

**Budget and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Meeting of the 24th January 2013**

**Public Questions submitted in relation to agenda item six – The Barnet
Group Performance Report**

Questions submitted by Ms Tirza Waisel	
Q1	<p>It is clear from the report and appendix that the rates of use of day centres is lower now than expected:</p> <p>1a. How does this stand in relation to previous years? <i>This information was not formally recorded in previous years although there have always been instances when service users did not attend.</i></p> <p>1b. How do you explain it?</p> <p>Response - <i>The delivery figures relate to attendance of service users. We gather information on why people do not attend, with the largest figures being illness or other appointments.</i></p>
Q2	<p>In 9.10.2 you say that "rates at Community Space are quite low (76 per cent) but the service structure has been reviewed and new clients were not actively sought over that period."</p> <p>2a. Who are the current users of The Space? (as it is not the original service users – for whom The Space was purposely built after a long battle of the parents' group at Broadfields centre - adults with moderate to severe learning disabilities and complex needs)</p> <p>Response - <i>The service users of CommunitySpace continue to be adults with moderate to severe learning disabilities</i></p> <p>2b. What is the reason that this purpose built centre ceased to be used as intended?</p> <p>Response – <i>CommunitySpace is the service provided, and not the building. It's focus is to support adults with learning disabilities to benefit from opportunities to access all of the facilities that are available within the borough and open all. In line with national policy, developed with people with learning disabilities, we offer opportunities for integration into the local community, rather than segregated services. The building is used, as intended, as a meeting point for some people and as a base for some activities.</i></p>

	<p>2c. In light of the lower use of The Space – are you going to bring it back to full use by the original group of service users instead of continuing to disperse them across the borough in unsuitable church halls? And if not – why not?</p> <p>Response - <i>As above, the service offers opportunities to access a range of community locations. There are some group activities based at The Space Building, but service users mainly choose to access other mainstream facilities, such as local gyms, libraries and indeed social activities within community centres and church halls.</i></p>
Q3	<p>You say in 9.7 that there was a “low response rate and lack of service user feedback”</p> <p>3a. How do you explain this?</p> <p>Response - <i>A paper-based survey was employed in this instance which, although written in accessible language, did not suit a lot of service users. For many people who use Your Choice services communication is difficult and alternative methods of surveying service users are being developed. The organisation places great importance of hearing from the people receiving the services.</i></p> <p><i>Many of those surveys which were returned gave positive anecdotal feedback but were not able to be statistically reviewed.</i></p> <p><i>The organisation is also looking at ways to ascertain feedback from family carers.</i></p> <p>3b. Can it be explained by the lack of meaningful consultation with family carers of this client group that preceded the formation of Your Choice Barnet?</p> <p>Response - <i>It is not for Your Choice Barnet to comment on actions taken before it was created.</i></p>
Q4	<p>In 9.10.1 you say “Your Choice has been in operation since February 2012 and has inherited the six day and accommodation services from the council... Over the year individuals will be reassessed to ensure their service is commissioned at an appropriate level.</p> <p>2a. What do you anticipate the outcome of these reassessments will be?</p> <p>Response - <i>As assessments are based on individual need, it is not possible to anticipate their outcome.</i></p>

	<p>2b. Can it result in reduction of day centre days for service users who are not able to fill their time with employments or similar?</p> <p>Response- <i>An assessment may result in an increase or a reduction of service based on the needs of the individual.</i></p>
<p>Questions submitted by Mr Ron Cohen</p>	
<p>Q1</p>	<p>9.10.6 Sickness – sickness rates are significantly higher than Barnet Homes and there is wide variation amongst services. HR support managers will robustly manage sickness absence by ensuring return to work interviews are carried out effectively and ensure actions, including referrals to Occupational Health, are made in a timely manner</p> <p>1a. How do you explain the sickness rate</p> <p>Response - <i>A number of staff transferred to the organisation from the council with existing long term sickness conditions however the level of sickness is disappointing to us and needs to be addressed</i></p> <p>Response -</p> <p>1b. How it compares with previous years of the same departments (before the creation of Your Choice)</p> <p>Response - <i>The recording of sickness for the services was aggregated within Adult Social Care and Health.</i></p> <p>1c. Is the proposed remedy the real answer for the problem?</p> <p>Response - <i>Management of sickness absence is dealt with robustly by managers, with the support of HR. Attendance Management plans are drawn up with individuals and, where necessary, they are given support to return to work following periods of ill health. A number of people are performance-managed out of the organisation.</i></p>
<p>Questions submitted by Mr Julian Silverman</p>	
<p>Q1</p>	<p>The report acknowledges that in April 2012 the service was “experiencing performance challenges in key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falling supply of accommodation • Increasing demand for accommodation.....” <p>1a. In its regeneration and any other new housing projects, to what extent do the council's priorities meet this challenge and reflect the known urgent need for much more social and genuinely</p>

affordable housing?

Response -

The challenges highlighted in the report reflect the impacts of a combination of factors, but particularly the impact that the economic down turn has had on the housing market and changes to the housing benefit system.

The lack of mortgage availability for first time buyers has led to more people seeking homes in the private rented sector; this means that landlords are often able to secure a higher rent from households who do not rely on housing benefit to pay their rent. This has made it more difficult for Barnet Homes to secure homes in the private rented sector for housing applicants.

The council's plans to deliver new housing through growth and regeneration will not address this problem in the short term, and Barnet Homes are taking a number of actions to address the issue, including:

- *Offering additional incentives to private sector landlords who agree to re-house housing applicants*
- *Working proactively to renew and retain existing private sector leases*
- *Offering incentives and a managed service to Leaseholders of council properties*
- *Working with Housing Association partners to increase the supply of leased properties (HALDs)*
- *Creating the capacity to develop new homes infill sites within the council's existing housing stock*