

Council Questions to Cabinet Members
21 January 2014
Questions and Responses

Question 1**Councillor Susette Palmer**

Could the Cabinet Member please update me on the number of care leavers awaiting housing, how long they have been waiting and an estimate of the re-housing time? Could he also inform me how many other young people we are looking after who will be reaching housing age in the next 6 months?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

There are 13 care leavers awaiting housing who have been assessed and verified under the allocations scheme. There are also seven who are either not yet assessed or ineligible for housing assistance. Of the 13 who are assessed:

- one is under offer to a property
- seven are on current shortlists for properties
- one is in substantial rent arrears and is currently disqualified on the Allocation Scheme until an arrangement is made
- one has recently refused a reasonable offer and has the right to appeal
- two are 2- bedroom need and have not yet been shortlisted due to the limited supply of 2 bedroom properties
- one is being housed under a reciprocal agreement with London Borough of Newham

The volume of supply at any particular time will impact on the waiting times as will the band which care leaver has been allocated. We are projecting 29 young people who will be reaching the age that they can be nominated (i.e. 17 ½ years old) in the next six months.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Susette Palmer**

All of us are corporate parents and we have to consider what happens to these children as though they were our own. Is the Cabinet Member totally satisfied with the figures that he has given, particularly as there are likely to be another 29 young people who will be on the housing list in the near future? Could you please explain what is happening to those children while they are waiting on the council list? Whether they are able to stay either in our children's home or with their foster parents for the duration?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

I can not comment on individual cases but I'll ask officers to provide an overview as to the situation based on roughly how many people were in certain circumstances and forward that information onto Councillor Palmer.

Question 2**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Would the Cabinet Member please comment, from Barnet's perspective, on the well publicised highly negative comments recently made by the Chief Inspector of Schools about grammar schools which he described as "stuffed with middle class kids" where parents were elbowing out "working class" children?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

I support the work of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) in continuing to raise standards through the rigorous assessment of educational establishments and the relentless pursuit of excellence. I regret that some would perceive Sir Michael's comments as a slur on grammar schools instead of what I believe is a genuine disappointment that we still have too many poor schools populated by young people being let down. We are fortunate that Barnet has a range of great grammar and non-grammar schools and young people in our local authority are far better served than many in areas where the removal of grammar schools has been pursued. I support all the successful schools in Barnet and encourage them to continue to pursue excellence, supported and challenged by HMCI. Many of these are currently planning for or under expansion and I support these whole heartedly to raise standards for young people in our Borough.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Some people would perceive the remarks made by the Chief Inspector as being a criticism or a slur on grammar schools. But whether or not they were intended to be so, could the Cabinet Member confirm that he, like I and many others in this chamber, give complete support to what remains of the grammar school system; that we do consider that our grammar schools are something for us to be proud of and we endorse the fact that the whole concept of being selected for a grammar school has nothing at all to do with a person's financial status, nothing at all to do with affordability and all to do with academic ability, which is a very fair way of assessing children's admissibility to a school.

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

I agree wholeheartedly that the few remaining grammar schools that we do have within the local authority actually retain an exceptional opportunity for young people within our local authority. It is completely open on the basis of ability, not on the basis of any particular background that young people may have. It was also pointed out that under the changes that have been made in terms of increasing the number of academies and free schools within the local authority, we have an excellent provision that I think we should be genuinely proud of.

Question 3**Councillor Alison Moore**

Given that the council spent £8m on new refuse recycling trucks, why are the kitchen waste hoppers on these trucks too small for the amount of kitchen waste being disposed of by residents, forcing refuse workers to off-load kitchen waste mid-round and return to complete rounds? Did the council get the specification for trucks wrong and waste volumes wrong, and when will the effectiveness of the waste and recycling business plan be reviewed?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The capital spend for the 40 new waste collection vehicles was £7,371,614. This is for the total Refuse and Recycling fleet.

The food waste compartments on the recycling and food waste collection vehicles are not undersized, it was always envisaged that vehicles would tip at least once during the working day. This is common practice in the industry, and was also the case with the previous "kerbside sort" recycling service provided by May Gurney. The performance and effectiveness of the waste and recycling operations is under constant review, and once a new baseline of performance is identified, the service will develop the necessary approaches to maintain and improve on this performance.

Question 4**Councillor Jack Cohen**

Can the Cabinet Member please provide the number of refunds made to residents for parking permits overcharged as at 31st December what in monetary terms does this amount to and what percentage of refunds claimed but not refunded remain. Please provide the same information for visitor vouchers. For both please provide the same information for Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) in Child's Hill Ward.

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Unfortunately we do not record a split between permits / vouchers when carrying out a refund but deal with the requirements of each customer including part electronic or part cheque repayment. The number of resident refunds made up to 31st December was 16,214; the amount currently refunded is £903,006 from the projected £2.25million. Repayment details are not available by ward.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Jack Cohen**

This supplementary relates to the continuing fiasco of the overcharging of our residents on parking permits. I don't accept that the details are not available by Ward. Calculated from the answer, over 50% of residents who are entitled to a refund have still not had that refund. Can I ask therefore you take steps to ensure that our residents are aware that they are due a refund and get this over and done with as soon as possible?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Firstly, Councillor Cohen is entitled to email any officer and get the response if that is available. In terms of the number of permit holders that have been paid back, the amount is a bit misleading in that it's actually now circa 17,000 permit-holders that have been paid out of a total of 23,000. So we are getting very close and continuing with our work on that.

Question 5**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Was the free parking facility recently provided by Barnet on certain key shopping days well utilised by the public?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Direct feedback and feedback through the Communications team does show that the public and traders took full advantage of the free parking including additional events attracting large visitor numbers to most areas.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Brian Gordon**

I was delighted to know that the public were happy with the concessions that were made on parking during the recent holiday period. However I raised the fact that many people in my area, for example, were very upset that there was a lot of enforcement of parking restrictions on bank holidays. Many people felt that during the very quiet bank holiday period in quiet roads, e.g. Boxing Day, it was quite unreasonable that there were enforcement officers going around ticketing people who quite genuinely were parking there thinking that the restrictions would not apply on bank holidays.

Can there be some kind of confirmation and clarity regarding bank holiday parking with perhaps taking on board the suggestion many have made that bank holiday parking should only be enforced on weekdays that are bank holidays when signs actually specifically say so.

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

I note Councillor Gordon's joy about how successful the time that we gave residents to park over

the festive period was and it did indeed work very well. In terms of bank holiday parking, it is known that on Boxing Day that yellow lines and double yellow lines are enforced. However, we are currently working on our parking policy and this will be part of it.

Question 6

Councillor Gill Sargeant

Could the Cabinet Member advise how many Barnet residents have received a court summons in 2011, 2012 and 2013 for council tax arrears, and also the number of Barnet residents on the new Council Tax Support Scheme who received court summons for council tax arrears for the time the scheme has been operating?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The number of summons issued for non-payment of council tax are as follows:

2011/2012 16,024

There were fewer taxpayers summonsed because of system conversion in this year.

2012/2013 20,119

These totals include taxpayers who may have been in receipt of Council Tax Benefit (CTB) but it was not paid at 100% and still had a balance to pay.

2013/2014 20,456

These totals include taxpayers who are in receipt of Council Tax Support at various levels. Of these, 3608 would not have had to pay council tax in the preceding year because they were entitled to 100% CTB.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Gill Sargeant

There is anecdotal evidence that a number of people are receiving court summons before receiving any reminders. Could this be investigated? A regular payer who didn't receive a letter before she received a court summons got an unofficial apology and there are likely to be others.

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

I was not aware of that but we can check the record of the communications sent to the tax payer so we can see when the literature was sent out. It's quite often the case that people do only read the envelope that's got the red mark on it saying summons. Whilst summons sounds like quite a serious thing, it is merely the Borough saying to the court, we want to prove liability that this person owes us council tax. It is not a demand that this person goes to court in person and is grilled by a judge. It is simply a legal formality. However, the accusations that reminder letters haven't been sent out will be looked into.

Question 7

Councillor Jack Cohen

In the financial year to 31st December 2013 how much money has been paid to the following suppliers /companies:

- Agilisys
- Trowers and Hamlin
- Capita
- RE
- Commensura

In each case can the Cabinet Member please provide month by month breakdown of payments, the amount of any outstanding invoices and in each case a brief description of services rendered.

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

See response to Question 7 on spreadsheet on last page.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Jack Cohen**

I refer to the spreadsheet which shows £84m in total paid to just five suppliers. One amount of particular interest, for July and August, £36m paid to Capita before they even commenced that contract. Can Councillor Thomas provide an explanation for this extraordinary state of affairs?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

That expenditure was taken through Leader DPR so Cllr Cohen can look that up. It has been discussed by Members and it is legitimate expenditure. Whilst these are 'eye-watering' amounts in Councillor Jack Cohen's opinion, I believe the £160m savings is also quite 'eye-watering' from my point of view

Question 8**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Is Barnet equipped for the change from household electoral registration to individual registration that the government is due to be introducing later this year?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I can confirm that Barnet is as prepared as possible for the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration which goes live on 10 June 2014. Whilst there is much activity still scheduled to take place (most significantly the Transitional Canvass between 1 July and 30 September 2014, when all of Barnet's electors will be individually contacted to inform them whether they must take any action to move to the new Individual Electoral Register) – all of the project work has progressed well and is fully compliant with the requirements as set forward by the Cabinet Office. There are still some outstanding details yet to be communicated to us from the Cabinet Office, but the rest of the project is expected to be delivered on time and to meet the performance Standards that the Electoral Commission have placed upon the Electoral Registration Officer.

Officers have undertaken much work and will publish the final household based electoral register on the 17th February with the individual registration going live on the 10th June 2014 and publication of the first Individual Electoral register – 1 December 2014.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Does the Leader share my scepticism about the whole purpose of Individual Electoral Registration? Why does the system need to be changed from the current one? But seeing that is being done, does the Leader feel that we are going to have more people voting, more people registered and therefore a greater participation in elections as a consequence of this system?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I do share Councillor Gordon's scepticism, but we are now in a modern age. It is unreasonable to expect that in any household, one member of it is delineated as "the head of household". We have got to creep through the 19th Century into the modern age and it's an inevitable and welcome step that this has been done.

Question 9**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What has been the cost of the market research focus groups on parking?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

£14,080.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Given that the cost of these parking focus groups was over £14,000, there were eight groups of between five and nine attendees, which means an average cost of £250 for each person who attended. Does he think that is good value for money?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Obviously we would like more people to attend but that's the number that were interested in attending.

Question 10

Councillor Jack Cohen

I refer to your answer to question 100 at the last Council meeting. Whilst I welcome the Council's decision to declare the former Bohemia Pub a community asset, why were my submissions for similar protection for the Castle Pub in Childs Hill rejected out of hand by another Cabinet Member? Does your answer to question 100 demonstrate that the left hand does not know what its right hand is doing?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Ultimately it is my responsibility to take the final decision on these cases as and when they are received, following advice from officers and legal on the merits of each case against the legislation. Where there is merit, I will list a pub as an asset of community value. I did so in the case of the Bohemia, as I believed it was unique in the context of the local area. An initial Expression of Interest to list the Castle Pub was received on 1 December 2013, which was rejected by officers as it did not meet the minimum criteria for applications as specified in the guidance on the Council's website. An updated bid has now been received and, in accordance with the 8 week response time set out in the legislation, the Council has until 6 March to make a decision. I will make the final decision once I have considered the application. Councillor Tambourides, I understand, was speaking on a purely planning point of view.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Jack Cohen

The change of heart in now considering whether The Castle Pub in Childs Hill is a community asset is welcomed. Is the decision that will be taken on or before the 6th March made by Councillor Rams alone? If so, what are the criteria and can it be confirmed that the decision will be published?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius (in the absence of Councillor Robert Rams)

Of course it will be published. Whilst it is Councillor Rams' decision, if Councillor Cohen of course wishes to have input into that decision, he should have a word with Councillor Rams.

Question 11

Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner

Could the Cabinet Member confirm the final number of unlawfully sublet council properties recovered under the amnesty in November?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

As a result of the tenancy fraud amnesty 16 properties were recovered and a further property is due to be surrendered in late January 2014. Of the 16 properties recovered so far: 14 were London Borough of Barnet tenancies and 2 Registered Social Landlords (RSL) (Housing Association) 6 were 1 bed properties, 8 were 2 bed properties and 2 were 3 bed properties. 14 were flats and 2 were houses.

This amnesty has effectively generated the equivalent of just over £2m in capital and saved the taxpayer around £250,000 a year in temporary accommodation costs.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner

I congratulate the Cabinet Member for the initiative that was the amnesty and its success on the numbers here. Could he expand on what has been the impact with regards to the cost savings for the tax payer and also for the use of the homes in question?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

The cost saving is huge. It is basically around a £250,000 a year to the tax payer. This is money that people were effectively stealing from the tax payer's purse. We are actively pursuing anyone who is illegally sub-letting a council property, It is a far more effective way of ensuring those in need get properties, than simply giving anyone a house who wants a house and never following it up as Labour would have us do.

Question 12

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Friern Barnet Community Library with its committed group of trustees and volunteers recently gained charitable status. Much work has been done to secure outside grants but the sticking point is that many large grant funding organisations and charities require the recipient to have a lease with a minimum of five years. Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that the trustees and volunteers should be congratulated on their sterling efforts and will he instruct officers to provide a longer lease as soon as possible so that outside grant funding - and the future of the library can be secured?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

I agree that the volunteers have made significant progress in gaining charitable status for the Friern Barnet Community Library, who have been granted a 2 year lease at a peppercorn rent and an element of council funding in order for them to establish this Community Facility. The council are in the process of developing a Community Property Strategy to establish a consistent approach to community groups in terms of lease arrangements and rent liability for outgoings and responsibility for buildings. As there are a significant number of Community buildings and housing organisations in the Borough that require financial support in terms of concessionary rent, and or grants, together with difficulty in meeting the demands of statutory compliance it was considered appropriate that such issues are addressed within a strategic approach before further long term agreements are secured. On completion of an agreed strategy individual cases can be considered to provide the most effective and sustainable solution.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

In the absence of Councillor Rams, is the Leader aware that inaction could cost the library up to £109,000 in grants. Money that outside organisations have agreed but only subject to a longer lease being provided. So just when will the community property strategy be completed?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The property strategy needs to be worked on and it needs to be right as well. For too long, property services have been working with a handicap of insufficient resources. That is now, as a result of the outsourcing, been remedied and it be much more efficient and we can have confidence that all these cases will be looked at. The loss of any grant income would be regretted and council officers are working with Friern Barnet Library to ensure that a successful outcome is achieved.

Question 13**Councillor Jack Cohen**

When I asked you a few months back whether the Castle Pub could be protected as a community asset you said no. In the light of Councillor Rams' answer to question 100 at the last Council meeting do I conclude you did not consult your cabinet colleague before giving me your answer?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

I gave you the correct answer based purely on the planning point of view.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Jack Cohen**

It is understood that the reply to a similar question a few Council meetings ago was purely from the planning point of view, doesn't the answer demonstrate what is wrong with this Council? Does this Council not operate with corporate responsibility across all departments? Surely if a question is asked about the future of a pub that well serves the community, the answer should not just be from a planning point of view but also a corporate point of view. Is that not correct?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

Councillor Rams' answer states the case that for an application or a renewed application has been sent in and the decision will be made on that from his point of view, from the portfolio that he runs.

Question 14**Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner**

Can the Cabinet Member remind Council how many council houses the opposition party built when they had control of the council?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

Zero.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner**

Would the Cabinet Member agree that the Labour Group's stance on this matter is both contradictory and hypocritical given the fact that whilst they repeatedly call for the building of new homes, they oppose virtually every new development that we are proposing and they repeatedly fail to offer any alternative solutions or locations?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

I would completely agree that the Labour Councillors are hypocrites when it comes to housing policy and have repeatedly failed to offer up any alternatives despite Councillor Julie Johnson promising to do so on at least one Council meeting and one Cabinet Resources Committee. She has failed to provide any information despite making claims that she would do so, in public forums.

Question 15**Councillor Alison Moore**

How much money has been spent by the council on paying haulage companies to take waste off-loaded mid-round by the new refuse and recycling trucks to the Edmonton Plant, and are these haulage companies still being used to do this?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The cost spent on hauling recycling is £14,016 to the end of December 2013. This is being piloted initially for 6 months, and costs and savings will be kept under review. The cost is expected to be offset by the time and number of journeys to Edmonton without the mid round off loading.

Question 16**Councillor Jack Cohen**

Why doesn't Barnet follow the lead of the majority of other London Boroughs and permit taxi card members to double swipe their cards twice during a journey instead of once?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Taxicard is a scheme that provides subsidised transport for people who have serious mobility impairment and difficulty in using public transport. Taxicard holders make journeys in licensed London taxis and private hire vehicles, and the subsidy applies directly to each trip subject to a minimum customer contribution.

The London Councils Transport and Environment Committee (TEC) manage the London Taxicard Scheme on behalf of participating London Boroughs and the Mayor of London.

Historically Taxicard in Barnet was funded wholly by Transport for London (TfL), and the council had no input to the operation of the scheme. TfL determined the level of service offered in the borough and this did not provide for double swiping (where a taxi-card user can use two subsidies from their allocation towards a single longer journey). Most other boroughs contributed financially to the schemes in their boroughs and some have offered enhancements to the basic scheme. Currently about two-thirds of boroughs offer double swiping and is understood to be popular with users.

There have been changes to how TfL's contributions to the scheme are allocated between boroughs in recent years. Under the revised system the TfL allocation for Barnet has remained above the cost of the scheme in the borough but this might not continue in future, and the borough could be expected to contribute. However as a result the borough might also expect to have a greater say in the operation of the scheme.

While currently there appears to be some headroom for increased costs, nevertheless it is estimated implementing double swiping could cost the council around £45k per annum.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Jack Cohen**

This is a question to Cllr Dean Cohen about the taxi card subsidy. Two thirds of boroughs, but not Barnet, offer double swiping which means a severely disabled person doesn't have to spend as much money on a taxi ride. You say it's understood to be popular with users. You say it would cost this council £46,000 to introduce double swiping. Is that not a drop in the ocean compared to the £86m we are told in question 7 is spent on One Barnet and could Councillor Thomas not be persuaded to come up with £46,000 which would benefit some severely disabled people in this borough rather than wasting £86m on consultants and the like.

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

This is ongoing work and it is being considered together with TfL.

Question 17**Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner**

At the date of this meeting, with the most up to date figures, what percentage of Barnet primary and secondary schools are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

88% of Primary schools and 91% of Secondary schools are rated 'good' or 'outstanding'. 100% of Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units are rated 'good' or 'outstanding'.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner**

These figures look excellent but can the Cabinet Member provide some context by commenting on how these compare with other local authorities, both locally and nationally?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

To put that into context, being that we have got 88% of our primary schools and 91% of our secondary schools rated “good” or “outstanding”, that places us in the top ten percent respectively of each of those particular school categories. Clearly, where we have 100% of our special schools and pupil referral units rated “good” or “outstanding” means that there is not a local authority in the land that is exceeding us on that. When you put the three together, there are no published figures that actually show a better state of schools than we have within the local authority. However to finish with the caveat: 88% to 91% clearly show that there is still a small percentage of schools that we need to do some more work with to help them to improve, to make sure that we get the best outcomes that we can for the young people living in Barnet.

Question 18**Councillor Jim Tierney**

The entrance for motorists to Essex Park, N3 1ND from Ballards Lane N3 is made difficult and dangerous by parked vehicles on both sides in Essex Park. The unrestricted parking on both sides there effectively reduces Essex Park to one lane allowing just one vehicle at a time through in either direction. As a consequence, motorists on Ballards Lane needing to enter Essex Park are often obliged to queue and wait there until they can get through. On occasion I have even noticed motorists being obliged to reverse back out of Essex Park into the main road, Ballards Lane. Could I ask the Cabinet Member to take the necessary action to address this problem and restrict parking in that section of Essex Park?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Traffic and Development Officers of Re are happy to investigate the concern and will propose any remedial measures if any are considered necessary.

Question 19**Councillor Jack Cohen**

I refer you to your answer to my question number 1 at Full Council on September 10th. You said then contracts had been exchanged for the sale of Land at Hendon Football Club. Will you confirm that the sale to Montclare Ltd has now been completed and that the sum of £2.8 million (as set out in the report Cabinet Resources Committee (CRC) on the 17th July 2012) has been paid in full? Has a new planning application been submitted?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The sale of Hendon Football Club to Montclare has been completed and £2,800,000 has been received as an initial payment. The developers are in discussion with the planning department pending submission of a planning application for the development of the site.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Jack Cohen**

I note that Montclare has completed a payment to the point of £8m but a major part of that bid was the money the Council would make or receive through the building of new homes. So, it's disappointing that they still haven't submitted a planning application. But one of the conditions of the sale was that Montclare would withdraw their current planning application which still remains in force. Have they withdrawn that application?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

I will email Planning Department and ask.

Question 20**Councillor Hugh Rayner**

How well have the new pay-by-card parking machines been received in the Borough's town centres?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The new machines have been very well received and are offering another choice of payment as requested by traders.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Hugh Rayner**

I congratulate Councillor Cohen on all his efforts on improving the borough's parking. Can I invite the Cabinet Member on a walkabout in Hale Ward to identify any confusing signage and lineage that need improving?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

I am more than happy to join the Member in Hale as I have done in other Wards across the borough.

Question 21**Councillor Gill Sargeant**

Could you confirm whether there has been a recent change in policy such that Barnet residents who pay council tax regularly and miss one payment will now receive a court summons unless they pay by direct debit?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

There has been no change in policy in this area. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992 provide the statutory instalment scheme and the issue of reminders where the payments are not made in accordance with the instalments. Taxpayers that do not pay an instalment on time may receive a reminder. If that reminder is satisfied within 7 days the taxpayer may continue with the instalments. If a payment is not made within 7 days then the full amount is due within a further 7 days. If that remains unpaid then a summons may be issued, incurring costs.

If the taxpayer complied with the first reminder but then fell behind again, a second reminder may be issued. If a payment is not made within 7 days then the full amount is due within a further 7 days. If that remains unpaid then a summons may be issued, incurring costs.

If an instalment is missed for a third time, then a final notice may be issued and that will be for the full amount payable within 14 days. If that remains unpaid then a summons may be issued, incurring costs.

Direct debit payments are collected by the council so will always be received on time. No reminders are sent when accounts are paid on time whether this is by Direct Debit or any other method. Direct debits are collected on 6 different dates in the month increasing flexibility on the date of instalment due.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Gill Sargeant**

Could you confirm what Capita's target is for council tax payers to pay by direct debit? Please note that many hardworking people are on zero-hours contracts and on numbers of different types of contracts and find paying by direct debit difficult. Can this be taken into account?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Direct debit target is unknown but the council's tax collection, certainly last year, was the best ever and it is as the result of a really robust policy, as illustrated here. Now, even though there may very well be a target for direct debit, were actually (before we outsourced to Capita) encouraging people to pay direct debit. But if quite clearly people don't want to or can't pay by direct debit, then that is fine. But they still must pay on time.

Question 22**Councillor Hugh Rayner**

May I welcome the arrival of the 23 new street cleansing machines and ask the Cabinet Member how the routes will be organised so as to maximise their benefit and minimise disruption?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The arrival of the machines marks the commencement of the transformation of the street cleansing services that will be delivered through a series of stages over the coming 12 months. The immediate changes that residents will see is a morning mechanical cleanse of the town centers before the Town Keepers commence their daily program. The mechanical sweepers will then be deployed onto area routes to work alongside a manual team in order to deliver the 6 weekly residential sweeps, currently delivered by individual manual barrow beats. Major and priority roads will see an immediate increase in cleansing frequency from 5 weekly to weekly, and in some cases more.

After a period of implementation, monitoring and subsequent review during the next 3 months (January to March) a new delivery approach will be developed. Following this period (April) the baseline data will be available to commence the work to optimize routes and build the new delivery model which is expected to facilitate an increase in cleansing frequencies as well as new ways of working for a phased implementation commencing in October 2014.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Hugh Rayner**

Would the Cabinet Member please congratulate our unsung heroes in the borough's street cleansing department for their quiet and most efficient efforts in keeping the streets so clean?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

I would like to commend the borough's staff on continuing their hard work in keeping the streets of this borough clean. Staff are also commended for the hard work they did in working with me to help have a much more robust cleansing strategy that will benefit every citizen and every resident of this borough.

Question 23**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

On what dates have parking focus groups been scheduled / held? How many (a) residents and (b) traders attended each group?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

There are eight separate focus groups booked and these have taken place on 9th and 11th December and 7th and 8th January.

Groups included:

- Residents of the borough
- Residents who live in Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs)
- Those who drive and park in Town Centres
- High Street Retailers
- Town Centre Business

Attendance has been varied from a minimum of five attendees to a maximum of nine attendees.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

In relation to these parking focus groups at a cost of £250 per attendee, would it not have been cheaper if the Cabinet Member actually spoke to the residents and retailers himself?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

I have spoken to more residents and traders than Councillor Schneiderman has ever done.

Question 24

Councillor Hugh Rayner

Does the Cabinet Member for Resources agree with me that an innovative free school with sports facilities accessible to the community and some much needed housing is a positive result for a plot of land derelict for a decade?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Yes, I agree. It is disappointing to see the Labour Party misinforming residents about the full proposals for the land.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Hugh Rayner

I am confident that Councillor Thomas would also hope that the forthcoming campaign for the May elections is robust. Does the Cabinet Member agree that any information put out to residents should be truthful and not mislead the residents?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

I agree and state that I would be helping Councillor Rayner to deliver leaflets telling the truth about this development in Hale Walk. I was disgusted when presented with a petition that blatantly misinformed residents. The Conservative party will tell the truth because we've got a good story to tell.

Question 25

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Can the Cabinet Member tell me how much has been spent on looking for alternative sites for the black bin lorry depot, have any sites been identified or is it still the plan to relocate the site to Pinkham Way?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

A decision has not been made regarding the depot. We are keeping all our options open.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

How much has been spent on finding an alternative location for the black bin depot and what is your preferred option?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

If the Member had actually written 'how much money' as opposed to 'how much', it could be time, it could be money, it could be anything.

Question 26

Councillor John Marshall

Now three months into the new recycling service, can the Cabinet Member explain what impact there has been on the amount Barnet is recycling?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The council's target is to recycle, compost or reuse 43% of household waste by 2016/17. Due to the huge success of the recent change of service offer, it is anticipated that this will be achieved within the first year of the new service.

Based on the initial 10 weeks of the new service (excluding week 1 where there were double recycling collections) the average weekly tonnages collected were 509 tonnes of recycling, and 144 tonnes of food waste. The average weekly tonnage of recycling collected through the previous recycling service based on June, July and August 2013 figures was 349 tonnes, and the estimated tonnage of food waste was only 200 tonnes for a full year. The service is reviewing residual waste tonnages and it appears that these have reduced but not directly in proportion to the increase in recycling, this may reflect housing growth, and changes in economic conditions and consumer behaviour.

Supplementary Question

Councillor John Marshall

I congratulate the Cabinet Member on the success of the new recycling system. I also congratulate the officers who implemented it and the staff who work for the council collecting the rubbish. Is the Cabinet Member in a position to give us any idea as to what the financial impact of these changes are because clearly we will be paying much less levy to the North London Waste Authority. He has produced a scheme that is financially successful as well as being environmentally successful and he deserves the congratulations of all members of this council and the people of the borough.

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

I thank Councillor Marshall for his kind words. As Members would have seen in the press, I am pleased to say that from the door-stepping campaign, 81% were pleased or very pleased with this service. As other Members would have seen the BBC report due out this week, unlike Labour-run Lambeth, residents in this borough are very happy with the recycling refuse collection. In terms of the financial impact, every tonne of food waste that doesn't go in the black bin is a saving of £80 per tonne so we're now saving 144 tonnes a week, a substantial saving.

Question 27

Councillor Alison Moore

Will the new refuse and recycling trucks have enough capacity to finish their rounds before off-loading kitchen waste when the council rolls-out re-cycling to flats this month?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Flats in blocks of up to five properties already have the food waste recycling service. This service will be rolled out to serve larger flat blocks from June 2014, and these sites will be served by dedicated food waste collection vehicles.

Question 28

Councillor John Marshall

Would the Leader of the Council like to join me in congratulating the Chairman of Governors at QE Boys School upon the award of the MBE in the New Year's Honours List?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The Leader is always delighted when the talent and hard work of local residents is recognised. To run such a successful school takes sustained effort and the Chairman of the Governors at QE boys is to be congratulated on the school's continuing achievements as well as his honour.

Supplementary Question

Councillor John Marshall

Would the Leader of the council be kind enough to write, congratulating Mr Barry Martin on everything he has done for this school which has on many occasions produced better A-level

results than Eton.

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I would be delighted to do so.

Question 29

Councillor Gill Sargeant

Could you give the amount the council has paid to bailiffs including recoverable costs in 2013, 2012 and 2011?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

No amounts are paid to the bailiffs in respect of costs charged to London Borough of Barnet for Council Tax collection. The bailiff companies levy fees in accordance with a schedule of fees set by schedule 5 of the Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992. These are directly payable by taxpayers to the bailiff.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Gill Sargeant

I felt sure that more had been recovered from council tax because the first that many residents knew was a court summons, which upset enormously previously law-abiding citizens. How much have bailiffs received in pursuance of their duties on behalf of Barnet council in 2011 and 2012?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The term "law-abiding" suggests making residents criminals, this is a civil matter. We are not making residents criminals in pursuing summons. It is not a criminal act. All we are doing is establishing liability of the council tax bill. I will write to Councillor Sargeant regarding how much bailiffs have received in fees, which is quite clearly governed by law.

Question 30

Councillor John Marshall

Will the Cabinet Member take action to update guidance to those seeking to add a basement to their home?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

We continue to monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), recently introduced in April 2013 which contains clear guidance in relation to basement development.

We are also currently reviewing the approach of other London boroughs to basement development. Kensington and Chelsea for instance are developing a bespoke basement policy as part of their review of their 2010 Core Strategy Development Plan Document. This is yet to be submitted for examination by a Planning Inspector. Progress on this has been paused as they review evidence.

Further to these work streams, consideration will be given as to how the guidance might be updated later this year.

Supplementary Question

Councillor John Marshall

When the Member says that guidance might be updated later this year, is she referring to the municipal year or the calendar year and can she council officers that under the new Committee Structure, which we're going to adopt, I will be putting down a Members item if re-elected, asking for a stronger line to be taken on basements which cause a lot of aggravation to residents on my Ward.

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

We hope to look at basements again in the later part - Autumn/Winter - of this year and it is noted that a Members question might be put forward should the Committee System be adopted.

Question 31

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

What questions were asked at the parking focus group?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

There are a number of different groups and as such a range of questions have been produced which have been tailored to be most appropriate for the attendees of each individual group.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Can Councillor Cohen please confirm whether one of the questions asked at the parking focus group was "do you agree with bringing back cash parking meters" and can he send me a full list of the other questions that had been asked at those focus groups.

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

I was not in possession of the questions asked but will ask officers for that information and suggest that Councillor Schneiderman could do the same.

Question 32

Councillor Barry Evangelii

What has been the change in satisfaction with the council, as found through the Residents' Perception Survey, over the last couple of years and how does satisfaction with Barnet Council now compare with other authorities?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

This year overall satisfaction with the council has again seen a significant increase, and is now above the London average.

- Overall satisfaction with the council has seen a significant increase in the last year (now 74 per cent, up 11 per cent, and 23 per cent in total since 2010/11).
- Barnet is now significantly above the overall London average (plus four per cent), five per cent above the outer London average.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Barry Evangelii

To what does the Leader attribute this increase in satisfaction which indeed is most welcome and how does he feel this will impact the council's future approach?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

This Conservative administration has worked very hard to keep services good and reduce the cost of doing so. A remarkable achievement that is undoubtedly recognised by the public and the proposal to reduce council tax by 1% has been very well received by the public. The council knows that we're doing a good job and running a tight ship here in Barnet and I look forward to their congratulations on May 22nd.

Question 33

Councillor Geof Cooke

In each of the last 4 years, how many parking penalty charge notices have been issued:

- a) to disabled Blue Badge holders for displaying their permit upside down or otherwise incorrectly;
- b) to Councillors for using their Councillor parking permits when not on Council business?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Unfortunately it is not possible to identify data relating to either of these requests as the parking system does not record information in a manner which would enable such figures to be reported.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Geof Cooke

Is it not the case that a number of disabled residents have been hit with hefty penalties for displaying their blue badges in the wrong way but some Conservative Councillors who have been caught out using their Councillor parking permits for electioneering purposes have not been fined in any way?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

My answer stands and I don't have any figures to back that up.

Question 34

Councillor Barry Evangeli

What are the implications for the residents of the Borough of the decision to move to a new CCTV provider?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

The upgraded service will enhance the safety of the Borough. With high definition cameras, new control room equipment and the introduction of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) the ability to proactively identify incidents and provide evidence to support prosecutions will be significantly enhanced.

The new service will bring flexibility in the location of cameras. The movement of ten cameras per year is built into the service cost and is only payable if cameras are moved.

In addition to delivering an improved service, the contract will deliver a total saving of £727,124 over five years.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Barry Evangeli

If ANPR is being introduced in April, can the Cabinet Member please explain why signs alerting residents to the use of AMPR are already up and running in the borough?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

ANPR which is Automatic Number Plate Recognition signs are up and that's thanks to the efforts of our borough commander. Chief Superintendent Adrian Usher, he has been able to bid for the Metropolitan Police's mobile ANPR cameras and has been very successful in lobbying for those cameras and that will be a benefit of us all in Barnet until we get our own AMPR cameras in April.

Question 35

Councillor Alison Moore

Would the relevant Cabinet Member advise how London Borough of Barnet's representative on North London Waste Authority voted on the issue of whether to cease their waste treatment procurement exercise and keep waste treatment at the Edmonton Plant?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

This vote was taken in a private session of the North London Waste Authority.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Alison Moore

The answer to this puzzles me; you refuse to answer the question. The only rational explanation for this is that you and Councillor Thomas, the other Council representative voted for the process to go ahead and

for Pinkham way to continue to be a site for a huge waste plant. Why are you not prepared to stand by his actions or do you agree with him?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

As I have said in my answer, the meeting was in private session and the information in that meeting is private.

Question 36

Councillor Andreas Tambourides

How has the council been working with the local police to help prevent burglaries during the winter months, when incidence can increase?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

Our performance in reducing and detecting burglary has been very good. In comparison with the other 32 London Boroughs we are currently achieving a 19% reduction in burglary over a rolling 12 month period to date. We have achieved the largest volume reduction in residential burglary and the second highest detection rate compared to the other 32 London Boroughs. The Council has continued to work jointly with the police and the wider partnership to help prevent burglaries during the winter months through:

1. Launching a Winter Burglary Crime Prevention Campaign.
2. Helping residents to improve the security of their homes, with a focus on the most vulnerable and those living in burglary hotspot areas.
3. Successfully securing four year funding of £120,000 from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to deliver a Safer Homes Scheme focussing on burglary.
4. Closely monitoring performance and trends and allocating resources accordingly.
5. Establishing a Burglary Reduction Partnership Delivery Group with the support of Middlesex University criminology department – to track performance, co-ordinate interventions and ensure a partnership approach is taken.
6. Keeping burglary a priority for the Safer Communities Partnership Board.

Our approach to tackling burglary is strongly supported by the Home office and is based on the underlying rationale that increased rates of residential burglary are at least in part as a result of poor property security. Our Safer Homes Scheme provides residents with an opportunity to receive a visit where the security of their home is assessed, advice provided and, for the more vulnerable individuals, timer switches or additional devices are provided to improve the security of their home.

The Council launched a Winter Burglary Crime Prevention Campaign in September 2013, jointly with the Police and the wider community safety partnership. Work included:

- Prevention and target hardening of homes in the burglary hotspot areas.
- Persuading residents to make their homes more secure by taking precautions of closing windows, locking doors, activating security alarms and remembering to adjust timer switches for lighting when the clocks went back. This was communicated through posters, leaflets and information on the Council website.
- Providing timer switches to burglary victims and vulnerable adults.

- Joint Police and council visits to pawn brokers, gold outlets and second hand laptop sellers identified by police intelligence as possibly receiving stolen goods and/or located near to a prominent burglary hotspot area.
- Joint Council and Police Crime Prevention talks delivered to the community with a focus on the more vulnerable members of the community.
- Joint Council, Police and Fire Service approach – linking with the free smoke alarm campaign – with advice both on fire safety and burglary prevention provided during home visits by the police, council and the fire service.
- The Council is working with Barnet Borough Watch to distribute information and advice to all Neighbourhood Watch Scheme co-ordinators.
- Information provided to Police Schools Officers – preventing burglary, providing property marking kits and ‘Safe at Home Messages’.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Andreas Tambourides

Would the Cabinet Member agree that the Winter Burglary campaign is an excellent example of the Safer Communities Partnership in action?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

I agree that this is an excellent example of the Safer Communities Partnership Board, which has made great strides in cohesive working and it is the willingness and enthusiasm of all the partners to get involved and work together that is proving highly effective. The partnership Board does believe that in working together, we are making Barnet a better and safer place for everyone to live and work. It is a great shame that when this council voted to adopt the Safer Communities Partnership Board Strategy, it was the Labour group that chose not to vote for it.

Question 37

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

What are the key messages that have come out of the parking focus groups?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The Focus Group meetings are at an early stage and are currently ongoing and therefore key messages have yet to be established.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Now that the meetings have taken place, what actually came out of them? We're paying £14,000 for them. What messages have come out of them?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The report has only just come out and I am still working through it.

Question 38

Councillor Andreas Tambourides

I note from the results of the latest Residents' Perception Survey that residents' level of concern about council tax has fallen markedly. Would the Cabinet Member agree that this is a reflection of this administration's ongoing commitment to keep tax low and will only be furthered by the upcoming council tax cut which will have helped household's Council Tax bills fall by 20% in real terms?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Yes, we have acted on residents' concerns and as a result the issue is no longer a 'top 3' concern.

Question 39

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Will the Cabinet Member join me in congratulating Danegrove Primary school on their achievement with disadvantaged pupils? Such has been their success that they rate amongst the top 250 performing schools in terms of progress between key stage 1 and the end of key stage 2 - a fact that has been acknowledged by the secretary of state for education. Will the Cabinet Member join me in sending congratulations to the staff and governors of the school for this outstanding achievement?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Indeed I am happy to do so.

Question 40

Councillor Andreas Tambourides

How many new school places were added in the Borough during the last year and how many more are set to be added this year?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

For the new school year 2013/14, 840 new school places were made available (510 primary Reception places and 330 secondary Year 7 places). For the school year 2014-15, 594 new school places are planned for with 444 primary Reception places and 150 Year 7 places for secondary schools.

Question 41

Councillor Alison Moore

In the interests of fairness, will the Conservative Group finally agree to scrap the free Councillors parking permits?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Permits are available to all Members; it is for individuals to decide if they take them up.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Alison Moore

Why not show some leadership by getting rid of these free parking permits? If residents have to pay for parking, so should Councillors.

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

As Councillor Moore says, like all residents, I also pay for my parking.

Question 42

Councillor Andreas Tambourides

We understand that Ashmole Academy is to expand its activities by adding a free primary school. Can the Cabinet Member update the council with the latest situation?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Ashmole Academy has announced that it is considering the creation of a two-form entry primary school, which would open in September 2015. We believe the intention is that pupils from the primary school would have admission priority to the secondary school. The Academy has informed us that they are running a consultation to try to establish whether there is sufficient interest to fill the school. We understand their intention is to submit a bid to the Department for Education (DfE) to open a free school in the January 2014 submission round. Successful applicants are expected to be announced by the DfE later this term.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Andreas Tambourides**

What sort of impact would such a move have on the nearby Osidge Primary School?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

We have quite a programme of looking at and encouraging many of our successful schools in trying to expand and take on additional places. With Barnet being such a successful place for schooling, many people are looking for an opportunity to have those school places available. With regards to specific schools within an area, if Ashmole Academy pursue and go ahead with the announcement it has made then the likelihood is that the pressure and demand on places is likely to be reduced. Therefore if other schools or Osidge are or aren't considering it, is a decision for them. Obviously as a local authority we try where possible to work with schools so that they make their own decisions in terms of looking for expansion and where there are successful schools looking to pursue that then we try to make sure we support them in as far as we can.

Question 43**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Is the reintroduction of cash parking meters currently being considered or has a decision on this already been taken?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

There are currently no plans to introduce cash payment parking meters. Anyone wishing to pay by cash can do so by purchasing a scratchcard which is available locally from various trader outlets and at libraries and via Paypoint outlets.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Many of the traders and residents have asked for cash to be re-introduced to parking meters. Have any of the residents and traders that Councillor Cohen has spoken to made similar requests?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Obviously there is interest in all types of payment but the payments that have gone on street on the last month or so have been very much welcome by all traders and residents that I have spoken to.

Question 44**Councillor Graham Old**

Could the Leader inform Council of the take-up of the Big Energy switch offer in its first phase; the likely impact for those involved; and how people can join the scheme?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

418 households in Barnet registered for the Big London Energy Switch between September and November 2013. 67% of these were able to make a saving, with the average saving being £190 per year.

Rising energy bills are a big concern for residents, particularly during the Winter. By signposting to schemes like this the council can help people to reduce their energy bills and keep the heating on during the colder months.

The next round of the scheme has not been formally announced yet however residents can still register in advance for it by visiting www.biglondonenergyswitch.org.uk.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Graham Old**

Are the methods described by the Leader simpler and a much more effective way of reducing consumers' bills than an unsustainable price fix?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Yes, of course, a price fix simply won't work. Indeed it has caused acceleration in price increases now. It's something that the Leader of the Labour party should regret. This is a much more sensible way of dealing with the situation.

Question 45**Councillor Alison Moore**

Will the Cabinet Member confirm that the Conservatives will not privatise Barnet's parks?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Yes, we won't.

Question 46**Councillor Graham Old**

With the New Year upon us and many people with pledges to exercise more, would the Cabinet Member reaffirm the importance of regular physical activity for the health of all residents and join me in welcoming the Outdoor Gyms soon to arrive in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

It is now generally accepted that participation in physical activity is just as important as a good diet in promoting and maintaining good health. Increasing this participation is a very important and significant priority for the Borough particularly as we do not currently perform at all well in this respect.

Physically active people have significantly lower rates of mortality from conditions such as coronary heart disease and stroke and participation in physical activity actually protects against type 2 Diabetes, Musculoskeletal conditions, Obesity and even Mental Health problems.

We all welcome the installation of the new Marked and Measured Routes and Outdoor Gyms in our local parks and the launch of the Fit and Active Barnet Campaign in response to the Director of Public Health's Challenge to the Borough. Barnet's health outcomes and behaviours are consistently better than those elsewhere in London and England as a whole but physical activity is an exception and we are currently doing everything we can to improve this.

Question 47**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

How many waste collections (refuse and recycling) were missed each week from the introduction of the new recycling service on 14 October until the end of December 2013?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Circa 4,000 missed collections occurred during the period 14.10.2013 to 31.12.2013. During the first week of the new service we had 465 missed collections (176 domestic and 289 recycling) and hit a high of 649 during the second week (330 domestic and 319 recycling). There has been a steady reduction in missed collections since then, during the week starting 16 December 2013 we had 197 missed collections (98 domestic and 99 recycling) and in the week starting 23 December 2013 we had 64 missed collections (35 domestic and 29 recycling).

Question 48**Councillor Graham Old**

What impact has Barnet's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, launched in August, made with respect to safeguarding efforts in the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

The Barnet's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is now the central point for information gathering and analysis regarding referrals about the general welfare of children and young people in Barnet. It has been receiving an average of 450-500 contacts per months, around 30% of cases were referred to the Children's Social Care Duty & Assessment Teams for an assessment while other referrals were re-directed to Early Intervention or universal services. The MASH is evidencing impact through case studies that demonstrate the positive impact of intervening early in families to prevent further harm. A detailed evaluation report will be presented to Members for scrutiny later in the year.

Question 49**Councillor Alison Moore**

Is the council/Cabinet Member aware that short term letting of properties on Beaufort Park is causing problems for other residents there, and will he support residents in getting this practice dealt with?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

There are a variety of different types of tenancies at Beaufort Park of which some are managed by housing associations and others from owners who have chosen to let out the properties as a private let. It would be useful for more information to be provided and which landlord (s) this relates to so we can decide how the Council can respond to this.

Question 50**Councillor Maureen Braun**

Can the Cabinet Member provide her assessment as to how effectively Healthwatch Barnet has begun?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

I have been extremely pleased both by the commitment and achievements to date of the new Healthwatch Barnet and how far they have progressed from their predecessor Barnet LINKs. They are also very much on track to meet the priorities they outlined during their regular quarterly contract monitoring meetings with the Adults and Communities Delivery Unit.

One key area has been to ensure that Healthwatch is resident-led and engages with hard to reach groups within the wider Barnet community so that it is a representative and diverse voice for both social care and health consumers. Some examples of the key activities which demonstrate how effective Healthwatch Barnet has been in achieving this during Year 1 include:

Undertaking 'enter and view' visits and making recommendations, some of which have already been implemented, such as more staff wearing name badges within Residential Care Homes and raising concerns where menus may need improvement.

Setting up a dedicated and up to date website detailing all Healthwatch activities and including Enter & View Reports and Monthly Newsletters.

Convening an extremely well attended Public Meeting on 26 November 2013 to update residents about their progress and to outline some of their key priorities over the next six months.

Running the information advice and signposting service (provided by Barnet Citizens Advice

Bureau) which is receiving positive feedback. The current rate of usage of this service is in line with other providers nationally. The key themes that have emerged through this service include enquiries about NHS changes, prescription charges and low income subsidies. From April 2013 to mid-November 2013 the Information Advice and Signposting service received 200 calls.

Consultations have taken place with small and/or marginalised communities with poor health outcomes, such as the Gypsy Roma Traveller community, and people with Learning Disabilities through the Barnet Mencap project. Further work will take place with Children and Young People and Older Adults during Quarter 3.

In summary, Healthwatch Barnet has successfully identified and implemented several activities in their first year for broader resident engagement and work with Partners. This will be reviewed at we come to the end of Year 1, with benchmarking and areas for development to be highlighted as Year 2 planning begins.

Question 51

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

How many residents in the public consultation on the change to the Council's governance system requested a cut in the speaking time for public questions at meetings or the introduction of a new restriction on the time available for residents to make comments?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

(1) All public comments on the consultation have been analysed. At the 20th November 2013 public consultation meeting, two comments were made under the discussion 'How can we encourage you to participate in meetings in the new structure?' which proposed limiting the speaking rights for members of the public at meetings:

"Limit the number of questions any individual can make at public meetings"

"In a representative democracy individual participation is not essential. It is the quality of the representative that is important"

(2) Consultation with all Members of the Council was a defined element of the consultation process. At the event for all Members chaired by the Mayor and held on 28th October, notes of the debate on Public participation stated that 'there was general agreement that 3 minutes may be an appropriate time slot, and that there should be consistency across committees. It was noted there needs to be a balance to allow for democratic input and public engagement while ensuring the committee has adequate time to conduct essential business.'

Question 52

Councillor Maureen Braun

How is Barnet performing, when compared to other London Boroughs and authorities nationally, with regards to the health issues benchmarked as part of Public Health England's Health Profiles reports?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

Public Health England produced two charts recently which compared each London Borough's outcomes against the indicators in the national health profiles with the national average and with the London average. These reports indicate that overall Barnet is a healthy place in which to live. Compared to the London average, Barnet is ranked 4th highest behind Richmond, Kingston and Kensington and Chelsea. Compared to the England average, Barnet is ranked 5th highest.

Question 53

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

How many penalty charge notices were issued this year in Barnet on (a) Christmas Day and (b) Boxing Day?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

There were zero (0) PCN's issued on Christmas day and 143 issued on Boxing day.

Question 54

Councillor Joan Scannell

Does the Leader welcome the announcement from the Mayor of London that the Northern Line will run 24 hours a day at the weekends from 2015?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

This will be a big achievement for the Mayor to have accomplished and will help integrate our great city ensuring that residents can return from Central London conveniently and safely.

Question 55

Councillor Alison Moore

When will the council deal with the appalling state of the public toilets in Cherry Tree Wood in East Finchley?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The immediate smaller issues that were raised regarding locks and the vandalised toilet roll holders etc. have been rectified. The larger project of refurbishing the toilets – redecoration, new windows and roof is currently being commissioned with the view to carrying out this work in March.

Question 56

Councillor Joan Scannell

Could the Leader indicate what has happened on the Stonegrove Estate and what action has been taken to help the residents affected?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The severe storms of the 27th - 28th October tore off a section of the roof to Skene Court on the Stonegrove Estate; the block is owned and managed by Family Mosaic Housing Association.

Significant water damage was caused to two flats immediately beneath the section of roof that had been damaged. The affected households have been relocated whilst repairs to the properties are undertaken. There were unacceptable delays to the relocation process caused by administrative difficulties. The householders had indicated that they did not wish to move into hotel accommodation and have been relocated temporarily.

The leader wrote to Family Mosaic in order to underline the importance of resolving this matter swiftly and London Borough of Barnet (Re) officers worked strenuously with all parties to deal with the situation.

A full inspection of all roofs on the estate has been undertaken by Barratts and works are now underway to dry out the flats and reinstate the roof. Family Mosaic has also carried out an inspection of the roofs of all similar blocks.

Family Mosaic anticipates that the households will be moved back into their flats at the end of April 2014.

Question 57

Councillor John Hart

Could the Cabinet Member update me on the disposal of Hendon Church Farmhouse?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Following specialist inspection work undertaken by Middlesex University, the costs to occupy the building increased to a level more than the University could commit to under the 4 year lease term they agreed to. The Council have been working with the University to consider options: the Council invest in the property; a longer term lease can be granted to Middlesex University to enable them to invest in the building; or that the property is sold.

Question 58**Councillor Alison Cornelius**

Will the Cabinet Member join me in welcoming the return of breast screening services to Finchley Memorial Hospital?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

Indeed the return of the Mobile Breast Screening Service to Finchley Memorial Hospital is most welcome and absolutely essential. Its removal - without any prior notification or consultation - was completely unacceptable, particularly as the Health and Well Being Strategy – to which all Members of the Health and Well Being Board including NHS England and the Clinical Commissioning Groups are signed up - actually had a target to increase the uptake of breast screening services and improve coverage to exceed the national average of 70% by 2015. The removal of this service from FMH was entirely counter-productive to this. Breast Screening services have historically underperformed in Barnet and it is important that local provision is not only maintained but extended and improved wherever possible.

Question 59**Councillor Alison Cornelius**

How many delayed discharges have been caused by the council being unable to accommodate people leaving hospital?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

Since April 2013 there have been 11 Barnet residents delayed in acute beds across Barnet & Chase Farm Hospitals NHS Trust and the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust. This is the equivalent of 61 bed days in total. Importantly this number should be seen in the context of the total of local Social Care delayed bed days of 1,066 in the same time period which are attributable to neighbouring and other Local Authorities and with whom we compare extremely well on this measure. As an example, the most recent performance snap shot (on the 6th January 2014) showed that there were 21 blocked beds in Barnet and Chase Farm and 16 blocked beds in the Royal Free, but none of these were attributable to Barnet Social Care.

There is a significant level of work being carried out, both at a senior management level and operationally with our Acute Trust partners - Barnet and Chase Farms Hospitals NHS Trust and the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust - to address any issues. We have joint pathways for elderly patients through PACE (Post Acute Care Enablement), TREAT (Triage Rapid Elderly Assessment Team) and Community Enablement to help reduce admissions and avoid discharge delays.

Social Care delays for Barnet residents account for only 5% of all London Social Care delays and only 1% of all London Health and Social Care bed day delays (data is for the year to date - data derived from London Trusts DTOC (Delayed Transfer of Care) information).

Question 60**Councillor Brian Coleman**

Bearing in mind Councillor Longstaff's attitude to the erection of the Barnet Eruv as demonstrated by his speech at the Planning Committee and the unease this caused amongst many residents, is he really the best person to take the lead on Holocaust commemoration?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Councillor Longstaff does not have an attitude towards the erection of Eruvs. He has a good relationship with the Jewish community. I am unaware of any unease amongst residents. He has taken the lead on successful Holocaust commemorations and I am sure will do so on many more.

Question 61

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will Cabinet Member congratulate Mr Barrie Martin, Chairman of the Governors at Queen Elizabeth's Boys School on the award of an MBE in the New Year Honours List and does will he continue with the Council's commitment to Grammar Schools in the Borough? Would he support those Grammar Schools should they wish to expand?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Indeed. See answer to Question 2.

Question 62

Councillor Brian Coleman

Would Councillor Cohen reveal the amount of batteries and textiles collected for recycling in the year prior to the withdrawal of the door to door collection service for these materials?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Between October 2012 and September 2013, 3.1 tonnes of batteries and 121.58 tonnes of textiles were collected through the kerbside recycling collection service. The council is working to set up a Textile Recycling Bank service in early 2014. Batteries are still collected door to door.

Question 63

Councillor Brian Coleman

Does the Leader believe that more members of ethnic minorities should become involved in local politics and does he think it is regrettable that the Labour Party in this Borough is apparently intent on removing ethnic minority Councillors from amongst its ranks?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

We live in a very diverse borough and the Labour Party will have its own views on reflecting that diversity. It would be a pity if anything they chose to do, led to the election of fewer councillors from ethnic minorities.

Question 64

Councillor Brian Coleman

What is the average amount being spent in a Ward on pavement and highways repairs and renewals during the current financial year? How much has been spent or is planned to be spent in Golders Green Ward?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Approximately £800,000 is being spent in Golders Green ward in 2013/14. This is as a result of the lack of investment in previous years, for example in the years 2010/11 and 2011/12 Golders Green ward was awarded less than £20,000 in total. I asked officers specifically to work on a list based on need, not like previous years on an even split in constituencies.

Question 65

Councillor Brian Coleman

How many school Governor vacancies exist in Barnet maintained schools?

Answer by Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Based on the information we currently hold, which may not be completely up to date in relation to schools that do not buy into the traded Governor Service, the total number of vacancies in Barnet

maintained schools (not including Academies and Free Schools) is 102 vacancies out of 1403 positions (7%).

Breakdown of vacancies by type of Governor:

LA Governor	26 vacancies / 189 (14%)
Parent Governor	16 vacancies / 381 (4%)
Foundation Governor	27 vacancies / 367 (7%)
Community Governor	24 vacancies / 176 (14%)
Staff Governors	9 vacancies / 290 (3%)

Question 66

Councillor Brian Coleman

What has been the cost in lost revenue of the various parking gimmicks undertaken in the run up to Christmas?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The estimated cost to the parking revenue encouraging Vibrant High Streets during November and December including Winter Festivals, the UK wide small business Saturday and the three (3) free weekends was £65,700.

Question 67

Councillor Brian Coleman

What was the cost of the two tonnes of fake snow apparently used in the North Finchley "Christmas Festival"?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

£0.00 (The snow machine was included as a free additional extra, by the supplier of the ice rink).

Response to Question 7:

Question 7

Councillor Jack Cohen

In the financial year to 31st December 2013 how much money has been paid to the following suppliers /companies:

- Agilisys
- Trowers and Hamlin
- Capita
- RE
- Commensura

In each case can the Cabinet Member please provide month by month breakdown of payments, the amount of any outstanding invoices and in each case a brief description of services rendered.

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Unpaid	Total	Brief description of services
Agilisys	277,840	288,108	0	127,201	138,603	351,169	239,127	140,414	227,295		1,789,757	Consulting support for various projects including NSCSO, DRS, Commissioning council, etc.
Trowers	74,484	0	455,227	617,791	6,954	8,852	430,684	26,205	111,177		1,731,374	Legal support in respect of regeneration projects, One Barnet and JR
Capita	24,061	129,321	284,107	17,848,823	18,268,874	0	8,508,970	34,826	9,085,813		54,184,795	Payments in respect of CSG (NSCSO) contract
RE	0	0	0	0	0	0	5,177,324	0	4,119,298		9,296,622	Payments in respect of Re (DRS) contract
Comensura	1,610,104	2,084,681	1,959,707	2,437,913	1,329,221	1,996,154	1,803,496	1,311,122	1,095,309	305,913	15,933,619	Payments in respect of agency staff
	1,986,489	2,502,109	2,699,042	21,031,728	19,743,653	2,356,175	16,159,599	1,512,567	14,638,892	305,913	82,936,167	

This expenditure helped create contracts which will save the council £160 million over 10 years.