy on the wearing of a uniform and, if it determines it wants pupils to wear uniforms, the particular uniform they require pupils to wear.

It is a matter for the Head teacher to make sure pupils keep to the rules set by Governors. Government guidance is that schools should ensure that their school uniform policy is both fair and reasonable and that the school uniform itself is practical, comfortable and appropriate and represents value for money for families.

To assist schools the Department of Education has issued guidance on school uniform policy. The link is:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolethos/b0014144/schooluniform>.

There is no requirement in the guidance for ties to be specified as an element of a school uniform. The Council has no role in formulating a uniform policy in any school - whether that school is a maintained school, trust or academy.