

Council Questions to Cabinet Members
22 January 2013
Questions and Responses

Question 1**Councillor Brian Gordon**

There is considerable public concern regarding the excessive manner (both in terms of time taken and area of restriction) in which public roads within the Borough are sometimes being closed or partially closed to traffic due to works carried out by utility companies. Is there anything the Council can do to strengthen its influence or control over this?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

In accordance with the Road Traffic Act, all road closures carried out by utilities within the borough are done so either with permission from the police, for immediate & emergency works, or with prior consultation and agreement with the council to accommodate planned works. Utilities are only allowed to close roads if the council sees real benefits to safety and or a significant reduction to disruption/congestion within a given area. On occasions, the closing of a road can allow works to take place at a faster pace reducing the overall duration. Areas of restrictions and diversion routes are always agreed ahead of planned works. Council inspectors monitor all sites when works are in progress to review and amend if necessary. Planned works are publicised and in all cases the police and (where necessary) Transport for London are consulted. We can issue fixed penalty notices if the utilities have breached their permit conditions regarding the physical closure of the road and having the appropriate authorised traffic order.

Question 2**Councillor Alison Moore**

Over 7,000 people have now signed a petition calling for the One Barnet mass privatisation programme to be stopped and a referendum held on whether it continues. Given that this is significantly more people expressing a view than has ever been expressed in any council consultation on any subject, would the Leader now agree to suspend the One Barnet programme and hold a referendum on it with immediate effect?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

This programme is not a mass privatisation but a mixture of contracting out some services and bringing others such as waste in house. 11% of the council budget will be outsourced by means of the back office contract. The contract will be operational as soon as possible subject to current legal action. I see no need to revisit the decision of council on the 11th September. We operate as a representative democracy.

Question 3**Councillor Brian Gordon**

Councillor recently made an FOI request for details of all Councillors with parking permits. This necessitated Members providing full details of their permits to the relevant Council officers, which one would have thought should be in their possession already. Whereas a Councillor is quite entitled to make this request, do you not think that excessive attention and bureaucracy connected with this issue is something of a waste of time and public money?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

It might have been easier just to ask for the information but that is a matter for the Councillor and Officers concerned.

Question 4**Councillor Ansuya Sodha**

Given the cuts to Disability Living Allowance, child benefit and tax credits and the 'Granny Tax' could the Leader say why the Conservative-led Coalition government is working so hard to make life difficult for women, the elderly and the disabled?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The Coalition government is helping the whole population by avoiding the national bankruptcy that would have ensued if the country had stayed on Labour's inevitable path to disaster. At any time there have to be limits on the level of benefits. It can not be right for benefit to be higher than average earnings. Much needed reform is essential to bring a sense of logic to the whole welfare system and bear down on cost when the taxpayer faces crisis levels of tax.

Question 5

Councillor Brian Gordon

Could the Cabinet Member use her authority to ensure that the Planning Officers are more directly accessible to Councillors than is sometimes the case?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

Members can contact planning managers directly if their matter needs to be dealt with promptly. There has been some turnover amongst planning officers recently but they should reply to any message from a Member within 24 hours of receiving it. Direct access to planning officers by telephone will be available by the end of March.

Question 6

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Given the nationally reported shortage of district nurses which has resulted in people staying in hospital longer than necessary, what is the situation in Barnet and its likely impact on patients?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

The District Nursing Service forms part of a range of Community Health Services which NHS Barnet CCG commissions from Central London Community Health Services NHS Trust. This service works with General Practice and other Health and Social Care professionals to support people to maintain their health either at home or in a community setting. There are also a range of other services supporting people such as the Rapid Response Service and the COPD service.

CLCH reports that the number of District Nurses is at the expected level and the NHS is not currently aware of people being delayed in hospital whilst awaiting District Nurse support. Recent changes in the admissions area at Barnet Hospital have led to a positive increase in the use of the Rapid Response Service.

The level of emergency admissions and excess emergency bed days at Barnet Hospital are relatively low which would tend to indicate the service is managing with the workload.

It should also be noted that recently CQC reported staffing pressures at Chase Farm Hospital do not relate to the District Nursing Service.

Question 7

Councillor Brian Gordon

At the recent Hendon Residents' Forum, concern was expressed regarding excessive amounts of furniture and structural merchandise being situated on pavements by traders in Watling Avenue and Burnt Oak Broadway. Similar concerns have also been expressed regarding other locations in the Borough. To the extent that such activity is unlawful and is causing obstruction on pavements, can the Council look into intensifying the enforcement measures?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

Where goods or other items are placed on the public highway without authorisation, the Council has powers in accordance with various London Local Authority Acts and the Highways Act to deal with them. Accordingly I have requested that officers investigate and take necessary action to ensure the public highway is not obstructed and street trading regulated.

Question 8

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Will the Cabinet Member agree to give a refund to people who paid to park for 2 hours or less on

the weekend of 22/23 December when this should have been free?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

I Instructed officers on December 24th and refunds were processed the week commencing 7th January 2013.

Question 9

Councillor Barry Evangeli

Will the Cabinet Member for Resources please advise the breakdown of costs to the council of the standards case which was an item at a recent Cabinet Resources Committee meeting? Please include costs incurred by the council for legal advice, representations and for officer's time.

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Counsel's fees were £9625 + VAT. Officer time was 35.7 hours (apportionment of salary including on costs equates to £1406). This totals £12956 and excludes the costs paid by the Council as resolved at the Cabinet Resources Committee meeting in October 2012.

Question 10

Councillor Ross Houston

Residents are very concerned about the safety of road users in the northern N12 section of Nether Street, particularly because of the schools there: Moss Hall Nursery, Infant and Junior schools and Morasha Jewish Primary School. The recent road resurfacing removed the mini roundabout at that junction and also removed the two speed bumps, one half ways between Moss Hall Grove and Essex Park and the other just across the railway bridge where the speed bump and pedestrian crossing were 'levelled', leaving just the crossing and motorists free to speed along over the bridge and on down to the Moss Hall junction and the schools with not even the mini roundabout to slow them up! I understand the Administration is opposed to speed reducing road humps and the policy is to remove them wherever they are without considering alternative measures. But speeding motorists are a danger anywhere and certainly in the vicinity of four schools. I put this on the agenda for the Finchley and Golders Green Area Forum, as an urgent item back in January 2012. Residents attended and addressed the committee. All their concerns were acknowledged. But the traffic is still speeding along there and still no action has been taken to remedy the situation. Can the Cabinet Member please reconsider and as a matter of urgency and introduce measures to reduce traffic speeds on this stretch of road past the schools?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Officers have held meetings with both ward members and schools representatives since the beginning of 2012 to inform the wider safety remit around the school in question and to explore the possibility of benefitting from the Transport for London dedicated fund towards School Travel Plan-linked initiatives. The location did not make it onto the priority list for the 2012/13 financial year. However, residual investigations to review and alleviate commuter parking on Moss Hall Grove and other roads in the vicinity of West Finchley tube station are outstanding and these will be progressed as soon as the funding for 2013/14 becomes available. Periodic speed surveys and reviews since the road layout changes continue to be made to question the need for any traffic management measures. Results from these speed surveys are held on file and show compliant speeds when compared to the 30mph posted limit. The location remains on the list of sites that are being monitored.

Question 11

Councillor Barry Evangeli

Can the Cabinet Member please tell this council how much per annum is spent on advertising in the local newspapers and if there is a contract, if so when does it expire?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Adverts and public notices are placed in both local newspapers, the Barnet Press and Barnet Times.

Below are details of payments made to Newsquest (owners of Barnet Times) and London and Essex Newspapers (Barnet Press) and TMP Media (for public notices and job adverts) for the financial year 2011/12 and this financial year to date. Please note these figures are inclusive of VAT.

	2011-2012	This Financial Year To Date
Newsquest	29,453.49	19,935.80
London and Essex Newspapers	21,359.58	20,670.38
TMP	125,565.43	117,762.69
TOTALS	176,378.50	158,368.87

Job advertising in local papers is carried out almost entirely by local schools and the placing of public notices is a statutory requirement for a number of actions by the council. The majority of spending on public notices and job adverts is to London and Essex Newspapers through TMP.

Question 12

Councillor Andreas Ioannidis

At the last Council meeting, the Cabinet Member assured me that the Brunswick Park Health Centre would be open in December. It is still not open – why, and what is she doing about it?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

At the Council Meeting on 6th November 2012 I was unable to give a precise re-opening date for the Brunswick Park Health Centre as the Site was then awaiting the installation of a new gas main - the timing of which I clearly stated was beyond the control of both the Council and its partners. As a guide I said that it was then anticipated that the Centre would re-open in December.

I have continued to monitor the situation and together with Councillor Andreas Tambourides have actively been involved in helping to progress the works and ensuring that the Council has assisted in every way possible to progress the earliest possible re-opening of the Centre. I am pleased to report that all the works have now been completed and that the NHS is in discussions with the GP's concerned in relation to when they will move into the Centre.

Having continued to press for this much needed Centre to be re-opened at the earliest opportunity, the most up to date information I currently have is that the NHS will have a Lease in place for the new building and detailed discussions on this Agreement between them and the GPs concerned are now advancing and are expected to conclude shortly.

Question 13

Councillor Andrew Strongolou

Could the Cabinet Member explain to us what other options for balancing the budget are available to him, aside from the One Barnet programme?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The savings generated from the One Barnet programme are significant – the saving from the NSCSO contract alone will save an average of £7m per annum (£70m over 10 years) on the core services included, and over £12m per annum (£125m over 10 years) including procurement savings and increases in Council Tax collection. If these savings were not achieved, more painful cuts would have to be made to frontline services. For context, £12m would be equivalent to the entire libraries, leisure and refuse collection/cleansing budgets.

- Libraries £4m
- Leisure services - £1m
- Refuse collection and cleansing- £7m

Question 14

Councillor Arjun Mitra

What cuts in funding are each Library in the borough facing for the next two years?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The council has not approached the savings process on a per-library basis as implied by the question. The actual figures are outlined in the budget report agreed at Cabinet on 7th November 2012. These are 13/14 - £652K, 14/15 £85K and 15/16 £119K.

Question 15

Councillor Andrew Strongolou

Could the Cabinet Member please tell us how much support the council gives to the trade unions?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The council provides pre-agreed release time. In 2012-13 the budget is £113,320. This represents a cut of 65% from the 2009-10 budget. In 2012-13 £43,000 is budgeted to assist with the One Barnet programme. This will cease. There is also some un quantified, pre-agreed ad hoc release, use of offices, notice boards and meeting rooms.

Question 16

Councillor Alison Moore

According to the latest Cabinet Resources budget monitoring report, car park income continues to forecast an overspend due to continuing low usage of Council car parks even after tariff changes. Given further tariff reductions are now being considered, will the Cabinet Member admit Barnet's parking charging policies are a shambles and explain what he is doing about it?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The majority of the car parks are on target and there are two or three which we are looking at proposals to improve the performance on. Overall the work done on car parks has been very successful. The first cashless machine has been installed in Lodge Lane car park to even offer a greater choice to the residents and we are sure this will improve the income even further.

Question 17

Councillor Andrew Strongolou

Does the Cabinet Member know how many council employees are members of Unison, Unite or any other trade union organisation within the council?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The Council does not hold this information as not all Unions utilise payroll deduction facilities.

Question 18

Councillor Alex Brodtkin

What measures are being taken by the Council to ensure that the current state of Silkstream Path and the stairs behind Watling Avenue are permanently kept in good order?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Watling stairs are visited daily by the town keeper / assistant town keeper to inspect and remove any evidence of anti-social behaviour, informing Police and Community Safety as necessary. The graffiti team also visits daily Monday to Friday at 7.00am, they jet wash stair surfaces, landings and skirtings and introduce an appropriate deodorising disinfectant. Washing of stairs is deferred when there is freezing weather for safety reasons. There is a confirmation phone-call made from the graffiti team to the supervisor / Manager following every wash down to confirm actions.

The footpath called Silkstream path is walked daily by the town keeper / assistant town keeper to service all litter bins and remove litter etc. The footpath is swept manually every 6 weeks as per schedule and the area supervisor visits frequently during the week to inspect and monitor.

More permanent outcomes are being investigated in terms of lighting solutions to deter the anti-social behaviour, final options and costs are due to be received shortly. The Street Lighting PFI

Contractor is obliged to scout all of our street lighting assets, including this site, on a weekly basis, to ensure the lighting that is installed is performing properly.

Question 19

Councillor Andrew Strongolou

Can the Leader tell us what alternatives to the One Barnet Programme have been provided by the Labour and Liberal Democrat Groups in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I am not aware that either party has proposed a means of achieving the level of savings planned by this programme, whilst protecting council services for residents and avoiding excessive rises in Council Tax.

Question 20

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

In the document '50 ways to save - Examples of sensible savings in local government' published last month by the Department for Communities and Local Government it says that councils could save up to 20% by following best practice to improve procurement. Given this, why does the Cabinet consider that Capita delivering just 5% savings on procurement is a good deal for Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Over the spending review period 2011-15, the Council has made, or will have made, savings totalling £72.5m, which is equivalent to more than 20% of the Council's budget, most of these through efficiency and better procurement.

The 5% procurement savings included in the Capita contract will ensure that the Council continues to drive down third party spend, improve efficiency and ensure that Barnet is exceeding the best practice noted in the recent DCLG publication.

Question 21

Councillor Andrew Strongolou

Could Cllr Thomas please explain how much council tax would have to rise to meet the reduction in funding should we not pursue a programme of cost cutting, within the current budget?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The savings over the next three years included in the draft budget proposals equate to a 38% increase in council tax.

Question 22

Councillor Andreas Ioannidis

Does the Cabinet Member agree with closing police stations and reducing police station front counter opening hours?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

The issue under discussion at present is not the closing of police stations, but the closing of some front counters and the more efficient use of police officers and staff where and when they are needed. The issue is efficiency and improving public access to our police.

Any decision is made by the Mayor of London Office for Policing and Crime.

Question 23

Councillor Andrew Strongolou

Could Cllr Cohen please assure us that the Borough is well stocked with grit in the event of another great freeze later this winter?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

This year we have stocked 3293 tonnes of salt and stocks will be replenished to no lower than 2000 tonnes by the end of January. 773 tonnes have been used thus far and if winter forecasts predict extreme winter conditions we have available 1000 tonnes on call off if needed from our suppliers. In the meantime 194 tonnes have recently been delivered. Comparatively the salt

usage over winter during; 2011/12 was 2039 tonnes and 2010/11 was 2766 tonnes and 2010/09 was 2544 tonnes. This years scheme of Community Keepers for Grit has been taken up by 11 schools and 10 residents. The community keepers have been given salt, wheel barrows, snow shovels and advise on snow clearing. The community keeper's prime responsibility is the equitable distribution of grit stocks amongst the neighbouring residents for the purpose of keeping public roads and footways open during severe weather.

Question 24

Councillor Alison Moore

Is the Cabinet Member aware of the number of residents across the borough who received no refuse and recycling collection over the Christmas and New Year period, even when they had been informed that their designated collection day should proceed

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

There were no cancelled collections for either recycling or refuse over the Christmas and New Year period. All re-scheduled designated collection days were collected. All Christmas and New Year collections and revised collection schedules were advertised in the local newspapers and on the Council website. Specifically for this year and to ensure that households were aware of the collection days, Streetscene services placed additional information hangers (detailing revised collection schedules) on household refuse bins the preceding week.

Refuse and recycling requests for service

The numbers of information requests for the period between 24 December and 4 January have been analysed. These show that there were 107 requests for information regarding changes to the refuse and green waste collection schedules. The figure of 107 for rescheduled requests were received and answered in the call centre, with the call centre operative being able to provide the resident with their revised collection date.

290,000 Council collection services were made during the period of Monday 24/12/12 and Tuesday 08/01/13, covering the Christmas collection schedule and revised collection dates. 252,000 May Gurney recycling collection services were made during the period of Monday 24/12/12 and Tuesday 08/01/13, covering the Christmas collection schedule and revised collection dates. There were 80 enquiries regarding missed recycling collections (compared to the current two week average is 64).

Refuse

The Refuse Service including Green Waste collections were carried out as per the revised collection schedule. All roads received a collection during this period as per the revised collection schedule.

Recycling

Recycling collections were carried out as per the schedule however, due to the volume of waste presented for recycling, approximately double the normal tonnage, there were some operational issues on Wednesday 2 January, Tuesday 8 and Wednesday 9 January. 48 and 15 roads from 453 roads (each day) did not receive their collection on the 2 January and 9 January respectively, these roads were all collected on the following day. On Tuesday 8 January 40 roads out of 451 roads did not receive their collection, these roads were collected on Wednesday 9 January and unfortunately a small number on Thursday 10 January.

Question 25

Councillor Andrew Strongolou

What options do residents have to grit their own roads should they find themselves snowed under?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

463 filled grit bins are located around various roads in the borough which enable residents to use the grit to help them as required to grit foot paths. The Council also operates 'pledge bank' a scheme which encourages residents to register their interest for obtaining equipment and salt. At least 10 roads and eleven Schools are signed up members to receive nearly 1 tonne weight of a salt bag and shovels and a wheel barrow.

Question 26

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

The too-little-too-late offer of some free parking on the Saturday before Christmas was, according to residents, not publicised in the car parks and led to people still trying to pay by phone. Why did the Cabinet Member not ensure that notices were placed in the areas affected?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Publicity for the event was made through the Press, the Council web site press online and poster advertising. Officers on street on the 22nd & 23rd observed a higher than normal usage of parking facilities including car parks around town centres. Those that did pay to park are in the process of receiving a refund.

Question 27

Councillor Andrew Strongolou

Is the Leader pleased that the Dollis Valley Regeneration agreement has been signed?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I am delighted with this progress but will be better pleased when bulldozers are on site, after satisfying the Planning Committee.

Question 28

Councillor Anne Hutton

On 12 July 2012, residents in Torrington Park, North Finchley received a letter telling them that the footway between Friern Barnet Lane and Glenhurst Avenue was to be relayed, due to be completed by 23 November. The work was listed as 'in progress' on the Highways Programme of week beginning 22 October when residents say in fact the work had already stopped the previous week, leaving the worst section still to do. The footway in that section of Torrington Park is indeed in a terrible state with uneven, cracked and broken paving slabs; could the Cabinet Member please tell me why the work stopped without warning and when it will be completed?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The planned maintenance schedule for Torrington Park was published with a predicted time to allow the programme to be completed on time. However an injection of additional contractor resources completed the footway relay ahead of schedule. Additional funding of £1.5 million was allocated to the footway reserve programme which provided an opportunity to fund schemes such as Torrington Park as one of the reserve schemes. The project value of schemes with high estimate values were reduced to allow smaller value schemes to be selected to give a much greater spread of the budget bringing in higher number of jobs. Torrington Park initial estimate £550K was reduced to £125K The worst section which was in need of urgent repair in Torrington Park and the footway renewal work was carried out in sections between Friern Barnet Lane and outside number 113 and between Friern Barnet Lane and opposite Ashurst Road. We are unable to extend the works due to restraints of funding. Any section of the footway which has been left but requiring treatment will be taken into account as part of the formulation of 2013/14 highways maintenance planned works programme subject to meeting the relevant assessment criteria. The footway relay scheme in Torrington Park finished short of the original limits as stated in the Council letter circulated to resident's (Friern Barnet Lane to Glenhurst Road) due to the fact that the footway was relayed on both sides instead of concentrating only on one side. The work commenced on one side from Friern Barnet Lane up to opposite Ashurst Road (Friary Park side) and from Friern Barnet Lane to just slightly past Ashurst Road. The work as completed in the two sections was deemed to justify full relay although there are further areas in need of attention.

Additional contractor resources were made available and the work completed ahead of the scheduled completion date.

Question 29

Councillor Andrew Strongolou

Does the tax that goes towards supporting the trade unions provide as much value for money as other council expenditures?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Unions have a historically useful function but I would hate to feel that tax payers resources were being applied to political activity.

Question 30

Councillor Arjun Mittra

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that Librarians have been asked to take a competency based test?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Competency based interview questions form part of the selection process for all library staff involved in the current restructure process. The selection process is fully compliant with the council's managing change procedure. The process has now started and the general feedback so far has been that the process is working well. This is also standard across both private and public sectors.

Question 31

Councillor Joan Scannell

How much influence do the trade unions have on Council policy?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The unions have offered advice and it has been and will be listened to appropriately. The unions have a job to do representing their members but elected representatives make the decisions on policy.

Question 32

Councillor Alex Brodtkin

Following the implementation of the Designated Public Place Order in November 2012, can the Council confirm that appropriate signage has been placed in all wards indicating that the Borough-Wide Alcohol Free Zone is now in force?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

Signage in support of the DPPO has been put up around the borough. We have tried to balance the number of signs erected to inform the public and minimise the cost and cluttered signage. There are still a couple of additional signs to be erected in response to specific requests. If there are any problematic areas that do not have sufficient signage there is capacity to respond.

Question 33

Councillor Andrew Strongolou

Could the Cabinet Member please tell us who has paid for the wrap around advertising in the local newspapers in the name of BAPS?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I can not say who has paid for these advertisements however the names of several unions appear on the BAPS website claimed as supporters.

Question 34

Councillor Andreas Ioannidis

Who maintains the car park behind the Brunswick Park Health Centre? There is a problem in the area with litter and rats - what actions is the council taking to stop this?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

This matter will be investigated by our Environmental Health department. The car park however is not council owned or maintained.

Question 35**Councillor Andrew Strongolou**

Will the Cabinet Member inform us if the Council will be pursuing legal action or consulting the press complaints commission due to factual errors in recent advertising found in the local press?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Sadly it would not be a sensible use of tax payers funds even though it is extremely irritating.

Question 36**Councillor Arjun Mittra**

Residents of Strawberry Vale in East Finchley are concerned about anti social behaviour going on around the estate, will the Cabinet Member press the police to review the situation there, and act on residents concerns?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

The police have been contacted in respect of this matter and will review the situation, taking action as necessary.

Question 37**Councillor Joan Scannell**

Does the Cabinet Member for Safety believe that ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) would be useful for Barnet?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

Yes. Criminals are known to target Barnet because we don't have a fully operating ANPR system. Despite arguments that ANPR is an invasion of privacy, the technology will enable our police to track criminals more effectively.

Question 38**Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb**

In view of the welcome news that Pinkham Way will not now be home to the proposed largest waste treatment site in Europe, does the Cabinet Member still plan to move the black refuse bin fleet there? If not, where will the lorry fleet be based once they have to vacate the Depot premises at Mill Hill?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Current plans are being discussed with the North London Waste Authority (NLWA) in order to seek the most advantageous solution to cater for operational requirements for the Depot. Options for other sites including Pinkham Way are continuing to be explored.

Question 39**Councillor Andrew Strongolou**

Has the Cabinet Member (Cllr Longstaff) received any information from the police about how they are utilising the new anti-squatters legislation?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

Barnet police welcome the new legislation. There is a recognised link between illegal squats and crime. The police and council officers have worked closely together on taking action against illegal squats and will continue to do so.

Question 40**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What action will the Cabinet Member take to help ensure that Barnet's town centres have a wide range of businesses and are not just an increasing number of chain coffee shops or betting shops?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

Planning policy ensures significant protection against shops (Class A1) being changed to other uses. Coffee shops in general are classed as a mixed retail and restaurant type use and as such planning permission would be required for the change of use of an existing retail outlet to a coffee shop.

Planning permission would also be required to change a retail shop (Class A1) into a betting shop

(Class A2) and in most cases this would be resisted on planning policy grounds. However, planning permission is not required for a betting shop to take over another Class A2 establishment like an estates agent's office.

In June 2012, Cabinet approved the Skills, Employment and Enterprise Plan for Barnet 2012-2015. The Plan sets out the actions the council will take, in partnership with the local public sector and community groups, to help create the right conditions to encourage growth and enterprise. This includes objectives around supporting our town centres. Last year the council delivered improvements to the Chipping Barnet town centre through the Mayor's Outer London Fund, and this year we will be delivering £3.7 million of improvements through the same Fund to deliver economic uplift through improvements to the appearance and vitality of North Finchley and Cricklewood town centres. This will include significant investment into the public realm, marketing and promotions and investment in improved shop fronts, exploring the concept of pop shops and other creative uses of vacant retail units. We are also supporting the Edgware Town Team who received a grant of £10,000 as part of the government's Mary Portas Review to help inject new life into high streets across the country. Improving the appearance, brand and ultimately the local economy within our town centres will support us in encouraging a wide range of businesses to locate in our town centres.

Question 41

Councillor Andrew Strongolou

Does the Leader feel that giving tax payers money to trade unions is a good use of public finances?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Not always.

Question 42

Councillor Alex Brodtkin

If the Council were to introduce Automatic Number Plate Recognition in the Borough, what would be the cost implication of this?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

There are no costs available at the current time. I will update Cllr. Brodtkin as and when costs become available.

Question 43

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

How many Barnet private sector landlords that the council uses to re-house residents in housing need are part of the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

Barnet Homes has recently taken responsibility for facilitating the Landlord Accreditation Scheme in Barnet from Barnet Council. Camden Council is responsible for managing the scheme and we have requested they provide details of landlords accredited under the scheme.

Independently, we carried out a survey of our landlords. Of those that responded, 53.8% were accredited, with a further 41.2% not accredited but interested in becoming so. In response to the landlord survey we have set up a program of accreditation courses for the coming year. We are currently promoting these courses to our landlords, and updating our systems so that we can record which of our Landlords are accredited.

Since July 2009, 150 landlords have attended the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS) landlord development course hosted by Barnet Council.

Question 44

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Following the North Finchley parking review, when will reviews for Barnet's other town centres be

published?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

It is expected that the outcomes of the Town Centre and Shopping Parades Parking Reviews will be published in February 2013, although it is expected that the results for Chipping Barnet and Edgware Town Centres will be published slightly beforehand, towards the end of January 2013.

Question 45

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Now that hundreds of items from Church Farm have been sold at an auction in Warwickshire, how much did council receive from this sale?

Please provide a list of the lot numbers, item descriptions and the hammer price for each item?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The council received £17,386.64 from the auction sale. A list of lot numbers and hammer prices will be provided separately to Cllr Coakley Webb. This money will be used to secure the retained items.

Question 46

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

What progress has been made to date on turning North Finchley library into a 'landmark library'? How much will these plans cost?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The council has commissioned a feasibility study to look at options. I am currently considering this and we will make a decision about this alongside the other potential bids for capital resources in 2013/14.

Question 47

Councillor Alison Moore

What progress has been made on the parking recovery plans, and when will the Special Parking Account be brought back on budget?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The council has recently implemented a number of changes and continues to review the changes and proposals closely with a view to meeting the SPA. Current projections at the end of quarter 3 are projecting SPA budget to be met.

Question 48

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Has the Cabinet Member noticed the increasing number of pot holes and deteriorating quality of Barnet's roads and pavements and if so where is the parking income being spent?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Pothole repairs has shown decline in the overall defects attended and repaired in 2012. The potholes in 2011 were 3254 and 2012 have recorded an estimated 1545 number of potholes. We are currently seeing no excessive deterioration comparatively to previous years.

Question 49

Councillor Alison Moore

What percentage of the projected based budget savings were made by the new outsourced parking service in its first year?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The current contract at 7 months is a little early to accurately say but savings have been made and the cost of the service is in line with the budget.

Question 50

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

What progress is being made in considering further tariff changes given the acknowledged continuing low usage of Council car parks?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

As part of the borough wide Parking Review, changes have taken place at all paid for car parks

and North Finchley town centre. Further reviews are taking place including Edgware, Mill Hill and High Barnet and further tariff changes may occur as part of the reviews.

Question 51 **Councillor Brian Coleman**

How many Police Stations does the Cabinet Member think the Borough needs?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

What the borough needs is an estate that is fit for the purpose of 21st century policing and located in the right place to deliver this. A simple number cannot be given to such a question as there are too many variables, i.e. by police station do you mean SNT patrol base? Response Policing patrol base? An administrative centre that houses custody and other criminal justice related processes? What I can say is that several different types of building are required to deliver the many facets of modern policing. These buildings could be part of a shared service agreement with other emergency responders or public services such as Probation or the Crown Prosecution Service.

Question 52 **Councillor Brian Coleman**

Could Cllr Thomas update the Council on the future of Stanley Road playing fields?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Sport East Finchley, who provided a community bid for the site, is now working with other groups and organisations to deliver wider community benefits for this location. We are monitoring progress and will report back to Members in the first half of 2013.

Question 53 **Councillor Brian Coleman**

Does the Cabinet Member welcome the recent decisions of the Planning and Environment Committee and the Eastern Area Planning sub Committee concerning the Woodside Park and Barnet Erubs?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

Yes.

Question 54 **Councillor Brian Coleman**

Where does Cllr Tambourides envisage Planning Officers will be based post the implementation of the DRS One Barnet project?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

We are not able to disclose the contents of final tenders for the DRS contract. It is expected that Planning officers would be located within easy reach of the applications they are dealing with i.e. in Barnet.

Question 55 **Councillor Brian Coleman**

Will the Cabinet Member list the gross costs to the Council (including redundancy payments, accrued holiday pay , pay in lieu of notice , pension contributions) paid out in relation to Assistant Directors and above who have not been given posts in the new management structure?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Payments anticipated to be made to Assistant Directors and above who are leaving the organisation following the senior management restructure are below. The restructure will save the Council just over £1million over the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Redundancy Payment	£131,644
Accrued holiday pay	Nil
Pay in Lieu of notice	Nil
Pension cost	£54,561

Assumptions

- The notice period concludes at the end of March, therefore, the circumstances of those affected may change, i.e. redeployment opportunities
- All outstanding holiday will be taken prior to leaving. The leaving date is the 31 March and this is also the end of the holiday year so there should have been taken by this time.
- The principle is that the notice period will be worked and within the overall planning of the restructure time was allowed for this.

Question 56

Councillor Brian Coleman

Has the Leader managed to read all 8000 pages of the Capita contract?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I have not read every page but have relied upon officers, professional advisors and lawyers in reaching my conclusion as to the benefit to the Barnet taxpayer from the early implementation of this contract.

Question 57

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will the Cabinet Member consult Surrey County Council, Solihull Borough Council and Essex on line partnership (Essex CC and Districts) on their schemes to allow staff and members to use their own IT equipment and email addresses?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

I will ensure the above Councils are consulted.

Question 58

Councillor Brian Coleman

How is the so called "Modern Mayor's Office" review proceeding and will the Leader ensure that the traditional and well loved nature of the Civic Mayoralty remains intact?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I have not seen this review. The role of the Civic Mayoralty is very important to the borough and appreciated by residents. The Mayor's office works well and operates as a credit to the borough. It is essential to make sure that the best means of upholding the dignity of the Mayor is maintained and that changes in the operation of the tax system do not adversely affect holders of this ancient office.