

**Council Questions to Cabinet Members
16 April 2013
Questions and Responses**

Question 1

Councillor Brian Salinger

Will the appropriate Cabinet Member please detail the implications for the Borough of the Legal Aid and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

The Legal Aid and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 is an extensive act which introduces a significant number of revisions to the current Criminal Justice System, including on sentencing powers, remand conditions, out-of-court disposals, knife crime and the rehabilitation of offenders.

The primary aim of the Act is to streamline existing criminal justice provisions and to provide courts with more flexible and discretionary powers in dealing with offenders. In addition to courts the changes will have greatest impact on our Youth Offending Service and for our partners in Probation.

The new provisions will also directly impact on programmes such as Barnet's Integrated Offender Management scheme where the greater flexibility it affords is very much in line with the goal of delivering individually tailored sentencing plans specific to each offender.

Question 2

Councillor Susette Palmer

Does the Cabinet Member think it acceptable for officers not to reply to Councillors emails about community problems within the 10 working days allowed? If not what is going to be done about it? Is it not totally unacceptable to ignore Councillors in this way?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Cllr Palmer and all other Councillors should receive a reply within ten days. If the matter cannot be resolved an acknowledgement should be sent quicker than that.

There is a dedicated helpline 020 83592002 and email address, member.enquiries@barnet.gov.uk.

Councillors may choose to use this facility which will be monitored for response rate. This currently stands at 88% but there is a commitment to get closer to 100%.

Councillors as elected representatives of the people must not be ignored by state employees.

Question 3

Councillor Alison Moore

Does the Leader and Cabinet Member agree with Ian Duncan Smith that you can live on £53 a week?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The £53 alluded to is of course a spurious figure. The maximum level of benefit is £26,000. No society can afford to pay more than average pay to those not working.

The laws of arithmetic make that apparent, except perhaps to Gordon Brown.

At the time of Lady Thatcher's death we should be pleased that the work of reforming Britain continues under the Conservative lead coalition government.

Question 4

Councillor Barry Evangeli

I understand that towards the end of last year, Ofsted inspected the Council's fostering service. Could the Cabinet Member please report on the findings of that inspection and any follow-up actions being taken?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Ofsted inspected Barnet's Fostering Service in November 2012, resulting in an overall finding on the performance of the service and on the individual areas inspected.

The findings of the inspection were as follows;

The Overall effectiveness on the performance of the Fostering Service was judged as 'Good'. This is an improvement from the previous inspection.

- The fostering service provides good quality of care to children and young people in foster placements.
- There is high quality support and supervision.
- The service promotes equality and diversity well in its practice and this is reflected in the diversity of the foster carers it recruits.
- Staff and foster carers demonstrated a real commitment to children and young people.

The Outcomes for Children and young people was judged as Good.

- Children and young people reported that they are very happy living in their foster placements.
- Children reported feeling cared for and loved, that their foster carers are nice and that they feel they are part of the family.
- Children and young people are able to have their voices heard and they are able to take part in the decision making within the service.
- 94% children have planned placement endings and this is above the national average. For understandable reasons the other 6% do not.
- Children make good progress in their placements.
- More children and young people have placement choice than before.
- We have a children in care council, the Role Model Army and now a junior RMA.
- The inspector found there were clear strategies in place to recruit foster carers.
- A new Peer Support Scheme for foster carers is good.
- Foster carers have a good understanding of children's needs.

The Quality of Provision was judged as Good

- Barnet has a wide range of foster carers skilled foster carers and able to meet children's needs.
- Foster carers are happy & positive about the service and say that the service has improved.
- The Fostering Panel is strong and understands the needs of children. The panel quality assurance process works to support the production of high quality assessment for the recruitment of foster carers.
- The availability and quality of training is comprehensive and helps to equip foster carers undertake their tasks.

- Foster carers have a good relationship with the fostering service.

Safeguarding was judged as Good

- Children and young people report feeling safe in their placement and say that they do not experience bullying.
- Safe Care with children and young people is promoted from the very start of a foster carers contact with the department. This helps foster carers in their caring for children this helps with placement stability.
- The inspector found that all staff and foster carers had received child protection training.
- Children and young people say that they know how to make complaints.
- a fast track CAMHS for children and young people looked after and this is good and effective.

Leadership & Management was judged as Good

- The inspector found that the leadership and management of the fostering service was strong.
- The fostering service regularly consults children and young people, their parents and foster carers.
- Foster carers feel valued and members of the team Foster Carers charter now in place and was developed in partnership with foster carers.
- Complaints are welcomed and there is evidence of learning as a result of complaints Barnet provides.
- Barnet provides a fast track CAMHS for children and young people looked after and this is good and effective.

Generally,

- The inspector found that the Fostering Service was much improved from the last inspection.
- There were no requirements for action found in the inspection, although it was suggested that the Service could be improved by foster carers completing their written Children's Workforce Development Plans and by ensuring that the fostering service records are clear, up to date and secured securely in all cases. This is in hand.

Question 5

Councillor Julie Johnson

There are three large new developments in Finchley, two proposed and one at the planning stage, providing housing for almost a thousand new residents, virtually none of which is proposed to be affordable housing. How does the council plan to provide a variety of mixed developments in the area?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

The Councillor has been misinformed. There are no currently submitted major planning applications in Finchley which would provide accommodation for that order of new residents. There are a number of proposals being considered for submission which may together provide approximately 160 new dwellings, including affordable homes. Details of each scheme however are still evolving. Should applications come forward they will be considered on their own merits having regard to national, strategic and local planning policy and guidance. Two recent major schemes in Finchley have received planning consent. These were for the former Furnitureland site on the High Road in North Finchley (reference F/00236/12) and Kingsgate House in Amberden Avenue (reference F/02182/12). The Furnitureland application proposed 60 new dwellings (and other non-residential uses) and included 10 affordable homes. The Kingsgate

House application proposed 64 new dwellings and provided 14 affordable homes.

Question 6

Councillor Stephen Sowerby

The Cabinet Member will be aware of the recent fox attack on a baby in its cot and of other press reports of fox attacks on London residents. Does the Cabinet Member agree that we face a growing problem with our urban fox population (estimated at over 10,000 foxes in London alone) and support Mayor Johnson's statement that whilst foxes may appear cuddly they are also a pest and a menace, particularly in our cities, and this incident must serve as a wake-up call to London's Borough leaders who are responsible for pest control? In light of Mayor Johnson's call for action will the Cabinet Member be taking any steps here in Barnet to control the fox population?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I do agree that there is a problem. I suspect that Mayor Johnson will need to give us some advice as to how to deal with the problem. Foxes subsist on worms, mice and rats and human garbage. Our bins are collected weekly and are fox proof so it will be difficult to cut off their food. It is not lawful to kill them other than by shooting or lethal injection. The first is dangerous in a suburb and the second expensive and impractical. The RSPCA estimate that one would have to kill 70% of foxes in the country to have a significant effect on the population. A local cull would lead to rapid re-colonisation from the countryside. 50% of foxes are estimated to be killed on the roads. Whilst the media has raised the profile of the recent attack on a child. There are, I understand, only two recorded such incidents. Parents need to take simple precautions and the public be encouraged to desist from feeding foxes.

Question 7

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Barnet has now taken over financial responsibility for children on remand, as outlined in the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012. Given the Government has devolved funding to local government with an immediate 15 % reduction, how much do you estimate this will cost and has extra money been put in the budget to cover the ConDem Government extra 'stealth cuts' to local authorities?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The new provisions of the LASPO (Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders) Act 2012 means that young people aged 12-17 may be remanded to local authority accommodation or remanded into local authority secure accommodation under Court Ordered Secure Remand (COSR). In these instances these young people will automatically become looked after children and are therefore the local authority's responsibility.

These changes made by the Act give Local Authorities (LA) financial responsibility for secure remand on a bed night basis. All those remanded into custody will acquire Looked After Children (LAC) status and therefore may be entitled to a leaving care service.

Current legislation in relation to eligibility for leaving care stipulates that:

- Eligible children are young people aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after by the Local Authority for at least 13 weeks, since the age 14 and are still being looked after.
- Eligible children are young people aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after by the Local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who have been looked after at some time after their 16th birthday, and who have now left care.

Therefore 16 and 17 year olds who are on remand for 13 weeks or more will also qualify for a full

leaving care service.

Barnet's Youth Offending Service, Children's Social Care, Youth Support Service, Family Focus and Barnet Homes are working together in an officer task group to prioritise these young people and intensify preventative measures, as well as develop packages to keep those otherwise at immediate risk of remand to custody safely in the community instead.

We estimate that the devolved budget of £152,276 that Barnet will receive may not meet the predicted remand or leaving care costs based on current trends and the Local Authority could have to meet a shortfall unless we can significantly impact these through our development work.

Question 8

Councillor John Marshall

What are the savings resulting from the restructuring of senior management and the changes in terms and conditions for senior management instigated by the Remuneration Committee?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Salary Savings

The Medium Term Financial Strategy Savings are:

2012/13	(£582k)
2013/14	(£263k)
2014/15	(£270k)
Total	(£1,115k)

The changes to Senior manager's Terms and Conditions are set out below:

- There will be no automatic link to national pay negotiations, nor will collective pay bargaining apply. Any changes to the senior management salary scale will be a matter for the Remuneration Committee.
- The annual leave allowance will be a maximum of 30 days plus customary and bank holidays.
- Sick pay will be limited to a maximum of six months at full pay and 3 months at half pay.

Any previous protection for pay or annual leave will not be maintained.

Question 9

Councillor Alison Moore

How many one or two bedroom social homes are available for people to move into in the borough for those who cannot afford to pay the bedroom tax?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

There are currently nineteen one bedroom units and four two bedroom units available including housing association properties. These figures will vary on a weekly basis as properties become vacant and new properties are built as part of the development programme.

Question 10

Councillor Brian Salinger

In the light of the recent reports in the Daily Telegraph of Council Officers and councillors who are selling their services as planning consultants, can the Leader please advise the Council if any of the Council's employees have advised the Council that they are also working for any outside organisations that might be employed in the field of planning advice or lobbying.?

Further can the Leader also advise if any Member of the Council has declared any income in the Register of Business Interests that might relate to work done that might relate to the giving of advice to planning applicants?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

As part of the contract offer process all prospective employees are required to complete a declaration of interest form. These are then reviewed by the recruiting manager at a minimum of Head of Service level to ensure that any conflicts of interest are identified and managed appropriately. It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that as their circumstances change during the time of their employment that they keep their declaration up-to-date. Should an employee need to amend or review a declaration they must contact HR Connect and complete a new declaration and send this to the appropriate AD for review before it is placed on personal files.

This is a process personal to the individual and no central register of declared interests for employees is kept.

The Register of Members Interests is a published document. The vast majority of entries are published online at <http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>. The Governance Service also keeps a Register for those Councillors who have opted out of publishing their declaration online. Therefore any Councillor or member of the public is able to access the information and make their own judgements.

Question 11

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Why was there an attempt to impose a ban on discussing parking at the North Finchley Outer London Fund launch event on 28 February?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The meeting of the 28 February was to launch the concept of the Town Team which is being funded as part of the Outer London Funding for North Finchley. We also used this opportunity to display progress on the wider objectives of the Outer London Fund. There was no ban on discussing parking at the meeting (a comment regretted by an attendee at the meeting who later added that this had been said in humour). However, the remit of the meeting was not on parking.

The Outer London Fund did fund a Parking Review in North Finchley as one of its first objectives, this was a very small element of the funding and two North Finchley Business Forums were held to discuss this, the findings and recommendations. The majority of the funding is to be allocated to public realm improvements and business support initiatives.

Question 12

Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Would the Leader agree that the success and desirability of Barnet is a significant driver of the population growth and demographic challenges we face?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Our excellent schools, beautiful parks and dynamic economy together with an excellent Conservative Council are important factors.

Question 13

Councillor Andreas Ioannidis

Could the Cabinet Member for Health advise how many people the as-yet-unopened Brunswick Park Health centre is meant to serve, and what are the alternative places they should go to while the Health Centre remains unopened?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

The Deputy Head of Primary Care at NHS England has stated that the current proposal is that the re-furbished Centre could re-house 2 single-handed Practices each with approximately 6,000 patients and that there will be sufficient additional capacity to allow these Practices to grow and/or provide additional services.

She has said that the Centre has 5 consulting rooms and 2 treatment rooms which offer adequate capacity for growth in list sizes above the current 6,000 patients. The actual capacity available would depend on the services offered by the Practices and their opening times. Additionally a Practice merger would offer more optimal capacity planning.

She has further stated that these Practices are co-located in a nearby Surgery and this is where patients currently access services.

Question 14

Councillor Reuben Thompstone

How does Barnet council compare with other London boroughs on measures of efficiency?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Barnet compares favourably to other London authorities when comparing the Value for Money of all council services. We benchmark our performance and financial information each quarter, in arrears. In Quarter 2 2012/13, Barnet was ranked in second place in London for the total number of 'high performing and low cost' services. This indicator measures the total number of council services rated as high performance and low cost. Only the London Borough of Bexley had a higher proportion of services rated as high performing and low cost (70%), with Barnet in second place (54%).

Question 15

Councillor Alison Moore

What is the average housing benefit paid for people living in a one bedroom or two bedroom social rented home compared with a one bedroom or two bedroom private rented home?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

The average housing benefit paid for people living in a one or two bedroom social rented property is £104 per week, compared with £190 per week in the private rented sector. However this comparison is not valid, as it is not possible to house all applicants in Social Housing without building more social Housing. The Capital cost to the taxpayer of doing so would be prohibitive. If the Councillor wishes to make a like for like comparison, the Capital Cost of Social Housing should be included in addition to the revenue costs.

Question 16

Councillor Reuben Thompstone

How many new homes are to be built in the borough under the current regeneration projects?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

Approximately 17,000 new homes will be delivered in our planned regeneration and major development areas by 2026 based on current projections. This includes the Brent Cross and Cricklewood and Colindale regeneration areas and the Council's Priority Estates.

Question 17

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Demos has ranked Barnet 129 out of 152 on its "Coping Index" for cuts to disability services and budgets. Is the Cabinet Member proud of Barnet's record and their low ranking compared with other local authorities?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

This ranking comes from the 'Coping with the Cuts 2011' report which is twenty months old having been published on the 11th Sept 2011 and which is based upon data that derives for 2010/11 and planned 2011/12 budgets. The methodology behind the analysis indicates that cash sums are the primary measure of success, with the coping index based solely upon six financially based criteria. It should also be noted that a key piece of information within the analysis associated with Barnet is in fact incorrect. The report states that the "council deducts 20% from the amount of a personal budget before giving the money to the disabled person" as part of our Resource Allocation System (RAS) calculation and this is inaccurate. It should also be noted that half of all London boroughs find themselves in the bottom 1/3 of the rankings based upon the six financially based criteria.

Further to the above it is worth acknowledging that what this dated ranking does not reflect is the additional protection that has been given to adult social care budgets within Barnet through the budget saving process and the additional amounts made available to help manage demographic pressures. The majority of the savings within Adult Social Care continue to be delivered through efficiency improvements as opposed to service reductions. Despite the financial challenges we have continued to ensure that our resources are delivered fairly and to those most in need, ensuring that service users and their families are enabled to remain as independent as possible. Safeguarding vulnerable adults, continuing to offer greater personalisation and a positive experience of care and support remain at the heart Adult Social Care in Barnet.

Question 18**Councillor John Marshall**

Would the Cabinet Member provide an update on the progress of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Community Library?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Hampstead Garden Suburb Community library was launched on 28 June 2012 and continues to deliver a community library service to local residents. The service is delivered by the Residents' Association, supported by the London Borough of Barnet. Volunteers now deliver a range of activities for children and adults including, for example, computer classes and sing song time. This wonderful service continues to go from strength to strength and I pay tribute to Cllr Marshall and his fellow councillors for their work to ensure its success.

Question 19**Councillor Alex Brodtkin**

How successful does the Leader consider his petition has been to prevent the closure of Whetstone Police Station?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Clearly the petition has not been a success but now the latest police proposal suggests keeping counter service at High Barnet the objections are somewhat mitigated.

Question 20**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Cabinet Member for Education join me in congratulating all those involved at Moss Hall Nursery school on the recent judgement by Ofsted that the school is OUTSTANDING in every category?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

I am happy to join Cllr. Salinger in congratulating the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils of Moss Hall nursery school on the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection.

Question 21**Councillor Julie Johnson**

The number of people claiming housing allowances in London has risen 16% since April 2011 to 230,030, and 45% in Barnet, according to London Councils - why is this, does the Cabinet Member expect an increasing number of private landlords will withdraw from providing tenancies and won't this undermine his housing strategy?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

A large number of people believe the taxpayer should subsidise them to live in areas they cannot afford to live in, which is resulting in increases in claimants. This is grossly unfair to hard working taxpayers who live within their means.

With regards to our successful strategy of mixing communities through the use of PRS and not creating ghettos of social housing as Labour would demand, a Private Sector Accommodation Procurement Strategy was launched on 23 May 2012. Barnet Homes looked to refocus the need to attract landlords and agents to supply private sector properties.

Firstly, the strategy improved the schemes offered to Landlords, better reflecting social market conditions assimilating the incentives offered by neighbouring boroughs:

Secondly, it proposed a comprehensive marketing and promotional drive: -

- Rebranding as Let2Barnet
- Leaflet and information pack distribution including electronic packs
- Enhance visibility on Barnet Homes and Barnet Councils website
- Advertising at bus shelters, exhibitions and promotional stands at shopping centres
- Develop business proposal for circulation to lettings agents in and out of the borough

As a result of these initiatives we have managed to increase acquisitions of PRS properties in 2012/13 compared to 2011/12, despite the increasingly difficult market conditions.

Question 22**Councillor Graham Old**

Could the Cabinet Member update Council on the trials of reduced parking fees in town centres?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The reduction in tariffs in North Finchley, Chipping Barnet and Edgware were implemented on an experimental basis. Therefore the council are obliged to review their effectiveness after 6 months, including considering comments made by the public. Once the sixth month period has been completed which will be May for North Finchley and July for Chipping Barnet and Edgware we will be able to provide a full update on the results of the trial.

Question 23**Councillor Alison Moore**

How many people living in social rented homes that have been specifically modified for their disability needs will be affected by the bedroom tax?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

Barnet Homes property database shows that of the 920 households affected by the under occupation changes 272 properties are recorded as adapted. Of these only 16 are recorded as fully wheelchair compatible, with 80 having major adaptations. The remaining 176 have only minor adaptations.

Question 24**Councillor Graham Old**

Could the Cabinet Member please confirm how the Stanley Road site is to be used under the recently agreed proposals?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The proposed disposal to the Archer Academy of the Stanley Road playing fields site and adjoining former Herbert Wilmot centre land, is for the development of an education building with ancillary recreation facilities. The Archer Academy have acquired the Institute building adjoining East Finchley tube station for their school and the Stanley Road site will provide an additional school building and sports facility.

The detailed scheme is being developed and will be subject to planning permission being granted. It is intended that the majority of the built area will be located on the Herbert Wilmot site with the playing fields being laid out as a sports pitches and ancillary recreation structures. The provision of an all weather pitch may be included subject to funding.

A condition of the disposal is that a deed of dedication or similar agreement is entered into to preserve public use outside school hours. The facility will be the responsibility of the Academy who will agree appropriate arrangements for the ongoing management and use.

Question 25

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

What steps have been taken to increase the opportunities for residents to participate in Council meetings?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

We will be reviewing the constitution as part of the work on the Committee system and it may well be that there need to be changes.

Question 26

Councillor Graham Old

Does the Leader support the London Living Wage?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I do support this and will be bringing forward proposals to enable this as soon as budgetary constraints will permit.

Question 27

Councillor Ansuya Sodha

The Council has now started charging £10 for a disabled Blue Badge, but what is being done to ensure that enforcement for cars parked in a disabled bay by able bodied people are dealt with?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The Council in partnership with NSL continues to monitor Blue Badge misuse. Powers allow officers if the public are present to ask to see the badge and where necessary to take details of the badge for possible confiscation. Vehicles found not displaying a disabled badge in a disabled parking bay are issued with a penalty charge notice.

Question 28

Councillor Graham Old

Could the Cabinet Member explain what the impact of the change programme has been on library services in the borough?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The library service in Barnet is in excellent shape. We now have two community libraries that can operate in addition to the council-run ones. We have an ambitious capital programme with a range of improvements now taking place across the estate, such as better Wi-Fi, improved meeting spaces and an active volunteer programme to enhance the range of activities available. We are also developing plans for new replacement libraries in Childs Hill, Church End and

Grahame Park.

Question 29

Councillor Alison Moore

The cost of renting in Barnet’s private sector at the cheaper end of the market has risen by £245 or 43% in the last 18 months – is this affordable for ordinary people?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

Yes, it is affordable for ordinary Barnet residents. If it was not affordable landlords could not achieve the rent. I am happy to provide the Councillor with a crash course in the basic fundamentals in Economics: Supply and Demand. This administration will not entertain the concept of rent caps/limits for the Private Sector which some London Labour Councillors have suggested.

Question 30

Councillor John Marshall

What is the current estimate of the savings the Council will need to make over the next 3 years?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
14,492	20,63	19,34
7		9

Question 31

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Why has Your Choice had to be bailed out with a loan after just one year of operation?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

It has not been bailed out as such. The Barnet Group's Business Plan (February 2012) set out the projected revenue, expenditure and profit/loss for the respective organisations and the Group for the duration of the contract period. This was a revised position from the original business case following due diligence undertaken by senior managers in both LBB and Barnet Homes. The Business Plan projected a loss for Your Choice in year one of £209k. However, the projected year end position is a loss for Your Choice of £60k.

In 2013/14, Your Choice will face an additional financial pressure in terms of meeting their working capital requirements as they move from being paid a block amount to payment by actual services delivered. Barnet Homes have agreed to give Your Choice a loan of £1m to be repaid over a three year period to mitigate the effect of the revised payment terms. It is important to note that this is a cash flow requirement, and does not reflect the year end accounting position of Your Choice.

Question 32

Councillor John Marshall

What steps is the Council taking to meet the growing demand for primary school places?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Council is currently undertaking a capital investment programme to deliver further permanent capacity within the primary sector at the following schools:

- Orion (expansion by 2 Forms of entry and a new resourced provision for pupils with Special Educational Need)

- Blessed Dominic (expansion of 2 Forms of Entry)
- Moss Hall Infant and Juniors (expansion of 1 form of entry)
- St Mary's and St John's (expansion of 1 Form of entry and development of all-through provision)
- Brunswick Park (expansion of 1 Form of entry)
- Martin (expansion of 1 Form of Entry)
- Menorah Foundation (expansion of 1 Form of entry)
- New school at Mill Hill East (3 Forms of entry)
- Oakleigh special school (to provide additional places for children with Special Educational Need)

This programme comes after the successful expansion of:

- Broadfields (by 1 form of entry including additional provision for children with Special Educational Need)
- Colindale school (by 1 form of entry and the provision of additional places for young children with Special Educational Need)
- St Catherine's (by half a form of entry)

A further tranche of investment in the primary sector is in development and we are in discussion with a number of schools who have an ambition to expand.

Additional provision has become available through the entrance by Morasha into the Voluntary Aided sector this April and it is anticipated that Noam School will become Voluntary Aided later this year. Primary Free Schools locating in the borough have provided additional primary capacity through the Etz Chaim (1 Form of entry) and Rimon (1 Form of entry) Free schools. The Alma Free School (1 Form of entry) is due to open in September 2013.

Question 33

Councillor Agnes Slocombe

Does the Leader agree with Eric Pickles that councils are wasting money on translating important documents into different languages?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I do, of course, welcome the Secretary of State's comments which perfectly reflect practice in Barnet over several years. While other boroughs have translated large amounts of council literature as a matter of course, we have argued that learning English as a key to integration with life in Britain.

Translation is still available for residents who need it and is important in many council services, notably housing advice, although this can often be most usefully provided by a family member.

It is also worth highlighting that the council website can be translated into over 60 languages, from Afrikaans to Yiddish. Although these can be somewhat approximate, in the spirit of economy, of which I am sure Mr Pickles would approve, it is worth noting that this is done through a free online tool.

Question 34

Councillor Wendy Prentice

Could the Leader state whether overall residents' satisfaction with the area has increased or decreased in the last two years, in relation to the official residents' perception survey?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Satisfaction has increased. The last Residents' Perception Survey, conducted in November

2012, showed that 88 per cent of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live. This is a 2 per cent increase since the previous survey, conducted in February 2011. When compared to national data, Barnet is 4 per cent above the national average.

Question 35

Councillor Barry Rawlings

When did the Council know that Your Choice needed a loan and why was it not reported to Budget & Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had been given the scrutiny responsibility last year?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

At a contract meeting between The Barnet Group and Adults and Communities on the 13th February 2013 a revised business plan was presented that specified the loan arrangement. A report to Budget and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee was presented by the Barnet Group on 24th January 2013. This was prior to any formal communications from the Barnet Group as to the decision to loan money from Barnet Homes to Your Choice.

Question 36

Councillor Wendy Prentice

Does the Cabinet Member support the Scrap Metal Dealers Bill?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

Yes. Scrap metal dealers have had to be registered with the local authority for a number of years. However the Scrap Metal Dealers Act (SMDA) which received royal assent in February will strengthen the regulation in this area.

The main change to scrap metal dealers is the introduction of an offence for buying scrap metal for cash. (This change is already in force having been brought in under different legislation in December 2012.) However the SMDA also sets out more information on what records a dealer must keep and also ensures that the identity of a seller is verified before a sale can take place. The legislation also strengthens the licensing regime

These changes came about following a trial in the North of England where a number of measures were undertaken to attempt to cut down on an increasing metal theft problem. Due to its huge success the Scrap Metal Act was drafted. Currently payment for scrap metal can only be made by cheque and electronic transfer.

The North of England saw more than a 50% reduction in metal thefts, and it is hoped this legislation will do the same within the rest of the country. The legislation through ensuring records are kept and that identities are verified allows the police and the local authority the opportunity to spot check premises and ensure compliance. Although the legislation will increase the regulation in the area, we would hope that traders would not find this onerous as it is what a reputable trader should be undertaking as best practice

In relation to the London Borough of Barnet a number of spot checks have already been undertaken by the police (in relation to cashless transactions) and so far there has not been any negative feedback in relation to the introduction of this from local businesses or consumers. The Act will not come completely into force until later in the year however the Trading Standards and Licensing Department are already planning for this change in legislation and will make sure that local businesses are fully informed of the relevant sections.

Question 37

Councillor Andreas Ioannidis

What is the Cabinet Member for Health doing to ensure that our local hospitals, including Chase

Farm, have sufficient staff to ensure services are safe?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

It is Barnet CCG which bears this responsibility not Barnet Council. The CCG is responsible for ensuring that the Hospital Care that they commission on behalf of Barnet's residents is safe and of high quality. They have therefore established a Director level post for Quality and Governance to ensure that patient safety drives their commissioning intentions. The Council can of course scrutinise the performance of the local Health System through the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and I know that quality and safety issues at Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals have previously been the subject of several reports. At the May meeting of the Barnet Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, committee members will be scrutinising the Quality Accounts of local NHS providers including Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals Trust and this will provide an ideal opportunity to raise any issues of concern.

The Barnet Health and Well-Being Board which is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Public Health also has a role to play in ensuring that the local services are safe and on the back of the Francis Report into the poor care provided by the Mid Staffordshire Hospital, the next HWBB on the 25th of April 2013 will be considering with the local NHS Trusts what lessons they have learnt from the Mid Staffs inquiry. Ultimately however, the Council can ask the right questions but the actual responsibility lies with the NHS to ensure that local health services are safe.

Question 38

Councillor Wendy Prentice

What is the Member's reaction to the details released in the MOPAC post-consultation report regarding the locations of police front counters and SNT bases?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

Following the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's public consultation earlier this year MOPAC have produced both a Police and Crime Action Plan 2013-16 and a Policing and Public Access in London document. The action plan sets out the Mayor's crime priorities for London with a stated aim of delivering a 20% reduction in neighbourhood crime, a 20% boost in public confidence in the Metropolitan police force and 20% budgetary savings.

The Policing and Public Access document sets out MOPAC's commitments on police numbers, visibility and accessibility. The latter will see the introduction of new police contact points, which are designed to make it easier for the public to speak to officers. There is also a commitment to enhance neighbourhood policing by putting an additional 2,600 more officers into local neighbourhood teams.

In conjunction there will be a revision of the police estate centred on a reduction in the number of high-cost 24/7 front counter stations where there has been a significant and sustained fall in public crime reporting (48% fall in Barnet between 2006/7 and 2011/12).

In Barnet we will retain a 24/7 front counter service at Colindale and a standard front counter service at Barnet police station. In line with the public views expressed in the consultation and following a review of the spread of locations across the borough both Golders Green and Whetstone stations will no longer provide front counter services, but four new contact points will be established at Golders Green, East Finchley, Friern Barnet Road and Cat Hill. There will also be 11 deployment bases across the borough where SNTs and borough tasking teams start and end their tours of duty.

I'm pleased that the borough will maintain two front desks at each end of the borough, but it is

very important that local community access requirements to the Police, such as Golders Green, are fully addressed.

Question 39

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Following the sale of contents from Church Farm House Museum, the total hammer price was £34,375. After commission, storage, additional storage, sorting / repacking some items, and the return of withdrawn items, the council received £17386.64. Does the Cabinet Member now regret disposing of so much of our heritage and why did so many war related lots go for sale including the record war diary and medals of DVR F Scratchard?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

No, the money raised will be used to help us maintain the retained element of the collection. The money we would have received was considerably less because a number of items catalogued for sale were returned to owners or given to Barnet Museum. Opportunities were provided to people to retain items of personal value. Considerable amounts of war-related materials that have better educational value have been retained.

Question 40

Councillor Hugh Rayner

Could the Member indicate the percentage of council contracts which fail?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

There are 771 contracts over £25k on the corporate contract register. In the last calendar year one supplier has gone into administration (2e2) which represents a 0.12% failure rate.

We actively manage contracts as part of the continuous improvement programme. We have a training regime on contract management which includes online training and workshop with case study sessions. Contract management responsibility is delegated to Delivery Units through their personal performance targets to actively manage and build commercial relationships with vendors and identify and mitigate potential risk situations. In relation to 2e2 we carried out a risk assessment in January 2013, a month before they went into administration. Based on the assessment the service lead determined exposure and a contingency plan was developed.

Question 41

Councillor Julie Johnson

A judicial review of the Government's controversial decision to deny housing benefit to people who have more than one bedroom if they are single or a couple will now be heard in early May. Given the uncertainty, what is the Council doing to ensure disabled social housing tenants in Barnet are not saddled with debt from the bedroom tax until there is a decision in the High court?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

Having analysed the list of approximately 920 council tenants identified as under occupying, we have identified 62 households who have a disabled adult tenant who may be affected by this decision. Pending the review outcome we have placed a flag on each rent account and will ensure that no tenant is sent any arrears letter but is personally contacted until the position is clarified.

Question 42

Councillor Hugh Rayner

What is the amount of additional cash in pocket that a Band D council tax payer has enjoyed, over the council cycle, due to consecutive council tax freezes as opposed to increases in line with inflation?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

If Council Tax had risen by inflation over the 4 year period from 2010/11 to 2013/14, then a Band D council tax payer would be paying an additional £167 per annum.

Question 43**Councillor Arjun Mitra**

Are there any outstanding savings from the libraries budget the Council have yet to achieve or identify in the next three years, and what items are at risk of not being met?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The library service has made considerable progress in achieving the required savings. Some savings are still required and officers are currently developing detailed proposals. The capital investment programme currently being implemented, including the recently published plans to move Church End Library, will enable the service to introduce new revenue streams to the service.

Question 44**Councillor Hugh Rayner**

How does a rent increase of 2.5% for existing council housing tenants compare with increases in other local authorities?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Although no national level data is yet available for rises in rents set by all local authorities in England for 2013-14, a survey conducted by Inside Housing strongly suggests that the average rent rise of 2.5 per cent for tenants of London Borough of Barnet is less than half the average 5.1 per cent increase in rents for council tenants in England as a whole.

Background

Rent setting for social housing tenancies is currently undergoing a change as a result of the move to a new self-financing system for local authorities, as provided for in the Localism Act 2011. The aim is to bring council rents into line with housing association rents by 2015-16.

Communities and Local Government department guidelines recommend rent increase is set using a September 2012 Retail Price Index (2.6%), plus 0.5%. Until 2015-16, an additional increase up to £2 per week will also be applied to bring council rents into line with housing association rents.

Rent setting 2013-14

No national level data is available yet on the increases in average rents each local authority in England intends to apply to their Council housing tenants for 2013-14. However, a survey by *Inside Housing* suggests that the average increase in rents for council tenants will be 5.1 per cent.

Of the 25 largest stock owning local authorities (those with at least 20,000 homes), the survey suggests that just Lambeth, Leicester and Nottingham have elected not to apply the maximum increase possible.

Lambeth Council has increased rents by 4.2 per cent, rather than the 4.5 per cent allowed.

Nottingham increased rents by 5.5 per cent, rather than the 6 per cent maximum under the guidelines.

Leicester rents increased by 3.4 per cent instead of the maximum 4.1 per cent.

Other local authorities to publish the average rent rises for their tenants include:

Sandwell Council has raised rents by 9.6 per cent – more than any other local authority surveyed. The West Midlands council has, however, switched from an October increase to April and so has not raised rents for 18 months.

Leeds Council's 5.9 per cent rise was also above the government guidelines after it opted not to impose the maximum increase last year.

Dudley will raise rents by the maximum amount allowed – 4.6%

Southampton DC – 4.3%

Sutton Housing Partnership – 4.9%

Cambridge – 5.2%

Norwich – 5.1%

Question 45

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Does the Cabinet Member agree that his previous comments on the contents of the Church Farm House Museum that referred to a stuffed cat and a skirt lifter does great disservice to the long list of objects now lost to the borough forever?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

No – as these were some of the items that were housed in the Museum.

Question 46

Councillor Hugh Rayner

Has there been any movement on the average time it takes to process a new housing benefit claim?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

In September 2012 the average time taken to process a new housing benefit claim was 19 days. Through the introduction of the new face-to-face process in Burnt Oak Library and Barnet House, this figure was reduced to 10 days by the end of February 2013 (the latest month for which figures are available). This performance is one of the best in London and is in the top 10 of all local authorities in Great Britain.

Question 47

Councillor Barry Rawlings

What are the estimated extra costs to Barnet of changes proposed in Social Care legislation, and how much will be covered by increased money from Central Government?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

A report on the implications for Barnet Council of Social Care Funding Reform and the draft Care & Support Bill is on the agenda for Cabinet on 18th April 2013.

The Policy Statement on Funding Reform (Department of Health, 11th February 2013 as updated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget Speech of 20th March 2013) estimates that the implementation of the cap on care costs and the changes to the means test threshold will cost an additional one billion pounds nationally per year. However, it is currently unclear how these additional requirements and costs will be funded at a national level and how funding will be given to Councils. Clarification is expected from the Department of Health.

Proposed changes in the draft Care & Support Bill relating to carers' assessments and services; service users' care and support plans; and deferred payments, have been modelled using local (Barnet) data. The financial impact on the Council resulting from the proposed changes is estimated at up to £11.6m annually. This excludes the funding reform changes (cap on care costs and changes to the means test threshold) and any potential funding from Government to

Councils for implementing the Care and Support Bill changes. The estimate is based on information currently available; actual implementation costs could vary depending on any changes to the published reform proposals, actual take up of the schemes by residents and the pace of take up.

Question 48

Councillor Barry Evangeli

Will Barnet lose any fire engines under the Mayor of London's planned changes to the fire service?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

The draft London Safety Plan, which details the Mayor's plans for the London Fire Service, is still in its public consultation period. The current plans show that there will be no station closure or loss of fire engines in Barnet, but that there will in fact be an additional fire engine at Hendon Fire Station.

Question 49

Councillor Geof Cooke

What percentage of the borough's a) yellow line road markings and b) 'no loading' kerb markings (affecting usage of disabled badges) are so worn that penalty charge notices at those locations are unenforceable? What instruction has been given to the NSL parking contractor on enforcement when lines/markings are worn? How much revenue has been lost on such issues and how much officer time has been spent on reviewing such cases?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Working closely with colleagues in the highways department, known faults are logged and reported for works to be carried out by their contractor as part of the continuous and on-going process of maintaining the network. This may occur before the markings are completely invisible and are subject to the elements before repairs are carried out. NSL also fault report and do use discretion when necessary, not enforcing the non-visible restrictions in place. There will always be a percentage of lines which are worn and require attention, we proactively monitor and instigate remedial works to rectify as we become aware. We do not hold the detail requested.

Question 50

Councillor Kate Salinger

Could the Cabinet Member please update me on the Council's progress in implementing the children's social work practice reforms recommended by Prof Eileen Munro?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

I am pleased to report that Barnet Council and its partners are making good progress in implementing the recommendations made to Government by Prof Munro, as follows:

The Local Safeguarding Children Board should submit an annual report to the Chief Executive, Leader, Police Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

This recommendation is implemented in Barnet.

The Barnet Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) already has the practice of submitting annual reports to the Chief Executive as recommended by Munro. The last annual report is available on the BSCB website for viewing and was presented to the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

LSCB should use systems methodologies such as the SCIE model to undertake serious case reviews and Independent reviewers should be used.

This recommendation is implemented in Barnet. The BSCB has adopted the 'SCIE' (Social Care Institute for Excellence) case review model for undertaking serious case reviews. These are case

reviews where children and young people have died or suffered serious harm in accordance with statutory guidance set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Independent chairs are used for serious case reviews.

Local Authorities and partners should start on ongoing process to review and redesign the way in which child and family social work is delivered.

Work is underway through a number of initiatives to review and redesign the way child and family social work is delivered. Some examples are given below.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

The Council and partners are working to implement a MASH. Phase one of the MASH has already been implemented and plans for the implementation of Phase Two are in progress.

Improving practice – Work on Neglect

The Council and partners have worked with the University of Stirling and Action for Children on the development of a tool for use across agencies for better understanding neglect in families and its impact on children. Neglect is a critical factor in children's lives and is often evident in cases where there is failure to thrive.

Improving assessments

Barnet's social workers are working with Professor David Shemmings (an expert in social work theory, research and practice who specialises in child protection) to improve the quality of assessment of children and families. This approach will be rolled out to all social workers and will inform our development of a single assessment pathway.

Improving joint working across Adults and Children's services

Managers across Adult Mental Health and Children's Service are meeting on a regular basis to discuss common issues and resolve difficulties. Front-line workers from both services are being offered shadowing opportunities.

A successful half day conference was held which focused on joint working in relation to safeguarding. This has resulted in improved information sharing.

Improving the court process – reducing timescales

The Council is working with Barnet Court to reduce the time it takes for a child's case to progress through proceedings. This work is taking place with Enfield and Haringey and is also part of the Family Justice Review changes that are taking place.

A court officer is in the process of being appointed. This person will work directly with front line social workers to improve their practice in line with the Principal Child and Family social worker role.

Lastly, the staffing capacity of Children's Social Care has been increased, with an additional head of service, to enable a better focus on the quality of practice and the further implementation of the Munro change initiatives.

Additional information

The statutory guidance document "Working Together to Safeguard Children" was published on 21 March for implementation on 15th April 2013.

Question 51**Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb**

How much per week is being spent on security for the now closed Church Farm House Museum and how much has been spent to date?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Property Services report that the Council spends £85 per day. A proposal to lease the building on a short term basis has been provisionally agreed with Middlesex University and approval will now be sought from Cabinet Resources Committee.

Question 52**Councillor Alison Cornelius**

Could the Cabinet Member please update me on the attendance figures for our Children's Centres over the last year?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Children's Centres continue to promote their services proactively in their community and target activities on the needs of the local area. Children's Centres and their activities are also promoted across the borough and we continue to see an increase in the families that are registering with centres (a 13% rise in the number of activities attended against the same period last year).

Question 53**Councillor Charlie O'Macauley**

What repercussions have there been for vulnerable residents in Barnet and what are the statistics of any illness or deaths in Barnet of people who could not afford to heat their homes this winter? What is the Council doing to help people in need keep the heat on when the weather is freezing?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

Excess deaths in winter (EWD) continue to be an important public health issue that is potentially amenable to effective intervention. EWD are associated with cold weather but are also affected by the amount and virulence of seasonal influenza and other viral infections. We know that other countries in Europe, especially the colder Scandinavian countries, have relatively fewer excess winter deaths in winter compared to the UK. The evidence points to three areas of importance that we need to address:

- a) tackling certain premature deaths;
- b) supporting energy efficient interventions in housing;
- c) encouraging fuel poverty referral.

EWD are calculated as an index that measures the percentage of additional deaths occurring in the winter months (December to March) compared with the background death rates in the months preceding and following the winter. Because of this calculation, the data for the current winter will not be available until later in the year.

Over the past 12 months, by way of example, the Private Sector Housing (PSH) Scheme has been involved in the following schemes to assist vulnerable residents:

Winter Well

Funding received from Warmer Homes Healthy People Fund from the Department of Health 2012/13. The scheme was administered by Public Health with PSH. The aim of the Winter Well project was to promote awareness of the health problems linked to cold homes, advise people on how to look after themselves to help them stay warm and healthy, and to assist with improvements to persons at risk. The project covered:

- An extensive advertising campaign (leaflets, thermometer cards, posters at bus stops, article in Barnet First, internet advertising, plasma screens in hospitals, leaflets to all flu vaccination recipients at GPs etc)
- Enrolling Energise Barnet to act as a call centre for all Winter Well calls and ensuring that all callers received the relevant help e.g. Decent Homes, ECCO, Re:NEW etc. Energise Barnet were also tasked with visiting all GPs in the borough to engage them in the campaign. This is still on going.
- Over sixty residents were assisted with home improvements e.g. insulation, heating improvements etc.
- Three community champions were chosen and are being trained to train other officers on signposting in relation to Energy Efficiency Measures, and SWITCH. Training was also provided to community groups by CAB
- Emergency supplies were purchased for Social Services e.g. electrical heaters

Energise Barnet

Private residents are signposted to Energise Barnet to access Green Deal and ECCO funding for improvements that will assist with Energy Efficiency.

Decent Homes Grants

Decent Homes Grants are provided to assist private sector residents on benefits to bring their properties up to the Decent Homes standard. Eighty-nine private sector residents have been assisted with issues relating to heating, insulation or dampness.

Housing Enforcement

The team works reactively to assist private tenants with home improvements. This is done through a combination of advice and enforcement action. The most common issues are damp and mould and defective heating. One-hundred-and-ninety-five residents have had Category One hazards as defined by the Housing Act 2004 reduced over the past twelve months.

Care & Repair- Minor Works Grants

Care & Repair provide minor works grants (including those funded through FILT for boiler servicing), income maximisation support and ensure that residents are referred to the relevant schemes. Where required, emergency supplies are accessed for the customer from Social Services.

Department of Energy and Climate Change Funding

Funding secured to obtain EPCs for all properties in the borough. All those with persons on benefits and minor works required to improve the rating are being targeted.

Question 54

Councillor Alison Cornelius

What is the purpose of the ArtsDepot and what is the role of the Council Representatives on the Board?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Opened to the public in October 2004, the Arts Depot provides a mix of performing and visual arts and participatory education and outreach projects. It provides entertainment and performances to the residents of Barnet and the wider area of North London and beyond.

The facility is also intended to benefit the local community. The role of Community Focus – through their use of inclusive arts programmes to engage people of all ages and backgrounds, including support to people with disabilities – is therefore important in that regard.

In terms of the role of Council representatives on the Board, it is generally the outside body themselves that will determine the expectations on a Councillor when sitting on a Board, as well as the rationale for requesting a nomination.

Question 55

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Will the Cabinet Member review the information currently on the Council's website about parking enforcement on bank holidays and public holidays so that it is clearer to residents?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The website details with regards Bank Holiday parking were reviewed last year in light of the extra holidays and celebrations taking place and have been found to meet the needs of residents and visitors to the borough in relation to Bank Holiday enforcement.

When special events occur the details are always advertised separately on the main page an example being the Torch relay event and requirements.

Question 56

Councillor Brian Salinger

At the Council Meeting on 22nd January 2103, The Council unanimously passed the following motion...

"Council recognises that it is 40 years since Idi Amin expelled the Ugandan Asian population from that country. Council recognises that this has proved to be a major turning point in the life of Barnet and the United Kingdom.

Council recognises the importance of the wider Asian community to the life of Barnet and Council calls on the Leader and the Mayor to find an appropriate way to celebrate the beneficial contribution that the community have made to the Borough, in particular in the last 40 years.

Council also recognises that Barnet is twinned with Jinja in Uganda, and that in the aftermath of the terrible floods a few years ago LB Barnet organised a successful fundraising dinner to help support projects in Jinja and the surrounding areas. Council asks that the Mayor to work with the High Commissioner and the local Ugandan Asian community, as well as the broader Asian community to bring forward proposals for this celebration."

Can the Leader tell Members what steps have been taken to implement this decision of the Council?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

Having spoken to the Mayor designate, I can confirm that there will be a celebratory event later this year. The nature will depend on the funds that can be found or raised.

Question 57

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Does the Cabinet Member have any plans to introduce business improvement districts in the borough?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council has focused on supporting the development of Town Teams rather than Business Improvement Districts. Town Teams are enabling the town centres to take their first steps towards a stronger joined up approach to dealing with issues in their town centres. For many of the independent traders, the more formal BID concept would be out of their reach financially.

However where appropriate we will support Town Teams in exploring their options including the potential for a future BID.

Question 58

Councillor Joan Scannell

Annually, how much will be saved by the internal structural transformation of senior council officers?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

The salary savings are:

Medium Term Financial Strategy Savings

2012/13	(£582k)
2013/14	(£263k)
2014/15	(£270k)
Total	(£1,115k)

Question 59

Councillor Zakia Zubairi

Would the Cabinet say if he is satisfied with the state of potholes in Burnt Oak and Colindale?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The Highways department operate a process which prioritises all pothole reports with a target to make safe within 48 hours. The performance is closely monitored and reported as part of the Corporate performance reports which are published quarterly. The latest performance stats identify that 95.9% completed within 48 hours and 100% completed within 28 days. Due to the recent adverse weather the number of pothole reports has increased significantly and as such it is not possible to rectify all these within 48 hours. A programme of pot hole related work has recently been issued to the contractor with a requirement for all pot holes within the programme to be completed with a permanent repair within 28 days. This programme includes a number of pot holes in the Burnt Oak and Colindale area.

Question 60

Councillor Joan Scannell

Could the Cabinet Member inform us of the current collection rates for council tax and business rates?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The final in-year collection rates for 2012/13 were 96.6% for Council Tax and 95.8% for business rates. The equivalent figures for 2011/12 were 96.0% and 94.9%.

Question 61

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

How much of the North Finchley Outer London Fund allocation has been (a) spent and (b) committed?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The total amount of funding for the Outer London Fund project in North Finchley is £1,453,140 including matched funding provided by Barnet Council of £379,080.

£12,000.00 has been committed to support 3 Apprenticeship opportunities in the town centre.

£24,000.00 has been committed for town centre events - £8,000 of this was spent on the Christmas event 2012 (complete), with the remaining £16,000 committed to the Summer event 2013 and Christmas event 2013.

£42,000.00 has been committed for Business capacity building and training including business events, promotional activities, setting up town team, research and benchmarking, business training and development.

£127,000.00 was spent on celebrations and activities during the Olympics, including public realm

improvements and activity to support the torch relay through North Finchley, along with two celebratory events - a Youth Festival and a 'Spectacular' Event.

The remaining funds are being allocated for public realm improvements, the majority of which will be in the southern end of the town centre, around Tally Ho Corner but with approximately £300,000 on wider public realm improvements along the high street. £25,000 was spent on the traffic and parking review and improvements (now complete) which was delivered in September 2012.

The funding also supports a Town Centre Officer post over the duration of the project.

Question 62

Councillor Joan Scannell

Would the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families agree with me that the growth in the number of our schools under academy status has contributed to satisfaction in the borough's schools increasing by more than 10% in the last couple of years alone?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The increase in satisfaction with nursery, primary and secondary education in the borough since 2010/11 as shown in the Residents' Perception Survey is a testament to the excellent work carried out by our family of schools. During this time, 16 schools have converted to academy status and parental choice has also increased with the introduction of several free schools to the borough.

Question 63

Councillor Arjun Mittra

Has the Council received any advice from the Foreign Office for Barnet's Cypriot residents who have savings in Cypriot banks?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council has not had contact from the Foreign Office in respect of Cypriot Banks. However, this announcement on the Bank of England website gives details about the two Cypriot banks operating in the UK, Laiki Bank UK and Bank of Cyprus UK Ltd:

<http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Pages/news/2013/058.aspx>

Cyprus Popular Bank Public Co Ltd (CPB) operated in the UK under the trading name 'Laiki Bank UK' as the UK branch of an EEA bank under the European Banking Consolidation Directive. The Central Bank of Cyprus was the home state regulator of this firm, not the UK authorities. As is the case with other EEA operations, customers were covered by the home state deposit guarantee scheme up to 100,000 Euros per eligible depositor.

Bank of Cyprus Public Limited Company operates in the UK through its subsidiary Bank of Cyprus UK Limited (Bank of Cyprus UK) which is incorporated in the UK and fully regulated by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) and Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Eligible deposits with the Bank of Cyprus UK are covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) up to £85,000 per eligible depositor and £170,000 for joint accounts.

Cyprus Popular Bank Public Co Ltd, operating in the UK under the trading name 'Laiki Bank UK', has reached an agreement with Bank of Cyprus UK Ltd to transfer all deposits to Bank of Cyprus UK, a UK subsidiary fully regulated by the PRA and FCA and covered by the UK Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) up to £85,000 per depositor.

Question 64**Councillor Bridget Perry**

Whilst the apparent decision of Barnet F.C. to leave the borough is disappointing, is the Member in agreement that it is important to protect the status and integrity of our Green Belt?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

Yes, it is very important to protect the Green Belt in the borough.

Question 65**Councillor Andreas Ioannidis**

What is the cost to the tax payer for security at the Brunswick Park Health Centre?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

Martin Hill - Associate Director - Estates and Facilities – NHS North Central London has informed us that they have spent around £16000 on security at Brunswick Park over January, February and March this year. The charge is approximately £199.00 a day going forward for 24/7 security. The figures are approximate due to the influence of weekends and Bank Holidays. Mr Hill has further stated that damage i.e. through vandalism would outweigh this cost.

Question 66**Councillor Bridget Perry**

What is the Council's plan for increasing recycling in the borough?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

The Council is making changes to the waste and recycling service to increase participation in the recycling and composting services, and to decrease the amount of residual waste (refuse) that is collected. This will improve our current recycling performance and help to limit increases in costs in the future.

There will be an extensive communications programme before this change is implemented. In the lead up to the service changes and the provision of new containers a range of communication channels will be used to give residents all the information they need to use the services. The first publicity regarding these changes is the current issue of Barnet First, and on adverts placed at JC Decaux sites and bus stops from 9 April.

Projections show that the new services could achieve a 43% recycling rate in 2016/17, compared to a 31% rate if we were to continue with the existing services.

Agreement to the Changes

Changes to the waste services were agreed at the meeting of the Cabinet on 4 April 2012. The report outlined that a range of options had been considered for the future services. A number of discussion group meetings were held with residents in November 2011 specifically to explore their views on a range of options. The residents who took part in the discussion group meetings were randomly selected following a telephone survey. It was not possible to consult all residents. The option that was recommended and agreed was considered to be the best in terms of financial and overall performance. At the meeting of the Cabinet Resources Committee on 7 November 2012 it was agreed that the waste services would be provided in house following the end of the May Gurney Recycling Services Contract in October 2013.

The Council's press release of 10 April 2012 outlined the key changes to waste services and that it was projected that this would save £4.1m in 2016/17 compared with the waste collection and disposal costs that would arise if no changes were made.

Question 67**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

At the Council meeting on 22 January, Councillor Dean Cohen said in response to a question from Councillor Hutton about the footway relay in Torrington Park: "I can give the assurance to Councillor Hutton that it will be put on the list for the next financial year". In fact, the relay of the footway in Torrington Park is only on the reserve list for 2013/14 and then only the so-called 'worst' sections. Can the Cabinet Member ensure that the work promised to residents almost a year ago is actually carried out and if not can he explain to local residents where all the parking income has gone?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

Torrington Park was inspected along with all roads within the borough in order to identify the condition of each. Torrington Park as expected was identified as a High Priority and as such was added to the priority list to be considered when finalising the next (this year's) programme of work. There is a limited sum of funding and therefore not all high priority schemes will be implemented and hence the reason for a reserve list.

Question 68**Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner**

What is the cost of answering Freedom of Information Requests to the council?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

In 2012/13 the Council received 1552 requests under the Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Information Regulations. Our performance figures are based on requests due to be responded to within a time period. For 2012/13 there were 1537 requests that were due to be responded to and the council achieved a performance figure of 92% of those 1537 requests responded to within the statutory deadline of 20 working days.

Research dating back to 2009 (UCL "FOIA 2000 and local government in 2009") suggested that authorities spent an average of 8.9 hours on each FOIA request, costing £25 per hour. Using this as a basis for calculation, this would mean that the cost to the Council of responding to FOIA requests in 2012/13 would be £341,982.50 (1537 requests). However, the Council does not keep logs of officer time spent dealing with FOI requests, so we cannot provide a more specific figure than this estimate.

Question 69**Councillor Anne Hutton**

What plans does the council have for the Church End library building when the library moves to its proposed new site in the Gateway House development?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

There are no specific plans at present.

Question 70**Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner**

Could council hear the outcomes of any recent Judicial Reviews?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius**Former Hendon Football Club Ground Site Claremont Road NW2**

The substantive hearing of the Judicial Review brought against the Council by the London Jewish Girls High School took place on 20 February, 2013 presided over by Mr. Justice Mitting.

Mitting J rejected the claim and dismissed it. He also discharged the Injunction. The Claimant's barrister asked for permission to appeal Mitting J's decision, but this was refused. There was no

order for costs in relation to the first Judicial Review Claim; and an order was made for 50% of the Council's legal costs for the second Judicial Review, to be paid by the Claimant.

The Judge did not accept the criticism that failure to evaluate the overage element of Montclare's offer was significant on the basis that the Council's Section 123 duty is directed at outcome and not process. Even though the Judge accepted some of the criticism of the process carried out by Officers, he was satisfied that they were not material to the outcome of the case. The Judge stated that the Montclare bid was the better of the two offers "on the table"; He stated that on the facts of the case, the Council's decision in relation to its Section 123 duty was unquestionably lawful.

Etz Chaim School : Former Wyevale Garden Centre Site NW7

The substantive hearing of the Judicial Review brought against the Council and the Trustees and Governors of the Etz Chaim Primary School by Mr. Daniel Coleman took place on 24 October, 2012 and 5 November, 2012 presided over by Mr. Justice Lindblom.

The Claim was originally based on nine grounds, two of which fell away. The Claim raised seven issues:

1. Whether the Council lawfully discharged its duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010
2. Whether the Section 106 Obligation entered into by the Trust on 29 March was adequate to achieve what the Council sought from it
3. Whether conditions 3 and 4 of the planning permission were unlawful
4. Whether the extant temporary planning permission for school use on the site was an irrelevant consideration for the Council to take into account when making its decision, and whether the Council erred in failing to properly consider alternative sites for the development
5. Whether the Council failed to consult as it ought to have done on the application for planning permission
6. Whether the Council failed to consider the likely effects of car parking and traffic; and
7. Whether the council failed to provide adequate reasons for granting planning permission.

The Judge found for the Council on all the grounds, rejected the claim and dismissed it. In doing so, he passed complimentary remarks about the Officers report to the Committee.

Of ground 1 (the Public Sector Equality Duty), the Judge said:

"In my view, the Council did all that was required of it in this case if it was to discharge its duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010."

Permission to appeal was refused and costs were awarded in favour of the Council.

Question 71

Councillor Arjun Mitra

Would the Cabinet Member be willing to look into the possibility of a 20 mph zone on the County Roads in East Finchley?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

For those locations where it is deemed appropriate there can be traffic calming measures, alternative forms of control tend to be considered in the first instance.

However, this does not preclude the introduction of 20mph speed limits if justified in a particular location. For example, recently there has been agreed to introduce a 20mph speed limit in Church

Lane.

Question 72

Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner

Could the Leader provide council with the details of the alternative strategies to One Barnet suggested to him by the leaders of the opposition parties?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

There are no budget proposals that would in anyway meet the savings programme that we have set out as part of One Barnet.

Question 73

Councillor Barry Rawlings

1 in 280 residents in Barnet suffer from HIV compared with the national average of 1 in 650, and figures released by the Health Protection Agency (HPA) show 54 percent of people living with HIV in Barnet are diagnosed five years after infection, compared to a national average of 47 percent. How will the Cabinet Member ensure that there is both earlier diagnosis and effective intervention for residents suffering from HIV?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

Firstly I must correct the figures given in this question, which have previously been quoted in the local press. The 2012 HPA report shows that 1 in 350 Barnet residents aged 15-59 is living with a diagnosis of HIV compared to 1 in 667 in England as a whole.

The rate of new diagnoses of HIV has remained fairly constant over the past years but as people are living for longer with HIV, the overall prevalence has been increasing.

Of course this remains too high and we will continue to work on HIV prevention focussing on the following areas:

- **Antenatal testing** – testing rates are high and must remain so. Diagnosis during pregnancy will help to ensure that the risk of transmission of HIV from mother to baby is minimised.
- **GUM clinic testing** – again testing rates are high and within our contracts we will be pushing for these rates to increase further.
- **Early diagnosis** – as noted, early diagnosis is vitally important. People identified early can then receive antiretroviral therapy (ART) and live a near normal life span. We are looking at the evidence gathered by the Health Protection Agency (now Public Health England) to ensure we commission the most effective interventions. This is likely to include an element of HIV testing within general practices which we know is very low at present. Rapid testing is now available which makes it easier to administer and give the results to patients quickly in a primary care setting. We will also explore the feasibility of introducing HIV testing of inpatients in hospitals which has been found to be effective in case finding.
- **Lastly and most importantly, we need to focus on prevention.** Our Public Health team is working with colleagues across London Councils to commission an effective prevention and awareness programme including generic awareness campaigns and targeted interventions for high risk communities across the capital. This will include work with men who have sex with men and Black African communities who are the two largest groups living with HIV but it will also target young heterosexual people who are a growing risk group. To support this work a pan-London HIV Needs Assessment is being commissioned

Treatment of HIV is commissioned by NHS England through its specialist Commissioning Unit.

Question 74

Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner

Could the Cabinet Member for Resources detail the savings to council tax-payers resultant from the council's decision to freeze council tax for the duration of this council cycle?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Over the period from 2010-14, council tax payers have benefited by £167 per annum from the Council Tax freeze compared to the level it would have been if it had increased in line with inflation. It is also the case that the Council has made savings of approximately £70m over this period. If these savings had not been made, council tax would have had to increase by £588 per Band D tax payer by the end of the current electoral cycle.

Question 75

Councillor Arjun Mitra

Does the Cabinet Member agree that speeding cars on East End Road between the junctions with Ossulton Way and Deansway are dangerous, and will he consider looking at traffic calming measures, and improving the safety of pedestrian crossings in the area?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

This location has only been recently flagged to officers by the local ward member and is currently under investigation. The Cabinet Member will be guided by the outcome of officer investigations.

Question 76

Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner

Without the Council's savings programme, how much would Band D council tax be this financial year?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

For 2013/14, if the Council did not implement the savings set out in the budget for next year, Council tax would need to increase by £116 to £1,229 per Band D tax payer.

Question 77

Councillor Andreas Ioannidis

Regarding Disabled Blue Badge Appeals, could the Cabinet Member advise how many people were unsuccessful on the first application, how many re-applied, and what are the criteria for success at appeal?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Unfortunately, the Northgate Blue Badge Information System is not able to report on this level of information. From 1st Jan 2012 to the 4th April 2013, however, 5% of all applications received were rejected and 7,300 Blue Badges were issued.

The criteria at appeal stage are as at application stage. The DfT is responsible for the legislation that sets out the framework for the scheme, including the eligibility criteria. Local Authorities are responsible for the day to day administration and enforcement of the scheme.

Question 78

Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner

Could the Cabinet Member detail the measures proposed to support those who critically need assistance within the Council Tax Support Scheme?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Any resident in severe financial crisis may apply for a grant under the Council's Crisis Fund scheme, which from 1 April has replaced Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans under the

DWP-run Social Fund scheme. It is planned to supplement the available funds from government for this scheme with any surplus generated by the new Council Tax Support scheme, specifically to support those who have difficulty meeting their obligations under the latter scheme.

Question 79

Councillor Anne Hutton

What are the future plans for the Finchley Youth Theatre in East Finchley?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Council's plans are to continue delivering at Finchley Youth Theatre the excellent programmes and other services that are already provided there for children and young people, not least those with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities. The centre works with a number of local partners to ensure a diversity of delivery and opportunities for young people. Currently, there are drop-in facilities for young people every Friday, offering information and advice about education, employment, training, sexual health, housing, relationships, emotional health issues, positive activities or whatever is on their mind. Future plans include extending the drop in service to be available from Monday to Friday, running a Duke of Edinburgh Open Award Centre and offering alternative learning programmes in line with the Council's 14-19 Strategy and its response to the raising of the participation age.

Question 80

Councillor Brian Salinger

Will the Cabinet Member for Housing please brief the Council on the implications for the Council and its tenants of the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

This Act was approved by Parliament in late January 2013. It seeks to create a criminal offence from the unlawful subletting of secure or assured tenancies (Housing Association).

An offence is deemed to have occurred where the tenant:

- Sub-lets or parts with possession of all of the accommodation
- Sub-lets or parts with possession of part of the accommodation without the landlords written consent
- Ceases to occupy the home as the only or principle home

This includes properties outside the local authority's own area.

There is a distinction made in the act between being in breach of a tenancy term and being dishonestly in breach of a tenancy term [both expressed or implied terms]. The bill does not apply where the "offences" outlined above are as a result of violence by persons residing in the home or the locality.

The main remedies will be by fine or in the case of dishonesty potentially a fine and imprisonment up to a maximum of two years.

Proceedings for offences may be brought within a period of 6 months from the date that evidence sufficient for proceedings came to the prosecutor's knowledge. No proceedings can be brought 3 years after the commission of the offence or after the date of the last offence was committed.

Local Authorities may also seek an unlawful profits order requiring the offender to pay the landlord an amount representing the profit made by the offender as a result of the offence. This would be calculated according to the amount he offender received as a result of the offence less any lawful rent paid. This order could be sought instead of the other remedies or as well as the other remedies. Interest will be payable on an unpaid unlawful profit order until it is settled.

Unlawful profits may also be sought by landlords in civil proceedings.

The Act also includes powers to require the provision of information for housing fraud investigation purposes covering prevention, detection or securing evidence.

The Corporate Anti Fraud Team and Barnet Homes work closely to tackle fraud and the new legislation will help strengthen their position. In the last two years 50 properties have been successfully recovered that were previously illegally occupied.

Question 81

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Does the Administration intend to sign the Inter Authority Agreement with regard to the North London Waste Authority?

Answer by Councillor Dean Cohen

At the meeting of the Cabinet on 14 September 2011, Cabinet agreed in principle to the signing of the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA), with a decision on whether to agree the principle relating to Household Waste and Recycling Centres being referred to a future meeting of the Cabinet for a decision.

At the meeting of the Cabinet on 3 November 2011, it was agreed to sign the IAA, and authorise the Interim Director of Environment, Planning and Regeneration (now the Director for Place), in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Cabinet Member for Environment to agree the final form of the IAA on the basis set out in the Cabinet report.

The IAA is in the process of being finalised between the eight authorities, (seven of which are Labour authorities) including the finalisation of the schedules contained in the document, the document is currently 201 pages.

Question 82

Councillor Anne Hutton

Could the Cabinet Member confirm which services for young people are moving from Woodhouse Road to the Finchley Youth Theatre and what is the rationale for this?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Youth Services will continue to deliver services from Woodhouse Road, with no reduction, along with the new service for care leavers, 'Onwards and Upwards'. Services at Finchley Youth Theatre are being extended to include drop in sessions and work clubs for young people.

Question 83

Councillor Andreas Ioannidis

What actions has the Cabinet Member for Education taken to ensure that all Barnet schools are free from asbestos, how many schools in Barnet still have asbestos, and what is the council's responsibility in terms of health and safety and providing schools with enough money to deal with the problem?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

Asbestos is a generic term for a group of mineral silicates that naturally occur in fibrous form and have, in the past, been widely used in the building industry. Inhalation of microscopic asbestos fibres constitutes a serious health risk and is associated with some terminal diseases. However, not all asbestos containing material (ACM) presents an immediate risk if intact and the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) discourages the unnecessary removal of sound ACM subject to an assessment of the risk (e.g. the likelihood of deterioration).

The principal regulations governing situations where persons may be exposed to ACM is the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 (CAR 2006). This requires the 'dutyholder' (i.e. the school)

to be responsible for the management of ACM within that property which they achieve by implementation of an Asbestos Management Plan. This plan clearly identifies where ACM are present and contains details as to how these ACM are maintained in good condition and how the risk is managed (e.g. removal may be the preferred management strategy where the ACM is in poor condition). Typically management of retained ACM would involve regular inspections by a suitably trained individual with any deterioration of the ACM reported to a specialist consultant or contractor for re-assessment of the risk and further action as appropriate.

Our legal advice has been that the Council has an obligation to ensure that local authority maintained schools are statutorily compliant in respect of asbestos regulations. Therefore, on behalf of Children's Services, the Building Services Team (Estates) has recently arranged for all maintained schools within the Borough to have the opportunity to update their Management Plan and provide Asbestos Awareness Training to individuals who are then qualified to implement the plan. Where this offer has not been accepted then Building Services are ensuring that statutory requirements are compliant. The management of ACM is not generally funded by the Children's Service; however, my understanding is that funding can be made available in exceptional circumstances.

In respect of local authority maintained schools, I can confirm that 41 have ACM to some extent and 10 are clear of ACM (as identified by asbestos management inspections – i.e. no opening-up of the structure was carried out to expose concealed ACM).

Question 84

Councillor Charlie O'Macauley

What is the current status of the Pavilion Way playing ground and how many years has it been left unused and why? Is there any plan for the community to benefit from this place in the future?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council are currently investigating the options for the site, which include educational and recreation use. A meeting has been held with a local community sports organisation and a proposal will be forthcoming to bring the facility back into use as a temporary sports facility whilst long term proposals are developed.

It is likely that any alternative use of the site will include an improved community facility.

Question 85

Councillor Anne Hutton

Could the Cabinet Member say which services for young people will remain at the Young People's Centre in Woodhouse Road?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The Youth Support Service drop in facilities and Volunteer Counselling Services will continue to be delivered from Woodhouse Road, along with the new service for care leavers, 'Onwards and Upwards'.

Question 86

Councillor Arjun Mitra

What steps are the Council taking to bring the Old Barn in East Finchley back into proper public use?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Council has a dedicated team working with the tenant, the Charity Commission and Community Barnet to resolve the underutilisation of the building.

The Council has taken legal action to bring the building into a useable physical condition, and

have been able to support the Centre Manager at the building, who has brought the property back into use with some community activities operating at the centre. There is also an agreement in place for a child care user which accords with the lease.

As there have been Charity management difficulties at the Centre, The Charity Commission are closely monitoring this case, including calling a meeting on 29th January 2013, at which the Chairman of the Rivers of Joy Charity, the Council, and Community Barnet attended. The outcome of this meeting as directed by the Charity Commission was that the Rivers of Joy Charity need to fulfil their management responsibilities including an AGM to be held in the next couple of months, to give the opportunity to increase the local community on the management committee. The Council are liaising with all parties and the community in this regard to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

Question 87

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will the Leader detail any meetings or conversations he has had with any representative of Saracens Rugby Club since 1st Jan 2013?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

A meeting took place on 28 February 2013 with Ed Griffiths, Chief Executive of Saracens.

Question 88

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will the Leader detail any hospitality he has accepted or declined from Saracens Rugby Club?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I have not accepted any hospitality from Saracens. I was invited to a match but declined.

Question 89

Councillor Brian Coleman

Will the Cabinet Member detail any hospitality she has accepted or declined from Saracens Rugby Club?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

None.