

**Council Questions to the Leader**  
**23 September 2014**  
**Questions and Responses**

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

**Question 1**

**Councillor Brian Gordon**

At the meeting in the previous session of the Council's Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee, representatives of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) were invited to give a report. The committee felt that in view of the important work of SACRE, one of its representatives should be co-opted to the successor committee under the new system. Is it intended to implement this?

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

The now decommissioned Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Membership included the following co-opted Members: three Voluntary Aided schools representatives from the Church of England, Roman Catholic and Jewish faiths, and two Parent Governor representatives. In anticipation of its decommissioning, the Committee requested the inclusion of co-opted Members in the proposed Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee. The Committee's view was taken into consideration and the former OSC co-opted Members continue to be invited to attend the successor Committee and are able to speak, but not vote, as agreed by Council on 15 July 2014.

The Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered an item at their meeting on 19 March 2014 which provided a summary of SACRE's Forward Work Programme and a report of their activities over the last year. The Committee resolved only to note the report; no recommendations have been recorded in the minutes of the meeting requesting the involvement of a SACRE representative in the successor Committee.

**Supplementary Question**

Schools will continue to be co-opted to the successor to the Education Scrutiny Committee. Would Councillor Thompstone agree that this is a very important issue, especially as there are so many secular forces at work within our society set on trying to interfere adversely with faith education and undermine religion as a whole?

**Supplementary Answer**

I agree with the statement entirely.

**Question 2**

**Councillor Alison Moore**

After handing over £16m upfront of council tax payers' money to Capita for IT and related infrastructure would the Leader confirm if he is happy with Capita's performance managing the council and members' IT so far?

**Answer by the Leader**

Overall, CSG is performing well. The Council is paying £6m per year less for the provision of these services since go-live and upgrade work has been on-going. Obviously, there have been some difficulties with Members' IT, but when they work the I-Pads are wonderful things.

It is worth noting that the root cause of many IT issues that members have experienced has been the Council's ageing IT infrastructure, which is due to be upgraded by the end of October. Had the

Council not experienced a delay in entering into the CSG contract, these upgrades would have been in place by April.

### **Supplementary Question**

It is clear that the council's IT system is still on its knees a full year after the start of the CSG contract. Does the Leader agree that this is because of the chronic lack of investment during the five years of the process to that outsourcing?

### **Supplementary Answer**

It would be hard to disagree. Clearly an antique relic of the past is unfit for the job that we are asking of it. IT technology changes very quickly and it's very important that in the future we make a much greater effort to keep it up to date.

### **Question 3**

#### **Councillor Brian Gordon**

Many Edgware residents object to the parking restrictions around the old cinema area of Edgware continuing to operate on Sundays and weekdays until 9pm. Are these restrictions likely to be reviewed in the future?

### **Answer by the Leader**

As it stands there are no plan to review the 'K' CPZ further, although as part of the draft Parking Policy which is current at the consultation stage, the Council are proposing to carry out regular reviews of the CPZs in the borough to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose, and continue to meet the needs of the community. The consultation on the policy ends this Autumn, and it is expected that the outcomes of the Policy will be known shortly thereafter.

### **Supplementary Question**

The CPZ in Edgware was raised as a case in point; as it has been a thorny issue for some time and many residents do think that the long hours parking restrictions around the old cinema site are well over the top. But whatever CPZ schemes are considered and are reviewed whether it be for the purposes of introducing new ones, modifying those that exist or indeed removing them entirely, can decisions please be made as quickly as possible?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I agree that all decisions should be done as quickly as possible.

### **Question 4**

#### **Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Why is the administration determined to move its depot to Pinkham Way which is an inappropriate use for the site and vehemently opposed by local residents?

### **Answer by the Leader**

The Council has been committed to relocating its depot operation from Mill Hill for some time. The former sewage works site is designated for employment use and has close proximity to the north Circular. The Council has a fiduciary duty to protect the value of public land on the site. If the site remained a waste land indefinitely, then this would mean a valuable public asset would be rendered worthless at a significant cost to the Barnet taxpayer.

### **Question 5**

#### **Councillor Brian Gordon**

I have received complaints from residents whose applications for blue disabled badges have been rejected even though they are seriously disabled. It seems the criteria for assessing disability to walk far for the purpose of the permits have become increasingly harsh and uncompromising. Is there anything we as a Council can do about this?

**Answer by the Leader**

The criteria in which we follow is set out to us by the Department of Transport (DoT) and applies to all Councils. The guidance changed in April this year when the eligibility criteria applied was tightened by the DoT, this has unfortunately meant that some residents who previously qualified for a blue badge had to be reassessed.

The Council lead officer in the commercial team is currently undertaking a review of the Assisted Travel team process and will be checking that the assessment criteria being applied is in line with DWP guidance. This review will also ensure that the appeal process is working effectively for customers who feel the decision has been incorrectly applied.

**Supplementary Question**

With regard to the blue badges, whilst the law is the law and we have to work within the confines of that law it is not the question that there are quite a lot of people who really are disabled and ought to be getting blue badges but are not getting them. Can the officers of the council who deal with these issues act as leniently as possible where appropriate, within the law, in issuing the blue permits to people who really do need them and are disabled? And also perhaps in some way the council can take a view on this and if it feels this way, either individually or collectively, make representations to the government to look again at the law and ease up a little bit to make it fairer and more just to people who ought to blue badges.

**Supplementary Answer**

I agree that those who need blue badges must get them and should get them quickly and efficiently but there is and has been widespread corruption with regard to these and it does need to be put right. It is upsetting that some innocents would have been caught in this envelope and I'm sure that officers will look to make sure that only those who are entitled to them get them but that they do get them quickly.

**Question 6****Councillor Nagus Narenthira**

Will the Leader make a commitment to adopt the roads in the Pulse development so that a decent scheme of parking could be enforced by the council where the residents could benefit without having to pay a huge amount of money to secure a parking space.

**Answer by the Leader**

Only the main spine road through the Pulse development will be adopted. The planning application for the development included a Transport Assessment and a proposed package of mitigation measures, including a Car Parking Management Plan, and was approved on the basis of including a robust package of car parking management measures and controls associated with the development. These are already effectively managed by the council through the Section 106 and Planning Conditions imposed on the developer. The parking provision for the Pulse development is consistent with the policies set out in the Colindale Area Action Plan and the Barnet Local Plan and is considered appropriate given the sustainable location of the site close to Colindale tube station. Charging by the developer for parking spaces at Pulse is a matter for commercial negotiation and agreement between individual occupiers and the developer.

**Supplementary Question**

Does the Leader realise that the residents of the Pulse development are prisoners in their own homes because of the lack of suitable parking and isn't the council failing in its duty of care in this matter?

### **Supplementary Answer**

The parking was part of the planning application and was agreed with the developer.

### **Question 7**

#### **Councillor Mark Shooter**

Would the Leader please update Council on the work of the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team (CAFT) over the 2013/14 financial year?

### **Answer by the Leader**

CAFT, the Council's fraud investigation squad, successfully detected frauds amounting to £11.9m during 2013/14. Over the same period, the council recovered 63 illegally sublet council properties via their successful investigations and a key amnesty. The team plays a critical role in detecting and prosecuting the instigators of fraud, returning properties to the housing stock for allocation to those most in need and recovering the taxpayer's money to support council services.

### **Supplementary Question**

Can the join me in congratulating the Corporate Anti Fraud Team on their good work and ensure the team is supported to continue recovering money for the taxpayer.

### **Supplementary Answer**

I agree. Clamping down on fraud is a way of saving money for the taxpayer and is the right thing to do.

### **Question 8**

#### **Councillor Arjun Mittra**

How does the Council aim to support car clubs? There is a clear desire to expand services to Barnet, but no overall strategy from the council.

### **Answer by the Leader**

In 2007 Council resolved to ask the Cabinet to support the provision of Car-Clubs in new developments and self-funded car club operations in off-street locations. Since then provision of car clubs has been encouraged through the planning application process generally and support to car clubs is identified as a potential means of meeting requirements in the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document and Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document.

### **Question 9**

#### **Councillor Mark Shooter**

What has been the outcome of the work conducted so far by the multi-agency Benefit Cap Task Force – in particular, how successful has it been at getting people into work?

### **Answer by the Leader**

- A multi-agency Benefit Cap Task Force, bringing together officers from across the Council, Barnet Homes, Job Centre Plus, was set up in July 2013. The team have made contact with 92% of all households affected by the Benefit Cap and offered them support to take steps to move into work.
- The team started working early with the 1,178 people who were at risk of becoming capped, before the reforms were introduced. By the time the cap came into force, only 682 of these people were affected.
- Barnet has been successful and 42% of capped households are no longer capped.
- The team have worked with 510 people who have since started working (1/3 of the caseload).

**Supplementary Question**

Does the Leader agree that this sort of approach that focuses on getting people into work is far more effective both for the residents involved and in terms of the public purse, than using council finances to undermine the government's welfare reforms as is being seen in some Labour authorities?

**Supplementary Answer**

Yes

**Question 10****Councillor Phil Cohen**

Residents of Victoria Road, New Barnet, are still waiting to hear when the council will begin its promised feasibility study into enforcing a 20 mph speed limit on the road and introduce other road safety measures, given the dangers to schoolchildren and users of the local community centre. Could they have a date please and an assurance they will be fully consulted?

**Answer by the Leader**

Feasibility study is in progress, a recommendations report is anticipated after which officers will proceed with the consultation.

**Question 11****Councillor Brian Salinger**

Is the Council still committed to supporting high quality nursery education in Barnet?

**Councillor Reuben Thompson**

Yes. The Children's Service is working closely with Nursery headteachers to develop proposals for a sustainable nursery school model. These proposals are due to be taken to the CELS committee in October.

**Supplementary Question**

The Education Scrutiny Committee had its meeting in January and unanimously agreed the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group that looked at Early Years and that he and the rest of the Cabinet at the meeting in February 2014 also unanimously endorsed the views of that group. This included a recommendation that the council should develop a sustainable funding solution for the nursery schools and that the Schools Forum should be informed of the view of the Task and Finish Group, thus these endorsements made this council policy. Can he explain how the nursery schools are still facing major upheavals which would see them lose large numbers of experienced teaching staff and why seven months on the Schools forum have still not been made aware of the decision of the cabinet?

**Supplementary Answer**

I met with each of the head teachers whilst visiting the nursery schools earlier in the year and there was a lot of work being undertaken by those head teachers in consultation with council officers to ensure that there is a sustainable model going forward.

**Question 12****Councillor Alison Moore**

Why does the Leader believe that it is necessary to exclude members of the public who pay council tax from meetings about the budget?

**Answer by the Leader**

I presume that Cllr Moore is referring to the working groups established by a number of the theme

committees, some of which are being held in public and others in private. It has been for each committee to decide its own arrangements and I know for a fact that a number of her members have been directly engaged in such private meetings. These groups provide members from both parties with the opportunity to ask silly questions and consider a whole range of ideas that may help them to better understand the challenges the committees face and their possible solutions. Cllr Moore and residents can be assured that all decisions related to the budget will be taken publicly in committee meetings. I see no harm in some of the preparatory work being held in private if that enables better outcomes and, in fact, a more bi-partisan approach. I do, however, take it from her question that Cllr Moore will be inviting a public gallery to all her meetings with officers, where budgetary matters are to be discussed, and that Labour Group meetings will henceforth be a spectacle open to all who wish to attend.

### **Question 13**

### **Councillor Brian Salinger**

How much money is the Council currently holding by way of bonds to cover possible damage to pavements and highways relating to properties or sites where building works are being done? Can the Leader (or the appropriate committee chairman) provide me with a list of the properties in Oakleigh Ward where we are holding such bonds?

### **Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen** (Chairman of Environment Committee)

Currently we are holding approximately £680,000 as bond to cover possible damage etc. to highways, including £13,000 from Oakleigh Ward.

The single property which we are holding Bonds against is in 4 Oakleigh Park South.

### **Supplementary Question**

Can I express concern that only one property in Oakleigh Ward has paid a bond. The council is fully aware that major works that are affecting the state of the pavements outside a number of properties in the ward. What criteria is used to determine which property owners or developers are required to pay these bonds?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I share Councillor Salinger's concern. This is an issue which is being worked on now to ensure we have an effective operation to secure bonds just before work commences.

### **Question 14**

### **Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Given the Council's reputation is in tatters after the Group Leaders Panel, what plans does the Leader have to restore its integrity?

### **Answer by the Leader**

The only thing in tatters after the Leader's Panel was the complainant's case. After examining the evidence submitted by the Labour London Assembly Member, and Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Hendon, the Mayor was completely exonerated by the panel, with Cllrs Moore and Rawlings voting to acquit on a number of the charges.

### **Supplementary Question**

The reputation of the council and the residents' belief in their council has been damaged by this process so, again, what plan if any does the Leader have to restore the integrity of the council?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I agree that this issue needs to be looked at with regards to some of the complaints that have come forward and all needs to be considered calmly.

**Question 15****Councillor Brian Salinger**

What has been the impact on the collection of green waste by the change to fortnightly collections?

**Answer by the Leader**

The green waste service changed from a weekly service to a fortnightly service in October 2013.

	April - August t 2011/1 2	April - August t 2012/1 3	April- August t 2013/1 4	April – August 2014/15 (provisi onal)
Green waste (tonnes)	10330. 50	10453. 08	10248. 51	8755.22

The table above shows the tonnages of green waste for the last four years during the growing season. Tonnage for 2014/15 is lower than the previous three years, with 2014/15 tonnages to date having dropped by 1,500 tonnes compared to the average tonnage for the three previous years.

The green waste tonnages delivered to the Civic Amenity & Recycling Centre, Summers Lane have also been analysed. For the months of April to August 2014 the tonnages of garden waste delivered to the centre have increased by 19.2% compared to the same period the previous year. However this equates to only 182 tonnes which does not represent a significant shift in tonnage.

This year's season has not yet completed and therefore further analysis will be required once full data has been received and collated to further assess the impact of this change in service.

**Supplementary Question**

Given the reduction in green waste collected, does the Leader still think that the changes have delivered any benefit to the council and its residents and would he speculate as to where all the extra green waste might have gone?

**Supplementary Answer**

The green waste collected at Summers Lane is up 20% and I'm sure most of the boroughs are keen composters.

**Question 16****Councillor Geof Cooke**

Prior to the outsource to Capita did any member of the then Cabinet authorise or become aware of a reduction of 25% in the number of telephone lines by which the public could communicate with the Council?

**Answer by the Leader**

This was an operational decision that was taken by the service prior to the point at which the CSG contract went live. This was not a decision that was authorised by a Cabinet member.

### **Supplementary Question**

The reduction in the number of telephone lines that were available to the public to contact the council was severe in 25% and significant change and reduction in the service available to residents of the borough. It was obviously ill-judged because when Capita came in they were forced to reverse it. Enquiries have been made and I was advised that there is no record of this decision being taken. Possibly an officer who has since left made the decision. The Leader has not addressed the question regarding whether anybody knew about this before Capita took over. Is this any way to run a council?

### **Supplementary Answer**

Clearly when a mistake is made it is to be regretted. I added that it was not a completely unreasonable decision. If the calls are being handled at a call centre other than in Barnet, it is fairly logical to imagine that you would need fewer phone lines. The fact that because of our archaic equipment and the inefficiencies and bureaucracy of the telephone network that wasn't possible is quite another matter.

### **Question 17**

### **Councillor Brian Salinger**

The Leader will, I am sure, have seen the report about the problems of sexual exploitation of young people in Rotherham. Can he or the appropriate Committee chairman or chairmen) please advise the Council of his assessment of risks to young people in Barnet and is he satisfied that everything that could be done has been done to ensure that our own officers and other agencies are acting properly in dealing with issues of this nature if and when they are reported in Barnet.

### **Answer by the Leader**

Barnet is committed to safeguarding and protecting children from child sexual exploitation (CSE). A range of recent reports, wide national media coverage and recent convictions in Oxfordshire, Derby and Rochdale highlight that this form of child abuse is often hidden from sight and preys on the most vulnerable in our society. Children and young people exploited are subject to significant long term risks to their physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing and Barnet is committed to work to prevent, detect and safeguard those children and young people affected.

In recognition of the local and national agenda, combatting child sexual exploitation is one of four top priorities of the Barnet Safeguarding Children's Board and Family Services and work is on-going in this area of complex work.

Through our multi-agency partnerships we have secured a better understanding of the prevalence of child sexual exploitation in Barnet, taking a proactive, co-ordinated child-centred approach to prevent, identify, protect and support children and young people being sexual exploited. Since January 2014 we have convened a monthly Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation Meeting (MASE) with partners where cases are discussed and a plan to prevent and safeguard these young people is agreed and actioned. We also have commissioned training for staff across all agencies to raise awareness and further safeguard these vulnerable young people.

To move this vital work further on we have now appointed a CSE Co-ordinator who will drive the strategy and action plan forward, co-ordinate the working arrangements with partners, ensure support and services are in place to effectively safeguarding these young people and track impact and outcomes of those young people affected by or at risk of CSE.

### **Supplementary Question**

The Leader states that controlling child sexual exploitation is one of the four top priorities for the Barnet Safeguarding Children's Board. What are the other three top priorities?

### **Supplementary Answer**

Neglect, domestic violence and e-safety.

**Question 18****Councillor Arjun Mittra**

How much are you allowed to get away with if you are a Tory Councillor before proper sanction is applied?

**Answer by the Leader**

Nothing

**Supplementary Question**

Can I take it from the Leader's answer that Tory Councillors shouldn't be allowed to get away with anything but there is no sanction if they do?

**Supplementary Answer**

Councillor Mittra is fully aware of the verdicts that were passed down by the Leader's Panel. He's also fully aware that the only sanction that is available is that of censure. The whole process has been brought into disrepute.

**Question 19****Councillor Brian Salinger**

Given the continuing problems on the North Circular Road heading East out of the Borough in to Enfield and Haringey, and the knock on impact that the problem has on other roads in the area, can the Leader or appropriate committee chairman tell the Council exactly what representations have been made to Transport for London and the Mayor of London to find a long term solution to the problem.

**Answer by the Leader**

Recent concerns specifically on this matter have been expressed to TfL at an officer level as part of the Mayoral/TfL Roads Task Force initiative, which identified the North Circular Road (NCR) as a case study for further investigation. Unfortunately TfL disposed of the land needed to deliver the inherited road improvement schemes along the NCR in Enfield and this was ratified by LB Enfield in their NCR Area Action Plan (AAP), which is currently being adopted. Barnet objected to the NCR AAP in May 2013, but the Inspector found in favour of LB Enfield. Now that the TfL Bounds Green scheme has been implemented officers continue to press TfL for a new long term strategic approach to addressing congestion along this part of the A406, particularly in light of emerging development pressures and proposals such as the extension of Crossrail2 to New Southgate.

I have also continued to lobby the Deputy Mayor for Transport frequently.

**Supplementary Question**

Shall I take it from the reply given suggests that there is no likelihood of anything being done that will alleviate the misery of users of that particular stretch of the North Circular Road? Nor the misery of those living on roads that have become subject of rat-running traffic trying to avoid the daily lengthy delays on that stretch of road.

**Supplementary Answer**

Lack of funding would suggest that is the case and that is to be regretted but I continue to mention it to the Deputy Mayor for Transport.

**Question 20****Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb**

Months after the consultation for a 20mph limit on the roads to the west of Colney Hatch Lane there is still no action. When will it be introduced along with a new zebra crossing on Colney Hatch Lane itself?

**Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen (Chairman of Environment Committee)**

The 20mph Speed Limit on roads west of Colney Hatch Lane has entered the construction phase. Barnet contractor is currently mobilising to get this implemented subject to road works permits. As soon as a start date is confirmed it would be made available.

The feasibility study for pedestrian crossings on Colney Hatch Lane is being undertaken separately and the officer recommendations are anticipated at the October Area Committee meeting.

**Supplementary Question**

The 20mph speed limit that was requested was not the only thing that residents were bothered about. It was reported in the local paper, when the parents took a fake zebra crossing to show where it was needed, in what seems to be a perfectly obviously place: right by South Friern Library. When enquiries have been made, nothing has been found to suggest that this matter is being progressed. Is this going to be something that we can tell the residents is feasible and is going to be pursued or shall we tell them that it is off the scale and not going to be looked at all?

**Supplementary Answer**

Can I ask that the Member write to me on that point and I'll ask officers to advise.

**Question 21****Councillor Brian Salinger**

I am sure that the Leader (and the chairman of the Planning Committee) are aware that part of the approved plans for the Well Grove site in N.20 is a requirement for the developers to provide a community building. What will be the process for determining the use to be made for that new building and does he have any personal preference for its use?

**Answer by the Leader**

In relation to the community building, Condition 34 restricts the use to a multi-use community hub.

The local planning authority is currently in discussions with the new owners of the site to progress the detailed matters following the outline approval and will be working with corporate colleagues to explore uses for the community element of the development, but I am conscious that the use meets local requirements e.g. for nursery provision. Input from the ward councillors will be vital.

**Question 22****Councillor Alison Moore**

Would the Leader support the many businesses and charities in Barnet that stand to lose their premises at Premier House by opposing the Government's extension of permitted development?

**Answer by the Leader**

The Council had raised strong concerns in relation to the to the relaxation of the permitted development regulations prior to being implemented last year and it will be raising further concerns in response to a current Government consultation exercise seeking to relax the legislation further based on cases such as Premier House.

**Supplementary Question**

Will the extension of permitted development right be opposed or not?

**Supplementary Answer**

I have already opposed it

**Question 23****Councillor Wendy Prentice**

We are nearly one year on from the launch of the re-vamped bin service. Can the Leader confirm that

residents are mostly satisfied with this service?

**Answer by the Leader**

The most recent Resident Satisfaction Survey was carried out in Spring 2014. The refuse collection service received a satisfaction rating of 75% Good/Excellent, and the doorstep recycling service received a satisfaction rating of 76% Good/Excellent (an increase of 7% since before transformation). These two services are now the top two performing services in terms of satisfaction levels within the Council's services.

**Question 24**

**Councillor Zakia Zubairi**

Residents and Colindale councillors have been campaigning for a crossing on Colindeep Lane for years now, and it was agreed some time ago but has been delayed by utility works in the area and the danger that the TfL contractor stops working for TfL on 30 September. Officers undertook to try and resolve the contractor issue so the crossing could be completed quicker – would the Leader reassure me that this crossing will happen eventually, that ward councillors will be kept up to date with progress and informed as soon as an implementation date is agreed?

**Answer by the Leader**

This will happen. Ward councillors will be informed when all the permits and contractors are in place.

**Supplementary Question**

For the last two and a half years councillors have asked for a pelican crossing on Colindeep Lane and every time a date is given nothing happens. The Leader replied 'this will happen Ward councillors will be informed when all the permits and contractors are in place. Again, is this the way to run the council?

**Supplementary Answer**

Councillor Zubairi is aware that after the last Labour Government there is a great legacy of incompetent bureaucracy that has to be waded through.

**Question 25**

**Councillor Wendy Prentice**

I understand that the council reviews its performance against other local authorities using the LGA benchmarking tool. What percentage of relevant services see Barnet exceed the benchmark?

**Answer by the Leader**

The Council uses benchmarking tools, such as the Local Government Association's LG Inform tool, to monitor overall performance and identify areas where we can improve service.

As reported in the Quarter 1 2014/15 Monitoring Report, LB Barnet exceeds the benchmark (median performance) when compared with similar authorities, across 94% of the relevant service areas.

**Supplementary Question**

Does the Leader agree that this information shows that services can be delivered that are both high performing and low cost?

**Supplementary Answer**

Yes.

**Question 26**

**Councillor Arjun Mittra**

Will the Leader of the Council support a review of the make-up of the Leader's Panel to ensure it is not politically weighted and independent members are listened to as part of the investigation and hearing process?

**Answer by the Leader**

It is important that this is reviewed.

**Supplementary Question**

Does the Leader think that the panel should be entitled to read all papers containing legal advice?

**Supplementary Answer**

I would find that hard to object to.

**Question 27****Councillor Wendy Prentice**

What has been the trend across the borough in terms of the number of robberies and residential burglaries over the last year?

**Answer by the Leader**

During the last year there have been significant reductions in both Residential Burglary and Robbery in Barnet:

- Residential burglary reduced by 16% (In total there were 2684 Residential burglaries, 523 fewer than the previous year)
- Robbery reduced by 35% (in total there were 624 robberies, 339 fewer offences than the previous year)

The above data is based on the 12 months: Aug 2013 to July 2014.

**Question 28****Councillor Alison Moore**

Why does the Leader think that just restating the current discredited parking policy in a document will make residents more satisfied with parking in Barnet?

**Answer by the Leader**

Local authority parking enforcement is defined in detail in legal requirements and statutory guidance and therefore the new policy reflects that statutory framework.

**Supplementary Question**

Isn't time that the council supported town centres by rolling out free 30 mins parking in all those town centres as has been done in other boroughs like Redbridge to great public acclaim and it is working well there?

**Supplementary Answer**

Councillor Moore is perfectly aware of the process that is continuing at the moment and a solution will have to be found to the question of parking. I am sure Labour members will join Conservative colleagues in finding a just and equitable, affordable solution.

**Question 29****Councillor Maureen Braun**

Can the Leader or Chairman of the Housing Committee explain how the changes to the Housing Allocations Policy, currently being consulted on, will impact local people in housing need?

**Answer by Councillor Tom Davey**

There is a high demand for housing in Barnet. The changes that are being consulted on at the moment will help to ensure that priority for limited housing is given to local people in housing need who are long-standing residents of the borough. This will include households living in long-term

temporary accommodation on the regeneration estates.

**Question 30**

**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Will the Leader and his group support us in lobbying for more money to implement the Care Act, including asking for the support of MPs and PPCs?

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

At the July meeting of the Adults and Safeguarding Committee, the committee resolved that the council should, following on from an analysis of the financial implications of the Care Act, undertake lobbying to ensure that the council receive under the 'New Burdens' principle, sufficient funding to discharge the new statutory responsibilities of the Care Act which comes into force from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2015. We have received an indicative new burdens allocation of £1.7 million for 2015/16 with funding allocations for the implications of the cap on care which comes into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 still to be announced.

The levels of additional demand that will come forward to the council as a result of the Care Act are difficult to predict. In 2015/16 alone, the council could face financial pressures of £2.9 million whilst in later years our modelling indicates that the pressure could rise to £14 million per year, peaking at £20 million by 2020.

The Council submitted a response to the national Department of Health (DH) consultation on the Care Act regulations in August, where the principle point made was our concern about the costs to Barnet of carrying out the new and additional duties created by the Act. We will also be responding to the current DH consultation on the funding formula for implementation of parts of the Care Act, making the case for the best option for Barnet. Through London Councils' representations are being made to ensure that the specific needs of London are addressed in the funding formula.

The Adults and Safeguarding Committee through its cross party membership is well placed to undertake lobbying on behalf of the Council to ensure adequate funding. We were successful in making our case in respect of Public Health funding levels for Barnet and we need to ensure that we are effective in respect of the Care Act.

**Question 31**

**Councillor Val Duschinsky**

Can the Leader explain why the council is looking into building a new office building to house itself in Colindale?

**Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas (Chairman of Assets Regeneration and Growth Committee)**

The Council is always looking for ways to improve efficiency and reduce cost. The proposed move to Colindale will enable the Council to make further savings on accommodation costs by vacating the current offices at Barnet House and North London Business Park. In addition to savings of circa £3m per annum on accommodation guaranteed in the CSG contract, a further saving is being targeted of £2m per annum as recently proposed by the Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee, and this move will contribute to that. The proposed move will also support the wider regeneration in this area.

**Question 32**

**Councillor Reema Patel**

Will the Leader withdraw the proposal that victims of domestic violence get punished under changes

in housing allocations by being forced to declare themselves homeless and maybe moved into temporary accommodation out of the borough? Would he agree that a better proposal would be instead to have the perpetrator lose the tenancy for anti-social behaviour?

### **Answer by the Leader**

The proposed change to the Allocations Scheme to remove the Band 1 status for this group was prompted by concerns that the existing policy is encouraging residents to stay in unsafe accommodation where their lives are put at risk. By being placed in Band 1, applicants are given the impression that they will be rehoused immediately but this is not necessarily the case. It is therefore safer to move them into emergency accommodation immediately so that they are no longer at risk. As a responsible organisation, the council does not want to encourage residents to put themselves at risk and this is why the change has been suggested. The residents are able to claim housing benefit on the existing home and the temporary home for up to 52 weeks while a more permanent solution is found. The process of evicting perpetrators of ASB is not straight forward and will depend on their legal status in the property which includes tenancy and matrimonial rights of occupation. Courts are unlikely to end someone's rights of occupation unless there is strong evidence of the ASB which can be difficult to prove.

### **Question 33**

### **Councillor Val Duschinsky**

How does Barnet compare with other areas for cancer survival rates?

### **Answer by Councillor Helena Hart (Chairman of Health and Well-Being Board)**

One year survival for all cancers in people diagnosed aged 15-99 is 69.1% for Barnet compared to 67.7% for England. One year cancer survival rates are a good indicator of whether cancer is being diagnosed early and whether access to optimal treatment is available.

Latest data from the National Cancer Intelligence Network Q4 2013-14 for specific cancers:

1year relative survival

Breast cancer is 96.3% - national average is 96.5%

Lower GI cancer is 79.6% - national average 76.4%

Lung cancer is 35.9% - national average is 32.8%

5 year survival

Breast is 88.6% - national average is 85.3%

Lower GI is 55.9% - national average is 53.8%

Lung is 10.7% - national average is 8.7%

### **Supplementary Question**

Whilst the survival rates are better than average, is there anything that can be done to improve them yet further?

### **Supplementary Answer**

Whilst we do well in 1-5 year cancer survival rates there is always more that we and the NHS can and must do to improve these rates. Firstly, we have to try to stop the 40% of cancers caused by poor lifestyle choices and, secondly, we need to continue to press NHS England to improve and extend the less than stellar cancer screening services. The borough has just set up the second 'get to know cancer' pop up shop at the Boardwalk Centre, Edgware. Hoped to be every bit as successful as the one ran at the Spires in Barnet in June which had contact with over 1000 residents wanting to know more about how cancer can be prevented. Secondly, the Health and Wellbeing Board has asked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to follow up with NHS England in screening coverage.

**Question 34****Councillor Alison Moore**

Does the Leader recognise that the constitution of the Group Leaders Panel with a Conservative majority rather than exempting it from political balance as had been the case previously, removes its integrity and credibility in the eyes of the residents of Barnet. Will the Leader agree to change the balance of the Group Leader's Panel so that it is not politically weighted and so that all parties are represented on it?

**Answer by the Leader**

The election result threw up all sorts of anomalies. These will have to be worked through.

**Supplementary Question**

Is the Leader going to support a review of the flawed Standards Committee process or not?

**Supplementary Answer**

I will support a review but I will not necessarily support all of Councillor Moore's observations and recommendations.

**Question 35****Councillor Anthony Finn**

How is the new Housing Allocations Policy set to complement the government's welfare reforms and the council's work encouraging people to get into employment or training?

**Answer by the Leader**

People in housing need who are working or training may gain additional priority for housing through the community contribution element of housing allocations scheme. This scheme has operated since April 2011 and in practice most applicants who are rehoused are now making a community contribution, for example they are working, volunteering or undertaking training.

It is proposed now that applicants should work, train or volunteer for at least 16 hours per week in order to gain the additional priority for housing. This aligns with the government's welfare reforms as this is the amount of hours a single parent needs to work to be exempted from the overall benefit cap (couples and single people need to work more).

**Supplementary Question**

How important is it to develop a coherent policy across service areas to deal with the consistent message on welfare reform?

**Supplementary Answer**

It is absolutely essential that everybody is 'on message' with reforming the welfare system in this country, the reform of which has been delayed for decades and is now finally being addressed.

**Question 36****Councillor Nagus Narenthira**

Can the Leader assure me that Barnet Council will not recommend that any planning application for new development is approved unless the following are satisfied?

- Sufficient parking is provided. Not just 0.7 spaces per dwelling.
- TA thorough traffic assessment is made in the area.

- At least 40% affordable dwellings are agreed.
- Sufficient transport links and road networks are planned.

### **Answer by the Leader**

No. All applications are dealt with on their individual merits having regard to national, regional and local planning policy and other material considerations including public and statutory representations.

### **Supplementary Question**

Does the Leader not think that the criteria mentioned is an absolute necessity for reasonable living especially for Colindale residents because of the over development that's taking place?

### **Supplementary Answer**

Councillor Narenthira is well aware of the planning requirements in this borough and we aim to achieve many of these objectives. It is very important that we do get on and create the housing that is needed for the people of this borough and this country. Anything that delays that is to be regretted as well. We have a housing crisis and we need to build housing.

### **Question 37**

### **Councillor Anthony Finn**

Should the council decide to increase the proportion of people's council tax liability they are expected to pay under the Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS), how will this compare to our neighbouring Labour-run authorities?

### **Answer by the Leader**

Barnet is consulting on three options for its Council Tax Support Scheme from 2015/16 onwards. These are: A minimum contribution of 8.5% (the current rate); minimum contribution of 15%; or minimum contribution of 20%. These options are in line with the 2014/15 rates of most of neighbouring authorities but lower than LB Harrow (currently consulting on an increase to 25%).

Borough	Contribution rate for 2014/15
Harrow	22.5%
Brent	20.0%
Haringey	19.8%
Enfield	19.5%

### **Supplementary Question**

Do these figures not show that so far we have been far more generous than our neighbouring Labour boroughs?

### **Supplementary Answer**

Yes.

### **Question 38**

### **Councillor Reema Patel**

The administration recently announced that the impact of moving the depot to Pinkham Way would be 'minimal'. Ward councillors and residents were not spoken to or consulted about the impact of the proposals before this announcement was made. What evidence does the administration have to substantiate these claims?

**Answer by the Leader.**

The Council has identified Pinkham Way as the site for its depot following the move from Mill Hill for a number of years. The depot will be located on a site that is designated for employment use. The site provides direct links onto the A406 so council vehicles would not pass local homes, unless they were collecting the household waste of those homes. Vehicles will use the A406 at non-peak times. A detailed report on the depot relocation is scheduled for the Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee meeting in December. Any planning application would be consulted upon and officers will be happy to brief ward members ahead of any application or indeed the December meeting of the ARG Committee.

**Question 39****Councillor Caroline Stock**

Based upon provisional results, would the Leader indicate the percentage of GCSE pupils in Barnet who achieved 5 A\*-C grades and how this compares to the national average?

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

Indicative provisional GCSE results collated from 95% (20/21) of Barnet schools indicate 70.9% of Barnet pupils attained 5 A\*-C grades including English and Maths, which is expected to be above the national average (60% in 2013). Provisional results indicate that 82.4% of Barnet pupils attained 5 A\*-C grades, above the national average which is currently reported as 68.8%. These results are subject to change through validation and confirmation through the DfE.

**Supplementary Question**

Would the Chairman join me in welcoming these results and the fact that more of the borough's young people are choosing to study at both GCSE and A Level, the strong academic discipline so vital to future job prospects?

**Supplementary Answer**

I certainly would.

**Question 40****Councillor Anne Hutton**

It has been reported in the press that Barnet had a shortfall of £70m to fund the extra school places. From which budget has that come from and has the council asked the government to refund the shortfall?

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

New school places are provided as part of the council's overall capital programme which is funded through a mix of government grant, council borrowing, asset disposals and contributions from housing developers. Barnet, along with other London boroughs, has been lobbying since 2009 to ensure that London gets its fair share of government grant funding available for school places and in the last settlement, the higher costs facing London boroughs were recognised.

Ultimately it is all taxpayer's money and what is important is that we are able to provide the required places – a challenge this council has so far met.

**Question 41****Councillor Caroline Stock**

Would the Leader like to comment on the council's work with Capita, one year on from the CSG and Re ventures going live?

## **Answer by the Leader**

### CSG

The Key success have been:

- An increase in customer satisfaction from 52% to 77%
- An increase in First Contact Resolution from 50% to 58%
- Savings of £1.2m procurement savings to date against a target of £1m
- All CSG contracted income and savings guarantees met or exceeded
- ICT are now resolving 88% of incidents first time (80% when transferred)
- 89% of Council Tax Support scheme collected against a 70% forecast
- Barnet is the best performer for processing New Benefit Claims and second best for changes in circumstances for all Outer London Boroughs

Challenges have arisen from the Council's ageing existing IT infrastructure, with implications for Members' IT for example, but this is in the process of being updated and rectified.

### RE

Some of the key highlights in the first 11 months of the contract are:

- Since April, the transformation of the IT systems and the establishment of the Customer Service hub to field calls has meant the service for the first time has a 100% view of all requests; it is also taking more calls than ever before.
- Planning Service now ranked 2nd within London Boroughs for speed of decision making
- Land Charges Team shortlisted for the 2014 National Local Land Charges Awards for Excellence - most improved service category

In the background we remain focused on growth and we are pro-actively seeking new opportunities to sell our services across the region. We have already had some success and in year two we hope to yield the benefits of the strong track record built in the first year.

## **Question 42**

### **Councillor Arjun Mittra**

In the last 6 months has there been an increase in A) anti-semitic incidents reported to police B) other hate crimes?

## **Answer by the Leader**

Yes, whilst the actual number of incidents remains low, there has been an increase in the amount of reported Hate Crime. The below figures are for the last 12 months (Aug 2013 to July 2014) compared to the previous year (Aug 2012 – July 2013):

Anti-Semitic crime: 2.3 more reports per month

Homophobic crime: 0.5 more reports per month

Islamophobic crime: 0.4 more reports per month

Racist and religious hate crime: 9.3 more reports per month

Hate crime and encouraging reporting will remain a priority for the Safer Communities Partnership in their forthcoming Community Safety Strategy.

Community and faith leaders, notably from the Muslim and Jewish communities in light of the recent conflict in the Middle East, have been quick to respond to this increase, condemning intolerance of any kind and committing themselves to promoting harmony and strong community cohesion.

**Question 43****Councillor Graham Old**

Does the Leader agree that the Empty Properties Grant could prove a win-win policy by increasing housing supply to those in need and tackling the issues associated with run-down and derelict properties?

**Answer by the Leader**

Yes. One grant has already been approved and there are 7 more in the pipeline. There are currently 596 properties on the Empty Property Data Base in the Private Sector Housing Team who are all being approached in relation to the scheme. The extended period of nomination rights from 3 to 5 years will also ensure that the impact is sustained over a longer period.

**Supplementary Question**

Does the Leader know what the financial implications of this policy might be?

**Supplementary Answer**

I don't have the actual figure but anything done will be helpful towards the council's finances and added that it's very important that revenue collected is maximised in order to minimise the tax level imposed.

**Question 44****Councillor Alison Moore**

Does the Leader not agree that it is a scandal that tenant victims of domestic violence, in being forced to move out of the family home to seek safety will have to register as homeless and thus lose their long term tenancy rights, and what is he going to do about it?

**Answer by the Leader**

This is not the case. Where the applicant is an existing secure tenant, they would not necessarily have to apply for rehousing. Rather their Housing Officer can highlight the case as having an exceptional need to move and apply to have the tenant moved as a management transfer. Once moved, the tenant will sign a secure tenancy on the same conditions as the previous tenancy that they held.

**Supplementary Question**

In your answer you say '... would not necessarily have to re-apply.' What about those domestic violence victims tenants who do necessarily have to re-apply for housing. Will they lose their long term permanent tenants' rights when they do?

**Supplementary Answer**

That would depend on circumstances but the most important thing is that we do get people out of a situation where they are at risk as quickly as possible and that has to be the overwhelming priority and it is also very important that scare stories are not raised about this matter which might lead someone to stay in an unsafe environment.

**Question 45****Councillor Graham Old**

How does Barnet's Planning team, part of the Re joint-venture, now compare to other London Boroughs in terms of the speed of processing applications?

**Answer by the Leader**

According to the Communities & Local Government published statistics for period Jan-March 2014,

Barnet ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> best in London (out of 34 local planning authorities) in respect of percentage of applications decided within statutory time periods. As part of the Planning Services drive to improve customer satisfaction resources are focussed on ensuring planning decisions are made as quickly as possible.

**Question 46**

**Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb**

Will the Leader ensure neighbourhood budgets are allocated according to residents' wishes rather than being in the patronage of local councillors?

**Answer by the Leader**

The process for allocating the area budgets was agreed by the Community Leadership committee at their last meeting. It is right that, as the democratically elected representatives of the residents, councillors have a role to play in this process as they possess a mandate to take decisions on behalf of all their local residents.

**Supplementary Question**

Given the lengthy presentation of these area budgets that happened at the last area forums, do you think that the public have been duped into believing that they would have some say and influence about how this money is spent? And apart from the Area Forums, how is the rest of the electorate being informed about this allocation?

**Supplementary Answer**

This should be publicised in the councillors' own bulletins now this has been agreed. It is important to realise that as elected members we do have to make decisions ourselves and we can't always rely on 'rent-a-mob' who turn up at meetings. We should listen to concerned residents who come to our area Forums.

**Question 47**

**Councillor Graham Old**

Can the Leader update Council on the progress of the Brent Cross Cricklewood redevelopment scheme?

**Answer by the Leader**

Following the resolution of the Planning Committee earlier this year to approve the revised proposals contained in the Section 73 application, the section 106 agreement has now been signed and decision notice issued.

In July this year, the Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee approved the Procurement and Delivery Strategy to secure a partner to deliver the southern parts of the masterplan in partnership with the Council. It is anticipated that a shortlist will be selected in early October, with a view to selecting a preferred development partner by March 2015. Approval will be sought from the Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee to select the preferred development partner.

The Council is working with our colleagues at City Hall and in Whitehall, along with Network Rail, to explore ways to bring forward the Thameslink Station within the programme to support the comprehensive regeneration.

**Supplementary Question**

How important does the Leader think that proposals at Brent Cross / Cricklewood have gained the political support of both the Mayor of London and the Chancellor of the Exchequer in bringing forward these very bold and adventurous schemes.

### **Supplementary Answer**

I agree with Councillor Old's observations. It is vital that the three levels of government do agree in this matter and show a completely joined up view when dealing with partners or contractors. It is vital that this complex development comes through in a coherent way. I am confident that the close working between the various tiers of government will lead to that working through.

### **Question 48**

#### **Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Will the Leader ensure the ring-fenced Public Health money is used for its proper purpose rather than, as in 2014/15, plug a financial hole in leisure services when their own report states it was not delivering Public Health outcomes?

### **Answer by the Leader**

Whilst it is the case that the council is looking to achieve better value from its leisure contracts, maintaining leisure provision makes an important contribution to public health. Promoting physical activity is a significant priority for the borough. The proposed public health commissioning priorities through to 2020 will be presented to the next Health and Well-Being Board in November where the plans will be subject to debate and consideration by not just Councillors but also by the CCG and Healthwatch who are members of the Board.

### **Supplementary Question**

The Conservative group have got three places on the Health and Wellbeing Board thus ensuring you can't have cross-party agreement over health and wellbeing, which is a sadness. On the main point, promoting physical activity is important. He misses the point that the PLL weren't delivering any public health outcomes. So to give money, £600,000, to waste that money on providing a service that what you've said isn't delivering was a ridiculous waste of public money. Can we ensure that will not happen again because this is not the proper use of public money?

### **Supplementary Answer**

The money will be used for proper public health objectives.

### **Question 49**

#### **Councillor Joan Scannell**

Has the Leader yet discovered who funds Barnet Alliance for Public Services (BAPS)?

### **Answer by the Leader**

I do not know definitively.

### **Question 50**

#### **Councillor Reema Patel**

Would the Leader sign my petition calling for the withdrawal of the proposed change to housing allocations that forces victims of domestic violence to declare themselves homeless while the perpetrators of violence against them are allowed to remain in the family home?

### **Answer by the Leader**

No. The reasons for the policy have been set out. I fear the councillor has misunderstood the implications of the policy. We are looking to protect, not penalise, those at risk.

### **Question 51**

#### **Councillor Joan Scannell**

Do those unions that support council employees fund individual political candidates for election and do they fund the Labour Party?

### **Answer by the Leader**

I understand they do.

**Question 52****Councillor Alison Moore**

How much more income is the Leader prepared to lose from the Special Parking Account before he agrees to change his disastrous parking policy?

**Answer by the Leader**

I would hope that Cllr Moore is aware that parking controls have to be entirely for the purpose of traffic management and that income into the Special Parking Account is strictly limited in its use. The draft parking policy makes this very clear. If she were to base her policy on income it would be liable to legal challenge.

**Question 53****Councillor Joan Scannell**

Does the council still collect union subs from staff?

**Answer by the Leader**

Yes. These are collected as payroll deductions where requested by staff.

**Question 54****Councillor Anne Hutton**

The independent chair of Safeguarding has said that Barnet's Safeguarding needs improvement. What steps are the council taking to ensure that the process is in place for this to happen?

**Answer by the Leader**

The independent chair highlighted that the Barnet Safeguarding Children's Board is always on a journey of continuous improvement. Our statutory function is to ensure that we have a multi-agency co-ordinated response, that this is effective and that we strive to continuously improve performance to secure the best outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The Council's and the Children's Safeguarding Board's vision is to make Barnet a place where all children and young people thrive, receive protection and feel safe. In order to improve outcomes for children and young people, we have:

- Secured sustained improvement in multi-agency safeguarding performance and practice through thematic auditing to better understand our position and the work needed.
- Improved the way that partners share information, resources and expertise in day to day business of safeguarding children and young people.
- Embedded a culture of continuous learning through audits, reviews and data to examine what works well and what needs to change and improve.

Ofsted now reviews the safeguarding board as a separate entity and the board quite rightly is required to evidence improvement in performance and the impact we have in making a difference to children's lives. We have a robust two-year business plan with four clear priorities in addition to the core business of the board and we are aligned to the adults safeguarding board to ensure robust strategic oversight of all safeguarding practice.

**Question 55****Councillor Bridget Perry**

Does the Leader welcome the service improvements in the Youth Offending Service, highlighted by its recent strong inspection report?

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

Yes. The council is extremely pleased with the positive and validating inspection report which described our Youth Offending Service as "well performing" and which identified the "highly skilled

staff, good leadership and the contribution of all partners”.

The inspection demonstrates that we are providing a high quality service to young people and residents in the Borough.

**Question 56**

**Councillor Charlie O'Macauley**

What are the council's plans for helping the Burnt Oak Business Community?

**Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas (Chairman of Assets Regeneration and Growth Committee)**

The council and its partners are currently consulting on proposals to support the small business community in Barnet, including in Burnt Oak, with the aim of making Barnet the best place in London to be a small business. The proposals include reducing red tape and bureaucracy, improving the borough's town centres and infrastructure through regeneration, and offering targeted support to small businesses and business sectors where they would benefit from it. Details about the proposals, entitled "Entrepreneurial Barnet", can be found at the council's consultation portal: <http://engage.barnet.gov.uk/>.

**Supplementary Question**

What is his view on regeneration in Burnt Oak?

**Supplementary Answer**

Any regeneration is to be welcomed. It improves businesses, it improves accommodation, it increases the tax base and Councillor O'Macauley should be encouraged to speak to businesses in Burnt Oak to respond to the consultation on the Entrepreneurial Barnet Strategy.

**Question 57**

**Councillor Bridget Perry**

Could the Leader comment on the council's continued investment into the borough's parks?

**Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen (Chairman of Environment Committee)**

Parks and Open spaces are an important part of the boroughs infrastructure, with a third of the borough comprising of Greenspace and parks, this being one of the key reasons people want to live in Barnet. Satisfaction ratings with parks have reached their highest levels since 2000 at 70%, which is a reflection of the consistent standards of cleanliness and grounds maintenance and specifically to the increased levels of investment and improvements to the parks delivered by working closely with residents, key partners and capitalising on external funding opportunities.

The following projects were completed in 2013 and 2014 to date:

- Refurbishment of Highlands Gardens pond
- Replacement of Oakdene Park Footpath (Dollis Valley Greenwalk) – Part One & Two
- Installation of outdoor gyms and marked and measured routes
- Complete renovation of Kara Way playground
- Replacement of Northway Gardens play area
- Pitch drainage works to Copthall Playing Fields and new extended car park
- New play equipment at Hendon Park play area
- Replacement of Malcolm Park play area
- New play equipment at Childs Hill Park
- New play area at Brunswick Park

The projects above total £2 million of investment, £1.4 million of external funding and £600k of S106 / Capital expenditure.

The following schemes, totalling a further £350k are due to be delivered in 2014/2015:

- New play equipment at Stonegrove Park
- Complete renovation of Percy Road play area
- Final phase of Oakdene Park footpath replacement
- Replacement tennis courts at Victoria Park

In addition to the above there may be a further number of new outdoor gyms. It should also be noted that there are major redevelopments planned for parks within the major regeneration areas that will see the provision of new additional public parks and the enhancement of the existing park stock with new facilities, infrastructure etc

#### **Question 58**

**Councillor Alison Moore**

What pressure is the council putting on the CCG, in the face of the closure of local GP practices, to ensure that there is sufficient GP capacity in the Borough, given that there is already a shortage?

#### **Answer by Councillor Helena Hart (Chairman of Health and Well-Being Board)**

Primary care services are commissioned by NHS England and not by Barnet CCG. However the CCG's plans to reduce unnecessary reliance on hospital based services requires that there is sufficient capacity in primary care services to support care closer to home.

Council members, CCG and NHS England representatives sit on the Health and Wellbeing Board where the need for expanded capability and capacity has been noted. Should a trend be established regarding the closure of local GP practices, this is a matter that would also be picked up by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

#### **Question 59**

**Councillor Bridget Perry**

What has been the trend in youth unemployment in the borough?

#### **Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas (Chairman of Assets Regeneration and Growth Committee)**

Over the last 12 months we have seen a small reduction in the numbers of young people who are aged 16-19 and who are not participating in education, employment or training (NEET)

In July 2014, 2.8% (278 young people) of the cohort were NEET compared to 3% (296 young people) in July 2013.

Overall, youth unemployment fell by 25% last year (JCP, April 2014).

The Department for Education publish annual NEET figures each June and nationally, Barnet's performance was the fourth best in the country.

#### **Question 60**

**Councillor Geof Cooke**

Why did it take 5 months to correct all FN CPZ zone permits and vouchers in Limes Avenue that were incorrectly placed in zone BZ, how many PCNs were issued incorrectly as a result of this and have all PCNs been cancelled and fines reimbursed?

#### **Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen (Chairman of Environment Committee)**

This was a system configuration issue and a consequence of changing from one parking system to another. It only impacted a small number of permits and where PCN's have been issued these have been cancelled.

#### **Supplementary Question**

The error on the part of officers issuing parking permits led to a very distressing harassment to quite a number of residents of Woodhouse Ward, specifically in Limes Avenue. Anybody can make a mistake but to restate the question: why did it take five months to sort this out?

**Supplementary Answer**

The answer is as stated. It was a system error that had to be corrected. Five months is a long time but it had to be right the second time.

**Question 61****Councillor John Marshall**

Could the Leader comment on the declaration forms submitted by members that register their interests?

**Answer by the Leader**

Some of them seem curiously short on detail.

**Question 62****Councillor Nagus Narenthira**

Is the Leader aware of the hardship the existing tenants are facing during the building works due to the regeneration in Grahame Park, and can he assure me that only a minimum disruption, if any, is caused to parking, noise, litter etc. during these building works?

**Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas (Chairman of Assets Regeneration and Growth Committee)**

Inevitably there will be some disruption during the delivery of this regeneration programme, but the council and Genesis Housing Association are taking measures to keep residents and councillors informed of progress and help minimise any disruption. This is an important scheme that we do have to get on and deliver, to the benefit of residents old and new.

**Supplementary Question**

Does the Leader think that it's his duty to value residents' everyday life while the regeneration is on-going. We are not against regeneration. We are just asking whether it could be done with the comfort of the existing residents.

**Supplementary Answer**

The construction and development partners are part of the considerate construction schemes and they do all they can to minimise disruption. Short term discomfort is for the long term good.

**Question 63****Councillor John Marshall**

Could the Leader update Members on the progress of the Claer Lloyd-Jones report regarding the investigation into the governance issues arising leading up to the Annual Council meeting?

**Answer by the Leader**

The independent investigator's report will be coming to Policy and Resources Committee in October where members will be able to ask specific questions. The report will be published.

**Question 64****Councillor Arjun Mittra**

Is it standard practice for the Council's Capita-subsiidiary bailiff not to provide a breakdown of the charges they are seeking to recover?

**Answer by the Leader**

Prior to issuing instruction to a bailiff a liability order is issued to the customer by the Revenues and Benefits Service setting out the overdue payments and costs awarded. The back of the liability order also sets out the potential enforcement routes that can be pursued and a Schedule of Bailiff fees that will be charged.

If no further payment is received or the Council Tax payer defaults on an arrangement the Council may opt to send the case to the bailiff as the chosen enforcement route.

On receipt of the instruction, the bailiff, in this case Equita will issue a Notice of Enforcement to all customers within 24 hours of receipt of the case being referred to them.

The Notice of Enforcement sets out in line with the regulations: the debt, any interest, the compliance fee of £75 and the date the debt has to be paid by. The Notice also sets out the “possible additional fees and expenses of enforcement” that could become payable if the debt is not paid or an arrangement made within the timescale set.

A customer can receive 3 to 4 notices before an enforcement agent attends their property.

When the enforcement agent actually attends he brings very little documentation as this would already have been sent to the customer. Any fee breakdown will be provided upon written request.

A customer receives a number of recovery notices from Barnet at each stage prior to any referral to the Bailiffs. At any stage there is an opportunity to make a suitable payment arrangement, before the debt is passed to the enforcement agents. An enforcement agent will only attend if there has been no contact following the notice of enforcement letters or if a payment arrangement has been broken.

Equita and all bailiff firms are governed by the prevailing National Standards for Enforcement Agents, best practice and in line with Council Policies around debt collection.

**Question 65**

**Councillor John Marshall**

Would the Committee Chairman join me in congratulating the borough’s students, teachers and schools on their excellent public examination results and welcome the fact that Barnet continues to significantly outperform the national averages in this regard?

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

Yes. Once again our pupils, parents, teachers and school leaders have worked hard and attained terrific results. I congratulate them all on their achievements. We know that the high quality of education in the borough continues to be a significant draw and source of pride. We continue to work supportively with all involved to maintain these high standards.

**Question 66**

**Councillor Reema Patel**

Considerable damage has been done to Coppetts Wood nature reserve as a consequence of some recent sewage works. Will the Council commit to rectifying this damage in the event that the third party does not?

**Answer by the Leader**

Thames Water have been on site for some 12 months and are still on site currently undertaking extensive works to a major sewer. These works commenced as an emergency response following the major failure of the sewer which flooded and closed the north circular and sections of Coppetts Wood, thus no prior notification and agreement to the works was sought or required from the Council.

Thames Water have agreed a series of works, which they are undertaking. There are legislative mechanisms to ensure that the reinstatement works are all completed, any failure to do so would be pursued by Officers.

**Question 67**

**Councillor Alison Cornelius**

Can the Leader, or the Committee Chairman, update Council on the progress of our Troubled Families Programme?

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

As at the end of May 2014, Barnet had identified all 705 of its cohort of families. Of these a total of 390 had been 'turned around' according to central government criteria. This achievement places Barnet as one of the best performing London Boroughs, leading DCLG to invite Barnet to pilot the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the national Troubled Families programme.

**Question 68**

**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

What progress is there on the Way-2-Save (former Woolworths store) site, and can the fly-posted advertising be stopped?

**Answer by the Leader**

In order to investigate and provide a detailed response to this question the team would be grateful if you would provide an exact location for the mentioned site. Once provided we will be happy to provide further details.

**Question 69**

**Councillor Alison Cornelius**

Does the Leader agree that treating those at risk of violence in their home as homeless and offering temporary accommodation is an important safeguarding step that will help protect vulnerable people?

**Answer by the Leader**

This is precisely why the proposal has been made. Remaining in their existing accommodation may put vulnerable people in further danger. It is better to place them in safety in temporary accommodation while a more long-term solution is arranged.

**Question 70**

**Councillor Zakia Zubairi**

Was the Leader aware that the Everglade Medical Practice at the Grahame Park Health Centre have had serious health and safety concerns for staff and patients attending the practice because of problems with repairs arising from asbestos, damage from water leaks and having no hot water for 2 weeks? Barnet Homes have said the repairs will be completed by the 9 September, would he reassure me that any future problems with the building will be addressed more swiftly so the centre is not left operating in such conditions for weeks on end?

**Answer by the Leader**

A waste water notice was served by Affinity Water on LBB Property Services due to a large underground burst underneath the medical centre. Affinity Water engaged contractors to excavate the floor of the medical centre but had to halt works due to finding asbestos underneath the floor. The water pressure to the flats in Block Kemp was reducing due to the leak and Flat 26 had an intermittent water supply for some weeks.

Barnet Homes became heavily involved at this point to assist LBB Property Services and arranged for the asbestos to be removed to allow Affinity Waters contractors to safely repair the burst. Unfortunately the burst was too deep underground to repair so a new water main had to be run in through the medical centre to provide a water supply to the flats above. The majority of the works had to be undertaken during the evenings or weekends to allow the health centre to continue to operate a day service.

Once this was completed and the water main re-pressurised, the flats above developed a number of leaks. There was also a leak on the district heating system and a leak on a pump, unrelated to the water mains renewal. Barnet Homes have since undertaken a survey of all flats above the health centre to confirm all pipe work being fed by the mains is free from defects.

This caused damage to a number of areas in the health centre affecting ceiling tiles, plasterwork and decorations. All of these jobs have been attended to within target timeframes and Barnet Homes are in the process of carrying out remedial works to the health centre to return it to its previous state.

Completion is imminent.

Following reports of a lack of hot water, this was referred to LBB Property Services who have responsibility for managing the commercial premises and who engage the services of an alternative contractor to resolve this issue.

Following meetings with NHS Practice Managers, NHS Facilities Managers, Affinity Water, Barnet Homes and their contractors, we believe much clearer lines of communication have been established to report issues of this nature in future. The main delays in this instance were a lack of clear signposting on who was responsible for each element of the repairs under the lease.

**Question 71**

**Councillor Alison Cornelius**

What proportion of those who applied on time received one of their top three choices for primary and secondary school admissions this year?

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

92% of applicants received an offer of a primary place at one of their top three schools of preference.

91% of applicants received an offer of a secondary place at one of their top three schools of preference.

**Question 72**

**Councillor Arjun Mittra**

Does the Leader of the Council believe that he can judge a case impartially, having made comments dismissing the case?

**Answer by the Leader**

I think I was very cautious in my comments and certainly did not pre-judge the case. I made no pre-determination of innocence or guilt in the way some Labour supporters appeared to do.

**Question 73**

**Councillor Charlie Omacauley**

In the last three months, how many crimes have been reported from Burnt Oak?

**Answer by the Leader**

In the three months June-August 2014 there were 319 crimes in Burnt Oak ward (an increase of 21 compared to the same period a year ago).

**Question 74**

**Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb**

Will the Leader support the partial implementation of 20mph limits on those roads in Friern Barnet Village that have been adopted by the council while we wait for the rest of the roads to be adopted?

**Answer by the Leader**

The Council can consider such a proposal, but the introduction of 20 mph limits are based on surveys of traffic and pedestrian movements/volumes/incidents as well as consultation.

**Question 75**

**Councillor Charlie O'Macauley**

How many community halls do the council own in Burnt Oak? How many are occupied and by which groups?

**Answer by the Leader**

The Council has seven community halls in Burnt Oak which are listed below. All the community halls owned by the council in Burnt Oak are leased out.

1. Stag House, 94 Burnt Oak Broadway, HA8 –leased to the trustees of Rex Chosen Ministries for 10 years from 23/12/2009

2. 210 Burnt Oak Broadway, HA8 – leased to Sangam Association of Asian Women for 99 years from 23/06/1992
3. North Road Community Centre, HA8 - leased to the trustees of the North Road Community Association for 5 years from 25/03/2013
4. Community Hall, Market Lane, HA8 - leased to Faith Community Ltd for 25 years from 10/08/2011
5. Watling Community Centre, Orange Hill Road HA8 – leased to the trustees of Watling Community Centre for 37 years from 18/03/1997
6. Burnt Oak Spiritualist Church (Adjacent Watling Community Centre), Orange Hill Road HA8 – leased to Burnt Oak Spiritualist Church for 20 years from 18/03/1997
7. Former Bowling Green and Pavilion, Watling Park – leased to TAVR (Territorial Army) for 25 years from 29/02/1988

**Question 76**

**Councillor Arjun Mitra**

How many planning applications are refused by officers on the grounds of objections from Transport and Traffic officers?

**Answer by Councillor Melvin Cohen (Chairman of Planning Committee)**

In the month of August, 62 planning applications were refused planning permission, 3 of which included highways reasons as a result of an objection raised by transport planners.

**Question 77**

**Councillor Alison Moore**

Will the Leader tell us how many resident CPZ permit holders who submitted renewal applications on time through the on-line system were subsequently issued with PCNs because the system failed to work properly and their permits were not re-issued on time? How much has it cost the council rectifying this situation?

**Answer by the Leader**

The recent issue where a number of PCN's were issued was not related to a system problem but was due to a short term service failure where reminder letters were not printed and sent to permit holders to warn them that their existing permit was due to expire within four weeks. When this failure became apparent letters were issued immediately but some residents would have had no or very little advanced warning due to the delay in printing the letters. There is no obligation on the council to send such reminders and therefore this has up to now been carried out on a discretionary basis, however where PCNs have been issued they have subsequently been cancelled. Due to the manner in which cancellations are recorded in the IT system we are unable to identify the exact number of PCN's cancelled due to this issue, however it is not thought to be any greater than twenty based on complaints received. Since this service failure a new process has been implemented to ensure that reminder letters are routinely sent out on a daily basis and there has been no additional cost to the council.

**Question 78**

**Councillor Agnes Slocombe**

Who is responsible for cleaning the riverbank under the flyover on the Edgware Road opposite Vauxhall Cars at Staples Corner where fishing takes place?

**Answer by the Leader**

The ownership of the land adjacent to the river bank (south of Priestly Way and north of the Industrial units) is unclear. This matter is being investigated by the property services team with HM land registry and an update will be provided to Councillor Slocombe with the findings.

**Question 79****Councillor Charlie O'Macauley**

How many council flats or houses are vacant or empty in Burnt Oak?

**Answer by Councillor Tom Davey** (Chairman of Housing Committee)

There is only 1 empty council property in Burnt Oak at present. It is a house and voids works are currently underway.

**Question 80****Councillor Arjun Mittra**

How many planning enforcements are made, out of how many reported?

**Answer by the Leader**

Between 1 September 2013 and 30 August 2014, the council received 1746 planning enforcement complaints and in the same period served 132 enforcement notices of various types. The rate at which complaints have been received in 2014 is at an historic high and it is likely that the number of notices will rise accordingly.

**Question 81****Councillor Arjun Mittra**

Does the Leader not agree that it is an appalling dereliction of responsibility for Westminster Council to hire out the Church in St Marylebone Cemetery on East End Road, then show no interest in managing the parking problems that occur at Easter and Christmas in the area?

**Answer by the Leader**

In order to investigate and provide a detailed response to this question Officers would be grateful if you would provide specific details relating to the parking problems. Once provided they will be happy to provide further details and investigate in consultation with Westminster Council to put measures in place for the future.

**Question 82****Councillor Alison Moore**

Some years ago the mini roundabout at the junction of Squires Lane and Station Road N3 was removed, along with other road safety measures in the area that had been installed following extensive local consultation. This gave local residents problems crossing safely. The roundabout has finally been re-instated. Would the Leader tell me how much it cost in traffic orders, signage and other costs to remove and now to re-install the roundabout?

**Answer by the Leader**

The mini roundabout and ancillary items removal cost was largely contained within the major carriageway resurfacing scheme.

The final bill for safety improvements at this location are expected to be contained within £50k. It will be noted that this is not being done on a like-for-like basis and a fully-fledged design process to introduce other safety features currently under construction has been done.