

Council Questions to the Leader

4 November 2014

Questions and Responses

Question 1

Councillor Brian Salinger

Will the Leader or the Chairman of the Education Committee explain to the Council which 'decisions' taken by the Schools Forum have to be implemented by statute, and which decisions are in fact recommendations to the Council? Can the respondent to this question list the decisions that have been taken under each category and can the respondent demonstrate how those decisions have been reported to Council or the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding committee over the last 12 months?

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

Schools Forums generally have a consultative role. However, there are situations in which they have decision-making powers. These include such matters as the central expenditure and the criteria for the growth fund, the central spending on significant 16-19 pupil growth, equal pay back pay, places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils and early years expenditure, admissions, the cost of servicing the Schools Forum and services schools wish to de-delegate. The role for the local authority in areas where the Schools Forum is the decision maker is to make proposals. The DfE is the adjudicator where the Schools Forum does not agree the LA proposal.

The local authority is the decision maker for the local funding formula. An update report on the Dedicated Schools Grant was included within the Business Planning Agenda Item reported to Cabinet on 25th February 2014.

The Chairman of the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee is a permitted attendee and contributor to Schools Forum meetings. The Member does not have voting rights.

Supplementary Question

Noting the Chairman's reply, would the Chairman ensure that all recommendations made of the Schools Forum come before this Committee for ratification, or not, and the way decisions are made by the Forum, in accordance with their statutory authority, that Members are told what those decisions are.

Supplementary Answer

I'd be happy to.

Question 2**Councillor Alison Moore**

How many people in the borough have still not had their parking permit refund following the successful legal challenge to Barnet's exorbitant parking charge hikes, and how much money overall is still owed to Barnet's residents?

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

Despite the wide publicity there are still approximately 6,700 who have not claimed a permit refund to date. However, whoever has applied has been refunded. A sum of £1.2M is set aside in the accounts in order to accommodate the potential outstanding financial liability.

A further exercise has been commissioned to actively make contact with those who have not claimed the refund they are due and it is anticipated that within a 6 month period everyone who is contactable will be made aware of the process by which they can claim their refund.

Supplementary Question

How much has the Council paid out in refunds and why did the Lead Member not proactively agree to contact residents earlier?

Supplementary Answer

I did instruct officers to act earlier. They have been acting proactively not just recently, but since day one and also earlier in the process. I don't have a figure as to how much has been paid back to date.

Question 3**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Leader or the Chairman of the Housing Committee tell the Council how many Barnet victims of domestic violence have been re-housed by Barnet (or other authorities) and how many we have accommodated from other Boroughs in the last year?

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

In 2013/14 38 households fleeing Domestic violence were placed into temporary accommodation of which 3 were housed into social housing. 7 of the 38 applications were from households outside of the borough who would not access social housing due to not meeting the residential connection.

In addition to the 38, three households have been housed into social housing from other boroughs under the North London DV reciprocal agreement which started in October 2013. From October to end of March 2014 Barnet have also nominated 3 households under the agreement.

Supplementary Question

Can the Chairman tell the Council if all of the victims listed are female and if not, how many are male victims and how many are victims of inter-generational violence

Supplementary Answer

I don't have that information to hand and I will have to talk with officers as to whether or not it is even appropriate to share that information.

Question 4**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Will the Leader support the LGA campaign against the proposal in the Deregulation Bill to relax Taxi licensing laws? Under current regulations only a licensed person who has undergone a council vetting process is allowed to drive a minicab. The new proposal will allow minicab licence-holders to let other people drive their minicabs. Will he also write to relevant ministers and the Mayor of London voicing his opposition?

Answer by the Leader

I support licensing for minicabs and, whilst reform may be needed, great care should be taken to ensure safety.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 5**Councillor Brian Salinger**

What advice did the panel that appointed the former Monitoring Officer receive about the qualifications that were needed by anyone being appointed to the post? Who provided that advice to the panel?

Answer by the Leader

The law does not require that a Monitoring Officer should hold any particular qualifications.

The senior management structure of the Council was agreed by General Functions Committee in April 2012, with implementation delegated to the Chief Executive save for the appointment of Chief Officers. The Assurance Director was appointed by Remuneration Committee in October 2012.

Supplementary Question

Can I ask the Leader if the next Monitoring Officer will be legally qualified?

Supplementary Answer

If the new Monitoring Officer has any qualification whatsoever that would be legally qualified. I assume you mean that he should have legal experience and in that case I would expect that the Monitoring Officer would be a lawyer, but I don't think we should preclude another qualified applicant.

Question 6**Councillor Adam Langleben**

In answer to a question at Policy and Resource Committee you told a Times Series journalist that you believe politicians should take responsibility for institutional failure. How have you taken responsibility for the failure of legal governance at Barnet Council?

Answer by the Leader

I am not sure that was the question asked, but in any case the answer is yes. I have taken responsibility by supporting officers obtaining authoritative legal advice and by appointing more Conservative Members to Committees.

Supplementary Question

Who do you hold accountable for the failure of Governance?

Supplementary Answer

I fully support the conclusions reached in the Claer Lloyd Jones report.

Question 7**Councillor Brian Salinger**

When does the Council envisage that the first 20 mph signs will start to appear in the Borough in line with the report of the Task and Finish Group?

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

20mph mandatory or advisory areas have been installed recently or are being introduced or actively considered in various locations including Moss Hall Grove, side roads between Colney Hatch Lane and Trott Road, North End Road, roads in N14, Gillingham Road/Dersingham Road and The Avenue EN5.

Supplementary Question

Can I ask the Chairman to make clear to the large numbers of people who are now clamouring for 20 mph zones around the borough that, whilst they will have the support of the council for their installation, it may be some time before they all get installed.

Supplementary Answer

Yes, not just 20 mph, but any scheme that is progressed through should make it clear to residents how long it will take.

Question 8**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

In how many cases of appeals against Barnet Penalty Charge Notices heard by the Parking and Traffic Appeals Service (PATAS) in 2012/13 and 2013/14 has the Council failed to submit any evidence to defend its case?

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

The Council have not contested cases on the following number of occasions:

2012/13 – 676

2013/13 – 514

There are many reasons for this and not least that an appellant can submit further evidence between the point of the authority considering a formal representation and the date of the PATAS hearing.

In relation to a failure to submit evidence and/or submitting evidence late to defend a case the figures are as follows:

2012/13 – 14

2013/14 - 7

Supplementary Question

This year the number of appeals against Barnet parking tickets has gone up by 45% and there are now more appeals against Barnet parking tickets than almost any other London authority, even more than in Westminster. Does Counsellor Cohen accept there's a problem and what is he going to do about it?

Supplementary Answer

I do accept there is a problem and officers are actively dealing with the problem.

Question 9**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Can the Council please prevail on Barnet Hospital to cease its new practice of requiring disabled drivers to register their blue badges at the hospital desk before being allowed to use them for parking?

Answer by the Leader

Due to the introduction of a camera system at the Car Parks at Barnet Hospital – similar to the one which is currently used at the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead – disabled drivers are now required to take their Blue Badges and report their registration numbers to Reception on their first visit. It is important to note that they do not then have to return to their vehicles to replace their Blue Badge on this occasion, nor to repeat this procedure on subsequent visits.

There is disabled parking for blue badge holders near to the Hospital entrances with Parking in these designated spaces being free for the first three hours.

For further information, the Trust's parking policy is available at:

<https://www.royalfree.nhs.uk/contact-us/parking-at-our-hospitals>

Supplementary Question

I'm not seeking to exaggerate the problems of Blue Badge holders at Barnet Hospital but I do feel that it should not be necessary for them even to have to report to reception once when they have their Blue Badges. Would you not agree that it is difficult enough sometimes, not the fault of the council, but generally the system, for Blue Badge holders to get their badges without being hassled even more once they've got them. Is there a possibility that you could contact Barnet Hospital regarding this?

Supplementary Answer

I was rather surprised at work today that one of my staff actually raised this problem as his mother had been dealt a ticket at Barnet Hospital. It's clearly a widespread problem and I will write to the hospital trust.

Question 10**Councillor Ammar Naqvi**

Given how forceful the Council has been in pursuing the retrospective Council Tax of the poorest and most politically excluded residents, would the Leader assure us that an equal amount of effort has been expended upon those with a second property or multiple properties?

Answer by the Leader

Yes. Council Tax pays for local services, so it's in our interest to collect all that is owed to us. For example, the Council spends £13m on single person discount, which has previously been ripe for abuse but with fraud now easier to detect. So far, we've recovered £600k in incorrectly or fraudulently claimed discount.

Supplementary Question

£600,000 of fraudulent claims over a £13m spend, what say you to all those families who haven't made fraudulent claims that have been unduly harassed in terms of council tax collectors?

Supplementary Answer

I don't have any evidence that families have been inappropriately harassed.

Question 11**Councillor Brian Gordon**

The Committee Chairman/Leader may have heard or read about the appalling stench which has plagued the Edgware area recently due to odour from a massive compost reprocessing site in Elstree. It seems there were a number of bureaucratic blunders, misjudgements and breaches which enabled this to happen. Even though the site was not within our Borough is there any official Barnet response on this and what can our Council do to try and ensure such a scourge will not reoccur?

Answer by the Leader

The Reviva Composting Site (in Hertsmere outside Barnet but boarding Hale/Edgware area) was creating a smell and effecting hundreds of residents – some residents several miles away could smell the site.

The Environment Agency are taking enforcement action on this site and this has led to a lot of the pungent waste being removed, but it did take a few weeks. Environmental Health did liaise with the Agency regarding progress on the case but have no enforcement powers regarding statutory nuisance with respect to waste management sites.

I will write to the Environment Agency on this matter.

Supplementary Question

Have you actually written yet to the Environment Agency regarding the problem of the 'Edgware Smell' and if you have, thank you very much. If you haven't, would you please be aware that the considerable pressure put by the public on the Reviva Company, the efforts of our councillors and working with the Environment Agency has now resulted in much more control being exercised over the reprocessing of compost at that site and I'm pleased to report that, so far, the smell has very much subsided if not been eliminated.

Supplementary Answer

I've always thought that Edgware was a particularly fragrant ward and I think it is important that it should remain so, so I join with Councillor Gordon in this effort.

Question 12**Councillor Alon Or bach**

Does the Leader believe people in Barnet are innocent until proven guilty?

Answer by the Leader

Yes

Supplementary Question

I'm glad he believes in innocent until guilt is proven, but sadly this does not extend to how Capita is treating single person households in our borough. Without any breakdown residents are being targeted with back-dated notices and you are asking for evidence. I've got one constituent who was direct debited £2,400 without proper notice whilst still in dispute. Does the Leader agree that this harassment is unacceptable and that Barnet residents deserve better, deserve to be treated with respect and this practice by Capita must be stopped.

Supplementary Answer

Of course there is a Code of Practice that must be followed. If the councillor could give me a copy of the correspondence he's got with Capita I will take it up.

Question 13**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Can the Chairman please note that there has been a very enthusiastic public reaction to the trees and flower arrangements installed along the shopping centre in Edgware's Station Road? How many of these do we now have at high streets throughout the Borough?

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

Eight town centres have recently been planted with streets trees to enhance the street and shopping environment; in 2013 the most recent plantings were New Barnet, North Finchley/Tally Ho, Hendon/Brent Street Golders green and Cricklewood. Further schemes are currently being developed and assessed for viability for delivery in 2014 including Temple Fortune and West Hendon.

In addition to the planting of street trees the Town Teams at High Barnet and Edgware have supplemented the tree planting with seasonal bedding hanging baskets and boxes that they have funded and sourced themselves.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Thomas, would you agree that the plethora of beautiful trees and flowers now adorning our streets as we see in Edgware is an example of how environmentally conscious our council is?

Supplementary Answer

Indeed we will add to Edgware remaining a very fragrant ward.

Question 14**Councillor Paul Edwards**

Would the Leader confirm how much the council has paid to Capita to date under the CSG and Re contracts, whether this is in line with the payment profile for both contracts and if not how much does it vary by for each contract?

Answer by the Leader

Under the CSG and Re contracts, the Council has paid £47.6m (CSG) and £16.1m (Re) by the end of September 2014. These payments are in line with the published payments schedule.

The CSG and Re contracts will provide a financial benefit to the Council of £165m through savings and income over 10 years. CSG services now cost £6m less per year.

Supplementary Question

Would the Leader please confirm that the figure of £63.7m given in his answer does not include the £14.8m paid on the 1st July to Capita and I quote 'for interim measures to provide critical services' and nor does it include the £16.1m paid to Capita as part of the CSG Contract for IT and back office infrastructure – whatever that might mean. So in fact the council has actually paid over £96.4m to Capita since the council outsourced services to this company, which is £31m more than in your written answer. Would the Leader kindly explain the difference?

Supplementary Answer

I suspect it is something to do with capital spend and revenue spend but I will write to the councillor. In the meantime I'm sure the Contract Monitoring Committee will take it up.

Question 15**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Does the Leader share my relief that the RMT called off the recent militant and unnecessary intended strike action, which undoubtedly would have resulted in great inconvenience for many Barnet residents?

Answer by the Leader

Absolutely. The right to strike is an important weapon that should not be deployed irresponsibly. The public have a right to travel.

Supplementary Question

Would you agree that trade unions, both at local level that we have experienced here and at national level, are still far too politically motivated? Often dominated by extreme left-wing influences and that only Conservative administrations and indeed governments are really capable of combatting them in the appropriate way.

Supplementary Answer

Yes.

Question 16**Councillor Devra Kay**

At the Council meeting on 23.9.2014, Cllr John Marshall asked: "Does the Leader agree that the investigations taken since 2 June have suggested that these problems go back a long way and pre-date the Conservative Party taking over control of this council?" to which the Leader replied: "It may well go back many municipal generations as suspected". Would the Leader agree following the conclusions of Claer Lloyd-Jones's recent independent report that this is not the case and that the failures of Governance in Barnet have been entirely due to the current and previous Conservative administrations under his leadership?

Answer by the Leader

I am relieved that, whatever and whenever the origins of the proportionality issue, it is now cleared up and I welcome the additional Conservative representation on Committees.

Supplementary Question

From your written answer I can only assume that just as you didn't read the One Barnet Capita contract you couldn't have read the report of Claer Lloyd Jones because my question was based on her findings of the staggering inadequacy or rather non-existence of knowledge of local government law in Barnet. Staff in key roles in the governance structure in Barnet who are inexperienced in governance matters and the equally inadequate legal advice from the private law firm you so enthusiastically tied us into. You refer only to the committee proportionality scandal earlier this year, which brought the council to a halt and which was just one failure of this dysfunctional, discredited council. So I ask, will you take personal responsibility for matters that are on record as taking place under the previous and current Conservative administrations, with yourself as Leader, and agree to the challenge of all decisions that were made without due process as described in the report that puts our council at risk?

Supplementary Answer

I would remind the councillor that she is part of this Council and she needs to remember that. I think it is very important that we do take notice of the report that was prepared but we need to be very careful and measured in what we do.

Question 17

Councillor Brian Gordon

Statements have recently emanated from the Department of Education suggesting the Government might enable impose a requirement on faith schools to teach religions other than those that are the ethos of the schools. While many would consider such an educational mix to be desirable would the Chairman agree that the content of religious teachings should be left to faith schools themselves and that this should be Barnet's approach?

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

Barnet is very proud of the diversity of the educational offer within Barnet. From time to time, national government makes requirements of all publicly funded schools to adopt a consistent approach to particular curriculum or other matters. Our approach is for all publicly funded schools to comply with national requirements, retaining local discretion at a school level on matters outside of national requirements.

Supplementary Question

Nobody would suggest that schools should not comply with national requirements, but what I'm merely asking you is whether the council could in principle support the notion that faith schools should be left themselves to determine their religious syllabus without outside interference.

Supplementary Answer

I fully support schools in make such determinations within the school.

Question 18**Councillor Alison Moore**

Could the Leader confirm that the contract with Capita CSG includes a financial incentive to increase council tax collection?

Answer by the Leader

Council Tax pays for local services so we need to collect what is owed. The terms of the CSG contract require Capita to increase the Council Tax collection rate from 98.2% to 98.5%. Any achievement of collection rates above what is specified in the contract would be on a payment by results basis.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 19**Councillor Alison Cornelius**

What does the council intend to do with regards to Christmas parking this year?

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

This will be a decision for the Environment Committee when it next meets on 18 November. However, I will be recommending to the Environment Committee that similar free parking arrangements as last year, for the three weekends leading up to Christmas, are put in place.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 20**Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb**

Has Barnet's planning application for Pinkham Way yet been submitted to Haringey and, if not, when will it be submitted?

Answer by the Leader

No

Supplementary Question

A very short answer, so can I take it that 'No' also now means 'Never'?

Supplementary Answer

Another short answer. No.

Question 21**Councillor Alison Cornelius**

What provisions is the council making for Small Business Saturday?

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

This is covered by the answer to Q19.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 22**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Will the administration support some on-going subsidy for Nursery schools in Barnet to recognise their additional costs?

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

The Council values nursery provision in the Borough and as part of the Early Years Review has been seeking opportunities to deliver a sustainable funding solution. In October, the Schools Forum agreed an extension to the subsidy for the next two years, subject to viable plans to operate on a subsidy free basis being agreed by Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee. This report has been referred to full Council. A subsidy for any part of the DSG would need to be funded by a reduction in another part.

Supplementary Question

As I said in my referral up, other councils do manage to find this funding so where it says 'a subsidy for any part of the Direct Schools Grant would need to be funded by a reduction in another part' I wonder if we could identify exactly where that might have to come from. Then we can move forward on this.

Supplementary Answer

I'm quite happy to seek suggestions from Councillor Hutton as to which particular provider she wants to see that cut too.

Question 23**Councillor Alison Cornelius**

How have the council's Fit and Active Barnet initiatives targeted hard to reach groups?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart (Chairman of the Health & Well-Being Board)

The Fit and Active Barnet (FAB) campaign has identified people over 55yrs, people from BME groups and people with disabilities as groups to be targeted in addition to the generally sedentary population with a view to encouraging them to be more physically active. The FAB campaign has been mainly a web/social media based campaign providing information to residents about how to access the activities already provided for in Barnet. However FAB also recognises that young people are often hard to reach when disengaged from the mainstream.

Through the Sport and Physical Activity Delivery Plan, FAB also encompasses:

- The Older Peoples Small Grants Scheme - which as part of the overall FAB umbrella of activities has been successful in granting funding to a range of organisations, many of which encompass BME groups to the West of the Borough.
- People with Disabilities – we have been looking to expand the engagement of people with disabilities and have requested representation on the FAB partnership board to assist with this. The Delivery Plan will be revised following this representation.

Young People – the Sport and Physical Activity Delivery Plan has identified a need to ensure that young people have access to Sport and Physical Activity. Sport England recently confirmed funding to an engagement project in Edgware and Burnt Oak with disengaged young people.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 24**Councillor Gill Sargeant**

What rents are being charged per calendar month for social housing in the new developments in Colindale in Pulse, Beaufort Park, Redrow and Genesis? What are the service charges? Are service charges inclusive?

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

Social rents charged to the properties are provided by several different registered providers. I will send the information on actual rents and service charges as soon as I receive it.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 25**Councillor Alison Cornelius**

What is the status of the Winter Well scheme for 2014?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart (Chairman of the Health & Well-Being Board)

The Winterwell 2014/15 Campaign will commence in early November. Last year's scheme was reviewed to collect feedback from key partners on its success as well as considering any suggestions for improvement for this year. Local residents were also asked to review the scheme literature from last year to ensure that this year's is as relevant and easy to read as possible.

We will also be distributing leaflets and temperature cards to residents via community networks, GPs, Adult Social Care and Children's Services. We will also be using bus stops and 6 sheet spaces to promote the message to carers and residents. Professionals will have access to a digital briefing pack outlining the purpose of the programme and how to refer clients. We are also working closely with the CCG to ensure distribution and information is disseminated.

Eligible referred clients may receive assistance with small works on their homes, emergency heating equipment and or advice on fuel debt and efficiency. The CAB is ready to train community representatives on fuel debt and efficiency and have been commissioned for 10 courses in the first instance. RE, this year, will provide the Call Centre function and support professionals and individuals through the referral process.

A number of briefing and information sessions are taking place or are planned and those which have already taken place have been attended by the team. In addition, Community Champions will be developed this year and Warm Zones will be piloted by Ageing Well in East Finchley. The Big London Energy Switch has been incorporated into the Project and we have established links with London Fire Service and the Power Companies for this year.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 26

Councillor Philip Cohen

Has the council considered taking advantage of the Mayor of London's High Street Fund to help regenerate areas such as New Barnet and East Barnet Village? The Fund is making £9 million available until March 2016 so does the Leader agree this is worth exploring with officers and ward councillors?

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

The Council is currently consulting on its Entrepreneurial Barnet Strategy which sets out its approach to supporting businesses and town centres. The strategy will help to guide the Council in where it prioritises support and resources for funding bids. Smaller bids which are developed and led by the community will also be given serious consideration. Town centres in Barnet have previously benefitted from the Mayor's Outer London Fund. We can bid for some money and the Area Environment forums will help inform which areas may benefit from any arising funding.

Supplementary Question

Will Councillor Thomas agree to meet with me and officers to look at the possible use of the Mayor's High Street fund for the benefit of East Barnet and New Barnet?

Supplementary Answer

Yes.

Question 27**Councillor John Hart**

The waste and recycling service has recently had its first anniversary since its transformation. What has been the impact of co-mingled recycling and the new brown food waste bins on the tonnages of recycled waste?

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

The recycling rate has risen from 33% to 41%.

From October 2013 to the last week in September 2014 there has been a 30% increase in the tonnage of recycling collected from households, compared with the same period the previous year. The tonnage collected rose from 19,022 tonnes to 24,757 tonnes between the two periods.

From October 2013 to the last week in September 2014, 6379.08 tonnes of food waste was collected compared to an estimated 200 tonnes for the same period the previous year.

Supplementary Question

Besides household recycling could the Chairman enlighten me about a) the recycling level from commercial garbage whether cleared by contractors or in-house and b) what measures there are for recycling the contents of litter bins across Barnet?

Supplementary Answer

Work is currently ongoing on trying to implement recycling within commercial waste and hopefully that will come forward soon and regarding litter bins on streets, I note Councillor Hart's suggestion and I will discuss that further.

Question 28**Councillor Charlie O'Macauley**

How many pavements have been repaired in Burnt Oak in the last four years and where?

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

For planned repairs, there have been 8 in total in the following areas:

2010 -2011

No Footway schemes - only carriageway resurfacing carried out in

2011 -2012

Watling Avenue -Phase 1 - Orange Hill Road to Montrose Avenue

Watling Avenue - Phase 2 - Mostyn Road to Woodcroft Avenue

Deansbrook Road - Worst section

2012-2013

Burnt Oak Broadway - Worst section

Slikstream Road - Whole Length

Cresingham Road - Whole Length

2013-2014

Watling Avenue - Gervase Road to Montrose Ave

Hook Walk - Whole Length

This is additional to reactive repairs.

Supplementary Question

Will the Chairman agree with me there's more to do in Burnt Oak with regards to pavements and they will do more so that residents will be happy, taking into consideration other works.

Supplementary Answer

Yes, there's more to do across to do across the borough. It's a big issue, pavements and highways. It's not just pavements, it's highways as well across the borough and will be done on need.

Question 29

Councillor John Hart

Is the Leader happy with the shortlist for Barnet's development partners for the south side of the Brent Cross Cricklewood development?

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

The shortlist is outstanding. There are very few companies in the world that can operate at this scale and we have very high expectations of our future partner. I am delighted that we have a high calibre field comprising: Argent (Property Development) Services LLP and Related Companies LP; Barratts and London & Quadrant Housing Trust; Capital & Counties Properties PLC; and Far East Consortium International Limited with Countryside Properties PLC, Notting Hill Housing Trust and Southern Grove.

Supplementary Question

Could the Deputy Chairman please comfort me with an assurance that the needs of small, hands-on businesses so fundamental to entrepreneurial Barnet with their need for workshops, start-up premises, incubator units – a term used – will not be forgotten in the redevelopments of western Barnet?

Supplementary Answer

I like the idea of commercial space, be it mixed, light industrial space being part of the regeneration schemes and in the consultation that we have on entrepreneurial Barnet we are asking residents and businesses what sort of places and spaces they need to set up business and hopefully the results of that will also tally with Councillor Hart's views.

Question 30**Councillor Rebecca Challice**

Would it be possible to have a break-down of the cost of refreshments provided at council meetings? I would like this breakdown to include the price of vegetarian sandwiches, meat sandwiches etc. as separate values. I would also like to know how the number of sandwiches provided is calculated? Is it a set number per councillor?

Answer by the Leader

The cost of catering for Full Council meetings is £512.50 per meeting. Since the sandwiches are prepared by our own staff, it is not possible to produce individual costs.

Supplementary Question

I'm rather shocked by the cost of catering: £8 per councillor totalling over £500 per council meeting on catering alone. Seems rather a lot. Would the Leader be willing to have a conversation with me regarding some very basic savings that can be made by the Council?

Supplementary Answer

I'm always interested in hearing savings.

Question 31**Councillor Anthony Finn**

Has the council written to Claer Lloyd Jones thanking her for her report?

Answer by the Leader

Yes

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 32**Councillor Alison Moore**

How many appeals against PCNs served in roads that are part of CPZs have been won and lost since March 1st 2014 and what has that cost the borough?

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

We do not currently record figures solely in relation to CPZ.

Supplementary Question

Does Councillor Cohen think it's acceptable that residents in my ward and indeed in others receive PCNs for parking outside their homes when they had applied for on time a renewed permit but had to wait for weeks for it to arrive and hence receive PCNs?

Supplementary Answer

No, it's not acceptable and I hope Councillor Moore has taken that up with officers who are representing her residents.

Question 33

Councillor Caroline Stock

How much income has been generated for the council from the regeneration and development programme?

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

There are a number of different sources of income that arise from regeneration and development. Since 2010, the following income has arisen primarily as a result of regeneration and development:

- New Homes Bonus - £10.8m
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - £1m
- Growth in Council Tax (per annum) - £5m
- Dividends received from Mill Hill East consortium - £3.4m

The Council is expecting significant additional New Homes Bonus and CIL funding to the end of the decade arising from current and future regeneration projects. The Council Tax base is projected to continue to increase, generating a further £5m per annum by 2020. The total dividends from the Mill Hill East Consortium are expected to be in the region of £40m, which will enable the Council to continue to invest in priorities such as roads and pavements and additional school places.

The Council also has a significant opportunity to generate income from the Brent Cross Cricklewood development, with a projected Council Tax base growth of £7m per annum, and possible returns from being a development partner well in excess of the returns from Mill Hill East.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 34

Councillor Barry Rawlings

While I recognise laughter is good therapy, is the Leader proud of his administration's ability to make Barnet a laughing-stock due to their incompetence?

Answer by the Leader

I am proud of what this council has achieved and do not recognise his comments.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 35

Councillor Caroline Stock

How did Capita perform in relation to the procurement saving guarantee over the first year of the contract?

Answer by the Leader

During the first year of the CSG contract procurement savings of £1.387m have been delivered by Capita. This compares favourably to the contract target of £1.040m.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 36

Councillor Adam Langleben

Does the Leader understand why many longstanding residents on the West Hendon estate are angry at Barnet Council and Barratt developers?

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

Concern has arisen as a consequence of delays in the project due primarily to the recession but the development is now progressing at a pace and critically affordable homes are now in the process of being delivered on site for local people. We are doing everything we can to meet residents housing need locally, and many non-secure residents have been moved to new secure tenancies in new properties in Colindale. For example, last month, 88% of the non-secure tenants that were moved were granted new secure tenancies at their new homes. So far, only one household has been placed outside Barnet, and they were happy with the new location which was in an adjoining borough. Negotiations are on-going on a number of matters including CPOs and leasehold charges. The need to comprehensively regenerate the housing estate at West Hendon was identified in 2002. A vote was taken by residents in 2003 showing that 75% were in favour of the regeneration proposals. Metropolitan Housing were selected then and Barratt joined the project in 2005.

Supplementary Question

You refer to secure tenancies. Please will you define these new secure tenancies?

Supplementary Answer

The secure tenants will be housed in the redevelopment scheme, non-secure tenants will be housed as close as possible and so far on average have been relocated within three miles of the scheme, the furthest going to East Barnet.

Question 37**Councillor Joan Scannell**

Would the Leader or the Chairman of Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee like to comment on the opening of the Orion School?

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

I am absolutely delighted to see the Orion School welcoming pupils into its brand new buildings which not only provide 21st century education facilities, but also an array of community facilities. The provision of new performance and sporting facilities available for other schools in the area and the wider community to use is a fantastic example of where council investment can make a real difference.

I would like to congratulate all those involved: the headteacher, school staff, governors, the construction partners and council officers.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 38**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What does the Leader intend to do about the fact that in 2012/13 (the latest year for which the Parking and Traffic Appeals Service has published figures), Barnet lost 75% of its cases, the worst performance of any London borough?

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

This needs to be considered in the context of the overall numbers of PCN's issued in the same period.

In 12/13 - 165,569 PCN's were issued, of which 2,253 (1.4%) were appealed. Of these 1008 were allowed by the Adjudicator and this equates to only 0.6% of all PCN's issued.

It is accepted that in comparison to other London boroughs there is room for improvement in terms of the number of cases lost and ways of addressing this are being explored.

Supplementary Question

Not only are parking appeals up by 45%, last year Barnet lost 60% of the cases that went to appeal. In fact when I visited the Parking Appeal Service recently, Barnet lost four cases in a row. Including one where the council failed to supply any evidence. Can Councillor Cohen accept that this is also a problem and explain what he is doing about this problem?

Supplementary Answer

It's all linked in and it's all part of the piece of work that is being carried out now.

Question 39**Councillor Joan Scannell**

How successful was the recent Get To Know Cancer Pop Up Shop in Edgware

Answer by the Chairman of the Health & Well-Being Board (Councillor Helena Hart)

The Get to Know Cancer Pop Up Shop in the Broadwalk Edgware was even more successful than our first Pop Up Shop at The Spires last June. The message that Cancer is treatable and beatable - and equally importantly preventable - was heard by some 1547 people who visited the Edgware Pop Up Shop over the 18 days it was running. This made an average of approx 86 people a day, which was a better footfall than that achieved in any of the previous Pop Up Shops in London.

Bearing in mind that the earlier Cancer is detected, the less traumatic and more effective the treatment to eradicate it can be, most importantly 72 clients were referred on to their GPs for follow up investigations. That's 72 extra people who will now have this vital opportunity for further investigation and early treatment where necessary.

Supplementary Question

I would like to congratulate Councillor Helena Hart for promoting this very worthwhile project and ask how much did the Edgware pop-up shop cost and does she think it was good value for money in getting the message across?

Supplementary Answer

As the management of the Broadwalk Centre in Edgware most generously provided us with the space for it free of charge, we were able to provide the Get To Know Cancer pop-up shop there for a total of £24,500 for the 18 days that it was in operation. And, yes, I do think this was an excellent use of our dedicated Public Health Funds. Not only did we have the 1,547 visitors and 72 referrals for follow-up investigations as a result of it, we also had the most positive reaction from the Hendon Times Group both prior and following the official launch on 30th September. All of which heightened public awareness in Barnet of the fact that cancer is treatable, even beatable, and most importantly preventable in the 40% of cases that are caused by lifestyle choices.

Question 40**Councillor Ammar Naqvi**

When approaching housing allocation policy, is the administration's guiding desire to reduce, by any means available, the number of people Barnet has a duty to house?

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

The Allocations Scheme has to operate in a climate of increasing demand and limited supply and has to prioritise those with the highest need. The reality is that very few households will access social housing and the scheme needs to reflect this and manage expectations.

In terms of the council's rehousing duties Barnet Homes's approach on the Council's behalf is to try and prevent homelessness and keep people in their homes. If prevention is not possible and applicants choose to make a homeless application the council is legally bound to open a homeless case and investigate the applicant's circumstances. A decision then has to be made on whether the council has a legal duty to house the applicant which is subject to review. The accepting of a duty to house falls under the homeless legislation and sits outside of the Housing Allocations Scheme.

It is also worth noting that all London boroughs are making similar changes to housing allocations, particularly in terms of extending residential connection.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 41

Councillor Bridget Perry

Can the Leader or the Chairman of the Community Leadership Committee confirm that the process for the award of the Area Budgets is now in place and indicate when the first round of grants are likely to be made?

Answer by the Leader

Each of the Council's three Area Committees will receive £100,000 a year for the next four years 2014/15 to 2018/19 to spend on projects and proposals to be brought forward by local residents, organisations, or voluntary or community groups. The scheme for allocating the budgets was launched on October 16. The deadline for applications is 15 December 2014, and awards for this year will be made on 15 January 2015.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 42

Councillor Alon Or bach

Can the Leader outline what changes have been made to council tax collection since the service was outsourced?

Answer by the Leader

There has been no change to the Council Tax collection policy and process since the service was outsourced, it remains the same process as was followed when the service was in house.

Supplementary Question

I will provide the Leader details as discussed earlier, but on this question I would like to ask how can this be true, given that Capita promised to increase revenue collection? Can the Leader tell us how the methods they undertake have changed to achieve this? They cannot be the same as they were before.

Supplementary Answer

I am assured they are the same.

Question 43**Councillor Bridget Perry**

I welcome the news that the building of 63 new affordable homes has been brought forward by six months under the Dollis Valley regeneration scheme. When are the first families likely to be able to move in?

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

The first homes will be available at the end of 2015 and will be some much needed 4 bed units.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 44**Councillor Paul Edwards**

On the 8th October the Telegraph's 'Questor' reported that: "INVESTORS have been ignoring the warning signs at outsourcing group Capita [LON:CPI (Other OTC: CPICQ - news)] as they chase returns and growth. Capita's return on capital has slumped. Last year the company saw pre-tax profits fall by a total of £260m, with £146.7m related to losses on disposing and closing businesses. The overall conclusion and advice it has given to Capita shareholders is to SELL! In the context of Capita's falling pretax profits and its slump in return on capital, and the advice to Capita shareholders to sell, would the Leader like to explain what risks he believes there maybe that Capita may not be able to deliver on its ten year contractual obligations to Barnet Council?

Answer by the Leader

Many Labour Members complained at Capita's past profitability, so should now be pleased that contracts must now be less lucrative for them. I am confident they will continue to deliver improved services for us.

Supplementary Question

Unfortunately for Councillor Cornelius your confidence that Capita is delivering improved service is not shared by everybody in your group. One example of this is Councillor Seal, who on 30th October tweeted someone called Robert Rams and I quote 'Sorry Robert, I'm having problems with my email. I will reply when Capita fix my machine.' Like many of us on this side Councillor Seal clearly feels that the £16.1m paid by the London Borough of Barnet to 'Capita' for IT improvements is turning out to be a very poor investment indeed. Would you like to comment?

Supplementary Answer

Clearly there is much work to be done on this system. I did believe it was improving until a few weeks ago but it seems to be fairly spasmodic. I am assured that the awful pile of servers next to the canteen in the council will be eliminated from use shortly and we should see substantial improvement thereafter. However it is extremely frustrating for everyone on the council, be they involved with the council, be they officers, members or the public trying to deal with it and this needs to be worked through and sorted out. Councillor Edwards wasn't on the council for the last four years, but the system we had then was not a byword for performance either.

Question 45**Councillor Maureen Braun**

Barnet's Corporate Anti-Fraud Team have been frequently featured of late on programmes such as the BBC's 'Saints and Scroungers'. What message does the Leader think this sends out to people engaging in, or considering, fraudulent activity and further about Barnet's approach to dealing with these issues?

Answer by the Leader

This sends out a very clear message in that the council's fraud team will rigorously investigate all instances of alleged fraud, ensuring that relevant cases are prosecuted. We have a commitment to taking firm, vigorous action and will take all necessary steps to recover any funds lost through fraudulent behaviour. This is clearly demonstrated through the cases featured in the tv programmes mentioned, and we I believe that this acts as a strong deterrent going forward.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 46**Councillor Devra Kay**

Will the Leader please assure me that he would welcome challenge of all legal decisions made under the aegis of the former Monitoring Officer since it has been revealed that she failed to wait for clearance from HBP Law before submitting 2 reports to Full Council and may have acted similarly in other matters. Also due to her lack of legal knowledge and the failure of Harrow Legal Service to offer officers adequate legal advice, her interpretations of issues such as dispensation need to be tested in order to avoid putting the Council at risk and creating inappropriate precedents for other Boroughs, and does he not agree that it would be irresponsible of him if he did not?

Answer by the Leader

This sounds like a personal attack on a former officer. Full legal advice was always available. A new Monitoring Officer is now in place.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 47**Councillor Maureen Braun**

How does Barnet compare to the rest of London for the percentage of residents who claim an out of work benefit?

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

Information on Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) claimants from September 2014 shows that Barnet has 4,185 JSA claimants – 1.7% of the working age population (16-64 year olds). This is significantly below the London average of 2.4% and ranks Barnet as the joint 7th lowest rate in London.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 48**Councillor Anne Hutton**

What does the council intend to do with the Church End library site once the library is moved to its new premises in Gateway House?

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

No decision has been taken on the future of the current library at Church End. When work has commenced on the new provision at Gateway House, the options will be considered and submitted to Assets Growth and Regeneration Committee for approval.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 49**Councillor Gill Sargeant**

When will the paths in Lynton Avenue be repaired so older people are able to walk out of their houses?

Answer by the Leader

Lynton Avenue is not included in the current 2014/15 highways maintenance planned works programme but will be reassessed in Autumn with a view to include Lynton Avenue in next year's programme subject to prioritisation of other vital pavements in the surrounding area and level of available funding.

Supplementary Question

A date as to when it will be done.

Supplementary Answer

I will ascertain that.

Question 50**Councillor Philip Cohen**

Will the council agree to bid for the Mayor of London's High Street Fund, which is providing £9 million until March 2016, to help set up traders associations in New Barnet and East Barnet Village with a view to boosting the local economies there?

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

The Council is currently consulting on its Entrepreneurial Barnet Strategy which sets out its approach to supporting businesses and town centres. The strategy will help to guide the Council in where it prioritises support and resources for funding bids. The Council will be working with several town centre groups seeking support for their bids and will give consideration to community-led initiatives. Direct funding bids will be informed by the Entrepreneurial Strategy whilst prioritisation of support for bids led by the community will be dependent on the number of approaches received.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 51**Councillor Charlie O'Macauley**

Did Barnet Council do any activities to commemorate the Black History Month? If Yes, what was the activity, how was it publicised and how did this benefit the BME in our communities?

Answer by the Leader

Black History month (BHM) provided several opportunities for the Council to work with our residents and partners to celebrate the rich diversity of Barnet residents. The programme of BHM events were advertised throughout libraries and via the council's website and social media channels.

A number of events and activities have been held in Barnet's libraries in celebration of Black History Month. These include: an author talk by Shereen Pandit regarding the anti-apartheid struggle; a history workshop with writer Rupert Colley; and a children's bookfair with Barefoot Books. These events have been supplemented by book displays throughout the borough's libraries. One highlight for residents was Black History Fun Day at Grahame Park on Thursday 30 October at the Concourse. This joint event with partners, including LBB was coordinated by Barnet Homes and widely publicised including press, posters and flyers to residents.

All but one of these events is still to take place and therefore no evaluation has yet been undertaken. BHM supports the aim of Barnet's equal opportunities policy to share an understanding about the issues that really matter to all our communities and continue to sustain strong cohesive communities where people get on well together and support each other.

Supplementary Question

Will the Council realise that the Council has not done enough for Black History, taking into consideration my origin is from Africa where I am from slavery. I am a Creole and my local language is the Linguafranca where all languages are mixed. My mother is from Trinidad & Tobago and taking into consideration that William Wilberforce from Mill Hill was one of the promoters for disintegration of slavery. Will the Council recognise that?

Supplementary Answer

Of course we recognise that especially considering that William Wilberforce was a good Tory.

Question 52

Councillor Alison Moore

What is the policy and practice that is used by NSL to deploy 'parking wardens' across the borough?

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

NSL have an agreed number of Civil Enforcement Officers who are deployed at specific times in specific locations in accordance with the Enforcement Plan which is reviewed and amended as deemed appropriate. Such amendments require agreement from the Council's Parking Client team before being implemented. NSL are monitored on the achievement of deploying resources in accordance with the agreed Plan on a monthly basis.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 53

Councillor Barry Rawlings

How much has it cost Council Tax payers to use external legal advice over the last 2 years?

Answer by the Leader

£2.615m in 2012/13

£3.002m in 2013/14

These figures include costs for Trowers and Hamlins, Bevan Brittan and payments to Counsel. These include legal costs associated with contracts, procurement advice, judicial reviews, the development of regeneration schemes and child protection cases.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 54**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Given that Barnet does not contest a third of appeals lodged against its PCNs and loses three-quarters of the cases it does contest, isn't it time to bring Barnet's Parking Service back in house?

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

Refer to the answer given to Q36.

Supplementary Question

Can Councillor Dean Cohen actually answer the question which was: given Barnet doesn't contest third of its appeals and loses up to three quarters of the cases it does bother contesting, isn't it time to bring Barnet's shambolic parking service back in-house?

Supplementary Answer

As I said, the work is being carried out at the moment and you'll start to see a difference shortly.

Question 55**Councillor Ammar Naqvi**

Just as it is right that residents pay the tax they owe, it is equally right that the Council ensures residents are only required to pay as much tax as they actually owe. In many cases errors, a general lack of clarity and distaste for communication has led to inflated tax liability, often for those residents whose lives are already so saturated with other serious concerns that they cannot spare the time to correct the blunder. Would the Leader inform us of what safeguards are in place to ensure that residents only pay as much tax as they owe?

Answer by the Leader

I do not recognise the described scenario.

Supplementary Question

In my question I described some real life experiences that the residents have had with respect to council tax collection and the response I received was 'I do not recognise the scenario described'. That's exactly my point. Would you care to comment?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Naqvi makes an interesting point: if I am aware of something if he would tell me about it then I will take action with the officers concerned, but as far as I'm concerned I understand we are working to the same protocols we had before and we are taking fewer people to court than before.

Question 56**Councillor Alon Or-bach**

How many years of council tax records does the leader recommended residents to keep?

Answer by the Leader

Whatever the resident feels appropriate.

Supplementary Question

But the point being this is what myself and Councillor Naqvi are talking about. We think that this practice of demanding people keep records of their children's studies going back eight years and demanding this within a matter of months or else being faced with £1,000s of bills for tax they do not owe is unacceptable. Does he agree?

Supplementary Answer

Residents of this borough have a good record in paying their council tax and paying it on time. If they don't pay it on time then it is a burden on the rest of the community. It is very important that we recognise that. I would say, however, if there is evidence of something going wrong please let me know. The Council sends out statements of council tax every year and then follows it up. It can never come as a surprise to a resident when they have fallen into arrears.

Question 57**Councillor Devra Kay**

At the Policy & Resources Committee on 14 October, Barnet's Chief Executive stated that Jessica Farmer, Head of Legal practice at HBPL, had been nominated by the former Monitoring Officer to act for her in her absence while she continued in her role until her departure on 9 October. Would the Leader please tell me why neither Members nor the public were made aware of either the existence or identity of an acting Monitoring Officer between 12 September and 8 October and why that information was withheld?

Answer by the Leader

Ms Farmer was not the acting Monitoring Officer, she was and is the Deputy Monitoring Officer. The deputising arrangements for the Monitoring Officer were reported to and agreed by the Remuneration Committee on 29 January 2013.

Supplementary Question

No supplementary

Question 58**Councillor Reema Patel**

Given Public Health England's support for 20 mph zones and that the guidelines have changed so they do not need physical obstacles to aid enforcement will the Leader support such zones where residents want them?

Answer by the Leader

Yes

Supplementary Question

I'm pleased that the Leader recognises the importance of road safety. Will the Leader write to major insurance companies in order to procure some additional and more accurate information about claims made, particularly around the Colney Hatch Lane area that is situated in my ward?

Supplementary Answer

If Councillor Patel were willing to indicate a number of insurance companies she wants me to write to, a small number, then I would be very happy to do so as that would be interesting indicative information.

Question 59**Councillor Anne Hutton**

How much as security cost at the Church Farm House museum site to date since it was closed by the council.

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

The Council made a saving of just over £100k per annum when it closed the museum. The costs incurred on Church Farm house Museum since its vacation are;

April 2011/March 2012: £6,210.27

April 2012/March 2013: £21,469.15

April 2013/ March 2014: £38,446.

April 2014/ Sept 2014: £1,238.

Supplementary Question

Could you say why on the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee agenda item in relation to Church Farm House Museum it seems that the amount has varied a lot. It's gone from £21,000 up to £38,000 down to £6,000. This year looks like being about £2,000-3,000. Could you say why there's been such a wide variation when it's the same company that is operating security there?

Supplementary Answer

I will write to Councillor Hutton.

Question 60**Councillor Gill Sargeant**

When will the zebra crossings in Aerodrome road be completed?

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

A zebra crossing in Aerodrome Road is planned at the recently installed pedestrian island near Heritage Avenue.

As the zebra crossing had not been included in the original design further detailed work is required to confirm it can be installed as expected.

Re officers envisage that it should be possible to complete the installation in six months assuming no exceptional issues are encountered.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 61

Councillor Phil Cohen

Why are there not more cycle lanes and more facilities for cyclists in Barnet?

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

Historically Barnet's priority was to resurface the road network in the borough benefitting a wide range of road users, not least cyclists for whom poorly maintained roads can be the greatest hazard. The provision of well surfaced roads on both main roads and quieter routes, provides a convenient 'main road' route for experienced cyclists who are confident cycling in traffic, and a comfortable ride via quieter roads and off road routes for less experienced cyclists.

The change in emphasis at the London level more recently, away from cycle lanes on main roads towards making provision more suitable for less confident riders, better fits with this approach.

Improvements have been made in parks in recent years and signed quiet road routes are being developed through the boroughs LIP programme and in conjunction with TfL through the proposed London Quietways network.

There are more improvements in cycling to come.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 62

Councillor Alison Moore

How many businesses have a) started up and b) ceased to operate in the borough in each of the past 5 years and of those how many have operated for less than 2 years?

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Businesses started	2610	2410	2440	2835	2995
Businesses ceasing to operate	2345	2980	2795	2650	3175
2 year survival rate	1775 (68% survived 2 years or more, 32% didn't)	1635 (67.8% survived 2 years or more, 32.2% didn't)	1625 (66.6% survived 2 years or more, 33.4% didn't)	Expected to be released by the ONS in November 2014	Expected to be released by the ONS in November 2015

Source: Business Demography (2012) dataset by the Office for National Statistics. This data is the most current, with a new release (for 2013) expected from the ONS in November 2014, if the timing of previous year's releases is followed.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 63

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Will the Leader help ensure a briefing session on the lessons from Rotherham for councils and councillors before the next full council to ensure maximum attendance?

Answer by the Leader

Yes. Family Services will work with colleagues in Governance to prepare a member briefing session for all Members to be held at Hendon Town Hall prior to a full Council meeting to present the findings from Rotherham and other authorities.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 64

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Who provided the legal advice that committee working groups are not covered by the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 or subject to the access to information requirements in the Local Government Act 1972?

Answer by the Leader

The advice was provided by the former Assurance Director, who was advised on this matter by HB Public Law.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 65

Councillor Ammar Naqvi

Given the reports received by many councillors regarding aggressive and insensitive practices undertaken by Capita with respect to the collection of Council Tax, does the Leader think it right to make residents feel like loan shark victims?

Answer by the Leader

The Council has a clear collection process in place for Council Tax, and Capita are following this policy.

It is worth noting that enforcement activity was lower in the first 6 months of 2014/15 compared to the first 6 months of 2013/14 before the CSG contract went live.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 66

Councillor Adam Langleben

Will the Chair of the Housing Committee confirm how many households on the West Hendon estate in the latest phase of property possession have received a court notice for possession of property but have not had a full reassessment for housing?

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

As of 23/10/2014 the Decant Project Team can confirm:

- In total 86 non-secure households needed to be assessed in the latest phase.
- 18 households are awaiting a full assessment for housing, all of whom have received a summons notice for a possession hearing.
- 30 have been rehoused
- 38 have been assessed and placed into a housing band.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 67

Councillor Devra Kay

Would the Leader please tell me when Jessica Farmer was appointed as acting Monitoring Officer, when her role came to an end and how much time she was expected to devote to it?

Answer by the Leader

Ms Farmer became the Deputy Monitoring Officer from 16 April 2013. Until that date the former Director for Corporate Governance was the Monitoring Officer, with the former Assurance Director acting as his Deputy. From that date the former Assurance Director became the Monitoring Officer, with deputising arrangements being made through HB Public Law. Those arrangements were reported to and approved by the Remuneration Committee on 29 January 2013. Ms Farmer was re-appointed as Deputy by the current Monitoring Officer on 9 October 2014.

A deputy Monitoring Officer is required to act only when the Monitoring Officer is unable to perform his or her duties personally, through absence or illness.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 68**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 state that non-executive meetings can only be closed to the public in two circumstances relating to confidential or exempt information. Why did Barnet Tories agree to add a third reason to their guidance for working groups, which advocates private meetings in order to allow members "to express and exchange free and frank views"?

Answer by the Leader

The Regulations do not apply to informal meetings with no decision-making powers.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 69**Councillor Adam Langleben**

Will the Chair of the Housing Committee confirm how many non-secure tenants on the West Hendon who have had housing assessments and not been offered a new tenancy post possession of their homes.

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

As yet no Orders for Possession have been issued on West Hendon residents due to the regeneration of the estate. Some residents have been issued possession orders due to rent arrears.

In relation to offers of accommodation having been made to non-secure households on the West Hendon estate impacted by the regeneration scheme, the Decant Team have successfully rehoused 30 non-secure households.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 70**Councillor Alison Moore**

What payments have been made to Capita through the CSG and Re contracts in addition to the agreed payment profile and for what?

Answer by the Leader

Additional payments above the contract schedule payments are as follows:

- £0.5m for gain share on procurement projects
- £0.3m for review of single persons discount
- £0.2m for print costs
- £0.8m for highways TFL programme (grant funded)
- £0.6m for additional Re TUPE costs

£7.6m for project invoices – the majority of this relates to the schools capital programme which was previous funded through a different Council budget. The level of spend is in line with previous levels.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 71**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Why was the extremely dangerous idea of turning off residential street lights between 11pm and dawn ever considered by the Tories as an acceptable way of saving money?

Answer by the Leader

For the same reason Labour Councillors have considered the matter.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 72**Councillor Adam Langleben**

Does the Leader believe that 5% affordable in a development of almost 400 properties represents a good deal for Barnet?

Answer by the Leader

Yes. 5% of something is much better than 25% of nothing

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 73**Councillor Devra Kay**

Would the Leader please advise me whether the former Monitoring Officer was active in her role at any time between 12 September and 9 October?

Answer by the Leader

She was not.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 74

Councillor Alison Moore

Can the Leader give me the current level of voter registration by ward and polling district, how this compares with the previous 3 years figures at this point in the calendar and what action is being taken to ensure that individual voter registration is maximised?

Answer by the Leader

It is not possible to provide this information at this stage this year, due to the transition to Individual Electoral Registration (IER).

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 75

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Does the Leader agree that in the interest of public safety, we should continue to lock our parks at night?

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

There is an option for consideration by the Environment Committee, which will need to make recommendations on budget savings.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 76

Councillor Adam Langleben

Could the Chair of the Housing Committee tell me how much has the Council paid to landlords in incentives in 2012/13, 2013/14 and the current financial year to date?

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

The Landlord Incentives paid are:

2012/13 £42,689

2013/14 £698,843

2014/15 to date £422,980 (the first half year was £391,936)

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 77**Councillor Devra Kay**

As the former Monitoring Officer was out of the office from 12 September and neither she nor Jessica Farmer appeared at the Council meeting on 23 September, would the Leader please tell me who was acting Monitoring Officer on that occasion presumably acting for the acting Monitoring Officer?

Answer by the Leader

It is not a legal requirement that a Monitoring Officer attends Council meetings. Legal advice to the meeting on 23 September was provided by Hugh Peart from HB Public Law.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 78**Councillor Alison Moore**

How many temporary and permanent residents have been rehoused from the West Hendon Estate to date and where?

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

Non-secure tenants: To date 30 non-secure households have been rehoused from the Estate. Of these 9 were housed from Franklin House, 17 from Marriotts Close and 4 from Tyrrell way. We expect these numbers to rise in the near future as a number of residents are awaiting viewings of alternative accommodation. Of the 30 rehoused households, 29 were housed within the London Borough of Barnet, of these 21 were housed in the NW9, NW4, NW2 and HA8 postcodes. One household was housed in Harrow, close to the borders of Barnet.

Secure tenants rehoused since the first phase was built: 44

2 went to Cool Oak Lane-

6 went to Sorrel Mead

5 went to Shearwater Drive

31 went to Skylark Court

The above are all part of the first 2 phases on the West Hendon estate.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 79**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Will the Leader confirm that all decisions taken since Barnet ceased to have a legally qualified monitoring officer are legally sound and in full compliance with all relevant laws and regulations?

Answer by the Leader

I have no reason to believe they are not, other than the two subject to recent publicity.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 80**Councillor Adam Langleben**

Could the Chair of Children, Education, Libraries & Safeguarding Committee tell me what the Council are doing to make sure care leavers are able to stay with their foster families post 18?

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

Children's Social Care has a Staying Put policy in line with the government legislation. Barnet will financially support Staying Put carers to cover all reasonable costs of supporting the care leaver to remain living with them. Children's & Adult's Social Care services are liaising to ensure that young people with additional needs are able to remain with their former foster carers if this is considered to be in their best interest.

The West London Alliance has negotiated an agreed fee calculation for Independent Fostering Agencies and their carers to enable young people placed with external providers to 'Stay Put'.

The Care Leavers service is ensuring that Pathway planning documents and tools are being updated to ensure Staying Put is incorporated into the process of planning & review for children in care from 16 until young people leave care at 18.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 81**Councillor Devra Kay**

Would the Leader agree that the reason Full Council on 2 June descended into "chaos" and attracted criticism from the public and press was not a matter of the incorrect political proportionality that was announced two weeks later on 16 June bringing the Council committees to a halt, but because of gross incompetence in the production and distribution of papers and of the irresponsible chairmanship of the mayor?

Answer by the Leader

No

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 82**Councillor Alison Moore**

How many charities or local branches of national or regional charities have left or ceased to operate in the Borough in each of the past 5 years?

Answer by the Leader

The Council does not hold this information but, according to the Charity Commission, the number of charities in Barnet that have been removed from the register over the past 5 financial years has reduced as follows:

Financial Year	Number of charities removed
1/4/2009- 31/3/2010	39
1/4/2010- 31/3/2011	24
1/4/2011- 31/3/2012	28
1/4/2012- 31/3/2013	19
1/4/2013- 31/3/2014	17

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 83

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

At Area Committees in June this year, Labour members instructed officers to review the London Cycling Campaign's 'Space for Cycling' proposals. What progress has been made and when will reports come back to each of the committees?

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

Discussions are underway between TfL and officers. Re officers expect to report back to the Area Committees by the March meetings.

Supplementary Question

Out of time.

Question 84

Councillor Adam Langleben

Will the Leader tell me who now manages lettings for the West Hendon community centre and why charges are so high?

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

Lettings are managed by Barnet Homes. The rates are set by The Council and have not increased since January 2011. There is a scale of discounts ranging from no discount to 70% which apply depending on the activity being carried out. For example, youth groups and local residents groups are entitled to a 70% discount.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 85**Councillor Devra Kay**

Would the Leader please tell me why the Chief Executive, who according to the Constitution is responsible for "the Council's risk and reputation management by ensuring it operates in an open, accountable and democratic manner", sanctioned Working Groups for themed Committees to be set up outside of the Constitution with guidance from the then Monitoring Officer that they be held in private?

Answer by the Leader

There have always been private discussions – indeed Party Group meetings are such. Members have also always met with officers. All decision making is done in public meetings.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 86**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Does the Leader believe that it is acceptable for Tory councillors with free parking permits to claim a dispensation and then vote to keep those permits?

Answer by the Leader

All Councillors can and have voted on these matters.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 87**Councillor Adam Langleben**

A resident told me that she called Barnet Council regarding a noise issue, was kept on hold for 22 minutes and then had a negative answer to her query. The officer she spoke with was not in London. The resident asked who the officer works for. The answer she received: "I work for Capita, not the people of Barnet". Could the Leader enlighten me on this question - do Capita staff acting on behalf of the Council work for Capita shareholders over the people of Barnet?

Answer by the Leader

If Councillor Langleben advises with whom and when the conversation took place, the Call Centre can be advised to take appropriate action.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 88**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

How many a) residents b) businesses have replied to the Council's draft parking policy consultation?

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

As at 23 October 136 questionnaires had been completed of which 104 had identified whether they were answering as:

- a) Resident = 96 (92%)
- b) Business = 2 (2%)
- c) Resident and Business = 2 (2%)
- d) Other = 4 (4%)

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 89

Councillor Adam Langleben

Will the Leader tell me if Re acting on behalf of the Council found any billionaire property punters at the MIPIM conference?

Answer by the Leader

Billionaires are sometimes difficult to identify. However, there were a number of billion pound organisations who were spoken with.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 90

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Why have so many pavements and roads been left in such a bad state that a recent report by Re said that at the current rate of recycling "we can expect roads to be resurfaced every 100 years and footways every 140 years"?

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

Roads and pavements will be resurfaced as and when required based on the asset management plan and available funding.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 91

Councillor Adam Langleben

Will the Leader tell me his opinion on the Channel 4 news piece on MIPIM conference and the West Hendon estate?

Answer by the Leader

I did not see the programme but hear that Channel 4 have since issued an apology to the Council.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 92

Councillor Adam Langleben

Could the Leader tell me how much Re has made in profits since its ugly birth?

Answer by the Leader

Re is undergoing a reconciliation of its accounts and the income that it has guaranteed to the council. Currently due to the additional work that has been generated for the LBB, predominantly in Regeneration and Planning we are forecasting a profit greater than the amount originally anticipated. Once the full reconciliation is complete Re will produce a set of statutory accounts which will be provided later this year.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 93

Councillor Adam Langleben

Could the Leader tell me what the projected profits are for Re in this financial year?

Answer by the Leader

See answer to Q93 above.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 94

Councillor Adam Langleben

Will the Leader pledge to publish viability studies on development proposals to restore faith to residents (and councillors) who do not believe you?

Answer by the Leader

I thank the Councillor for his question but do not understand what he is getting at.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 95

Councillor Adam Langleben

Would the Leader tell me how many non-secure tenants (as 1 October 2014) are living on a) the West Hendon estate b) Stonegrove estate.

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

a) West Hendon: 236

b) Stonegrove: 21

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 96

Councillor Adam Langleben

Could the Leader tell me how much all properties sold under right to buy were sold for on the West Hendon estate since 2010?

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

There have been 2 properties sold under right to buy between 1 April 2010 and now. The first was a 1-bed flat valued at £67,500 in Sep 11 and sold for £51,500 with discount in October 12. The second was a 2-bed maisonette valued at £160,000 in June 13 and sold for £60,000 with discount in May 14.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 97

Councillor Adam Langleben

Will the Chair of the Community Leadership committee give me his assessment of how safe at night the numerous pedestrian subways are between Brent Cross flyover and Five Ways Corner on the A41?

Answer by the Leader

Cllr Langleben needs to ask Andrew Dismore to obtain this information from the GLA.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 98

Councillor Adam Langleben

Does the Leader believe that the Council should offer full market value for leasehold properties subject to CPO proceedings on the West Hendon estate?

Answer by the Chairman of the Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee (Councillor Daniel Thomas)

The Land Compensation Act 1961 dictates that where property is identified to fall within an area subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order, where land is taken, and the owner of the land is entitled to the Market Value of the interest.

The Market Value is assessed on the assumption that 'the scheme' (the reason for the Compulsory Purchase Order being made) does not exist. It is therefore assessed in a 'no-scheme-world' that ignores the benefits or detriments arising from the scheme.

Market Value excludes the affected parties' other rights, notably disturbance (in the case of the West Hendon Estate, Home Loss / Basic Loss payments, costs of relocation etc) and recovery of reasonable fees (surveyors' and lawyers') resulting from the land take. These are in addition to Market Value.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 99

Councillor Adam Langleben

To ask the Leader if he will ever answer the emails from Andrew Dismore AM regarding help for businesses being evicted from Premier House in Edgware?

Answer by the Leader

I will always help business.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 100

Councillor Adam Langleben

To ask the Leader who removed the need for a legal qualification from the job description of Assurance Director (Monitoring Officer)?

Answer by the Leader

The senior management structure of the Council was agreed by General Functions Committee in April 2012, with implementation delegated to the Chief Executive save for the appointment of Chief Officers. The former Assurance Director was appointed by Remuneration Committee in October 2012.

Supplementary Question

Out of time

Question 101

Councillor Adam Langleben

At the July Full Council meeting I asked you if you would attend a meeting with residents on the West Hendon estate - you gave me an assurance that you would. Will the Leader now set a date?

Answer by the Leader

Yes

Supplementary Question

Out of time