

CHIPPING BARNET RESIDENTS FORUM

16 June 2009 – As at 16 June 09

ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE FORUM MEETING

	Issue Raised	Response
	<p>Mrs Windsor</p> <p><u>Raised an issue at the last meeting:</u></p> <p>Concerns regarding speeding traffic at the junction of Totteridge Lane and Barnet Lane. She asked whether traffic lights could be installed at this site.</p>	<p>Neil Richardson</p> <p>It is understood that the request for traffic signals was suggested in order to improve pedestrian safety at this location for those wishing to cross the road as opposed to a speed limiting measure.</p> <p>Transport for London are responsible for the maintenance of all traffic signals within the Borough and their criteria for justifying traffic signals - as they will ultimately fund them, includes some mandatory factors such as vehicle speed and vehicle and pedestrian volumes. At this particular location, the criterion that the proposed/new location must have an accident rate equal to or greater than the average signal junction in the Borough is not met as accident rates here low.</p> <p>Therefore at this time there is no justification in considering a signalised pedestrian crossing, however Officers will continue to monitor the location should this situation change.</p>
1	<p>Mr Ashwood</p> <p>Why have the Auditors failed to pay off the Council's accounts for the past three years? What is the content of the recent letter sent to the Borough Treasurer by the auditors?</p>	<p>Clive Medlam</p> <p>The Appointed Auditor was unable to sign off the Council's recent Statement of Accounts due to prior Accounts not having been signed off by the previous Appointed Auditor. This was due to the unresolved query relating to the sale of the Barnet Football Club ground. This has now been finalised and all of the Statement of Accounts up to 2007/08 have been signed off by the respective parties.</p>

2	<p>Mr Ashwood</p> <p>The council has £320 million in reserves. What projects are ear marked for this funding, what is the extent of their costs, and when are they due to be paid?</p>	<p>Clive Medlam</p> <p>As at 31 March 2008, the Council held a total of £36m in reserves not £320m and the reasons for holding these funds vary. The Council has a general balance of £17.4m to cover unforeseen circumstances that may occur and as one of the mitigating actions for potential financial risks. It also holds specific reserves totalling £18.6m for defined purposes, for example capital projects, to meet the cost of service restructures and future software and licensing costs.</p>
3	<p>Mr Ashwood</p> <p>Even if the capital invested in the Icelandic Banks is repaid, will there be a loss of income in respect of interest payments, and if so, how much?</p>	<p>Clive Medlam</p> <p>At this stage there is no loss on the deposits placed with Icelandic banks and, until the final terms for repayment are agreed, it will not be possible to determine whether there has been any loss and, if there has been, how much that is.</p>
4	<p>Mr Ashwood</p> <p>He understood from information supplied under the FOI that Cabinet Resources Committee made the decision to invest in Icelandic Banks. If this is the case, why was the blame put on just one officer?</p>	<p>Clive Medlam</p> <p>Cabinet Resources Committee is responsible for approving the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, which is done annually in March. This then provides the framework for officers to conduct the treasury management activity, i.e. placing deposits with approved counterparties and undertaking prudential borrowing. Cabinet Resources Committee did not explicitly decide to place funds on deposit with Icelandic banks but gave authority to officers to place funds with any counterparty that met the approved criteria within the Strategy. An officer resigned from the Council after it was identified that deposits had been placed with organisations which did not meet the approved credit criteria.</p>
5	<p>Mr Ashwood</p> <p>Where is the income from renting out King George Trust land going to? He says that it is not being paid to the Trust. He gives the example of rent from the riding stables over the past 12 years and rent from Film London for use of the car park in Barnet Lane.</p>	<p>Peter Cridland</p> <p>Income from pitch lettings within the George V Trust is credited to an individual cost centre with the Council's Accounting system SAP. There was no rent from the riding stables as it was run as a Council Service for the period of time that the land was within the trust. This situation was recognised as inappropriate (as this was not an open space use) and the land was taken out of the trust and swapped for a similarly sized and valued portion of open space land. The income from film lettings goes to a Communications budget. It should be noted that even if that income went to the trust cost centre, it would still not improve the income position such that it covers all of the costs associated with the maintenance of the Trust land and the pavilion</p>

6	<p>Mr Ashwood</p> <p>Why is the Council insisting on using and paying for Councillors to chair the residents forums? It is his view that chairing could be carried out effectively by officers and that this would cost the taxpayer less.</p>	<p>David Seabrooke</p> <p>Councillors are the decision-makers and most of the community would expect to see their elected councillors visibly leading the Forums and to have the chance to engage with them</p>
7	<p>Mr Ashwood</p> <p>Mr Ashwood has evidence that the responsibility for maintenance of the pavements and highways in Crocusfield and Meadow Close fell to the Council and not Barnet Homes as they were adopted in 1975. He wishes to know why residents have been misled in the past as to responsibility, and he asks when these roads will be repaired?</p>	<p>Paul Bragg</p> <p>In order to clarify the confusion - Crocusfield has not been adopted and is the responsibility of the Council's Housing Department. Meadow Close is adopted highway and as such is inspected along with other adopted roads. The Highways department is currently reviewing the Highway inspection function and will be introducing a new way of operating the inspection regime. The way in which inspections will be carried out will radically change and as part of the review the adequacy of the inspection frequencies for each category of road has also been undertaken. This is all with the intention of improving the service and ultimately ensuring that the highway network is maintained in a safe condition for the benefit of all users of the highway. Arrangements have been made for an inspector to visit Meadow Close before the date of this meeting and all identified intervention level defects will be addressed by issuing appropriate instructions to our contractor.</p>
8	<p>Mr Ashwood</p> <p>Why did Barnet Homes attempt to overcharge leaseholders on the Quinta Estate by 75% for repairs?</p>	<p>Kevin Turnpenney</p> <p>Leaseholders are provided with an estimated cost of the work in advance as part of the statutory consultation process. They then receive a revised actual cost of the work after its completion.</p> <p>Fourteen blocks were represented as part of the application to the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal (LVT) from the Quinta Drive estate. It is the case that one of the blocks did receive an estimate which was 70% in excess of the actual cost. The other 13 blocks received estimates that were between 5 and 50% over the actual cost. It should be noted that the estimates contain provisional and contingency sums.</p> <p>This issue is still subject of the LVT process and at this stage we are unable to advise further</p>

9	<p>Mr Ashwood</p> <p>How and why was the extra £12 million incurred in respect of the additional cost of the bridge at Mill Hill?</p>	<p>Dan Ash</p> <p>The Aerodrome Road Bridge and Road project was the subject of a detailed public report to Cabinet Resources Committee in May which provides a full background to the project and project costs.</p> <p>This includes issues around the management of the project and the unforeseen additional works and consequent costs involved, particularly in relation to the diversion of utility installations and the extent and design of works required by Network Rail.</p> <p>The report also clarifies that we are working closely with the main contractor to reduce the final costs and achieve completion as early as possible. This report is available on the web or in hard copy upon request.</p>
10	<p>Mr Ashwood</p> <p>It is Mr Ashwood's view that there have been vast increases in Members' Allowances over the past three years. He asks the Council to justify these increases.</p>	<p>David Seabrooke</p> <p>Councillors' allowances are set on the advice of the Independent Remuneration Panel and are in place to enable people from all walks of life to be a councillor.</p> <p>A councillor's basic allowance in 2006/07 was £8,500 and in 2009/10 has been set at £9,974, an average annual increase of 5% of over 3 years.</p>

11	<p>Mr James Topham</p> <p>Residents along Church Hill Road are extremely concerned about the increased and dangerous speeding along the road and at the recent spate of road accidents since the removal of the speed tables by the Council and TfL in April 09. Mr Topham says that five crashes have been reported in the past five weeks which includes injuries to pedestrians and the driver of a car in a separate incident. Residents are calling for traffic calming measures</p>	<p>Neil Richardson</p> <p>A number of highway improvements were identified along Church Hill Road for buses, pedestrians, and general traffic.</p> <p>A summary of the proposals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· The removal of the raised tables to improve ride quality for buses as well as general traffic.· The introduction of 'At Any Time' waiting restrictions (double yellow lines) near pedestrian crossing points and junctions to improve sight lines.· The replacement of the mini roundabout at the junction of Rushdene Avenue with a standard give way.· The introduction of a zebra crossing opposite St Mary's Road adjacent to the green, and improvements to the bus stop layouts.· General minor improvements to existing bus stops along the route to improve accessibility.
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Speed of vehicles in Church Hill Road

To monitor the speed of vehicles before and after the implementation of the scheme, the Council organised speed surveys at four locations along Church Hill Road located near Parkside Gardens, St Mary's Road, Cedar Avenue, and Little Grove.

The survey at each location lasted for a week and were carried out in November 08 and May 09 (at the exception of the location near Cedar Avenue which was carried out last week).

The result of the 85th percentile speed "before and after surveys" indicates that speeds along Church Hill Road ranged on average between 29mph and 37mph with the higher values being reached very early morning and the lower values during the daytime. The 85th percentile is the speed at which 85 percent of vehicles are travelling at or below and is a nationally used benchmark used to assess what design parameters or traffic control measures might be considered.

There was not a major change in speed during the day, which averaged changes of ± 1 mph, however there was slight increase in the westbound direction at Cedar Avenue of 2.5mph.

Note that out of the 6500 vehicles travelling in each direction the number of vehicles exceeding 41mph has increased from 45 to 65 at Parkside Garden , from 7 to 18 at St Mary's and has not changed near Little Grove. A high increase was noted at Cedar Avenue, where the increase was from 83 to 156.

The above results suggest that whilst the removal of the humps has not led to an overall increase in speed throughout the day, the number of vehicles travelling faster than 41mph at night has increased in some locations.

30 mph signage

In light of the survey result presented above, council officers are recommending the introduction of vehicle activated signs to address the ongoing issues observed during the day and the slight increase observed at night. Once approved, the signs will be introduced as quickly as possible.

The new zebra crossing

The point of visibility of the zebra crossing on the southbound approach has been noted. An assessment of this issue made at the design stage concluded, that the position of the buildout in relation to the alignment of the parking bays, together with the warning pedestrian sign erected on the approach were sufficient. A final safety assessment of the site has just been carried out and once the findings are presented, the issue will once more be reviewed for completeness.

The accident that happened on the morning of Wednesday 3 June

The information gathered regarding this accident indicates that the driver who caused it, had failed to follow the curvature of the road. Whilst not confirmed, the early report suggests that the driver who was coming back from a night shift had lost concentration and failed to notice the slight change in direction of the road hitting a stationary vehicle with full force and pushing it onto the footway.

<p>12(a)</p>	<p>Mr Howard</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the Council started work on the New Barnet Town Centre strategy and when will the public be consulted? 2. What is the time table for the strategy? 3. Will it have regard to the comments of CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) in their ASDA and Tesco responses and will the Council be consulting local community groups as part of the preliminary study? 4. How long will the preliminary study take? 5. Will it have regard to the new retail strategy for the Borough? 6. When will the draft report be published and will it be subject to public consultation before adoption? 7. Will it be in time to influence the imminent planning application from Tesco for their Victoria Road site? 	<p>Martin Cowie</p> <p>Yes, work began on the strategy in April this year.</p> <p>Initial stakeholder engagement in relation to the scoping of the strategy has recently taken place. Key local amenity groups and representatives and landowners have been approached to seek views on some of the issues, opportunities and objectives of the study.</p> <p>The Council will adopt a strategy for the town centre by the end of the year.</p> <p>It is intended that a draft report will be ready for consultation with the community in September. It will be subject to public consultation prior to adoption.</p> <p>The emerging strategy will inform consideration of major planning applications in the local area.</p>
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<p>12(b)</p>	<p>Mr Howard</p> <p>1. When will the public be consulted over the New Barnet Town Centre Strategy?</p> <p>2. What is the time table for the strategy?</p> <p>3. Will it have regard to the comments of CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) in their ASDA and Tesco responses?</p> <p>4. Will it have regard to the new retail strategy for the Borough?.</p>	<p>We aim to go out to consultation on the Draft Town Centre Framework and Options in late summer/early autumn</p> <p>We aim to have the Town Centre framework adopted before the end of 2009.</p> <p>The strategy will consider all relevant information submitted in relation to major planning applications in the locality. The views of key organisations such as CABE and the GLA are important to ensure the approach adopted is comprehensive and deliverable.</p> <p>All the town centre strategies being prepared over the course of the next year will have regard to the strategic retail policies being formulated as part of the Local Development Framework</p>
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13	<p>Mr Howard</p> <p>The Police have informed us that there have been changes in the Road Traffic Acts whereby the whole of the Metropolitan Police area has been designated a Civil enforcement Area thereby handing over enforcement to the Local Authorities.</p> <p>Most Local Authorities have accepted responsibility for enforcing the Road Traffic Acts where appropriate. We understand that Barnet has not accepted the responsibilities. Will the Council please advise us who is the enforcing body for such responsibilities in Barnet?</p>	<p>Nick Bell</p> <p>The London Local Authorities and Transport for London Act 2003 created a new power which allows London Boroughs and Transport for London to take on responsibility for enforcing minor traffic offences involving drivers disobeying certain traffic signs. Examples include yellow junction boxes, banned turns and one-way streets. If the powers are adopted, responsibility for enforcement is removed from the police. In addition, enforcement under the new arrangements can only be carried out by CCTV.</p> <p>The Council has considered the new powers, but as adopting them would remove the powers from the Police and the borough is only partly covered by CCTV, it was felt that leaving the powers with the Police would be appropriate for the time being.</p> <p>Due to a misunderstanding, the Metropolitan Police recently advised officers that enforcement should be stopped across the whole of the Greater London area (excluding the City). Following legal advice, the police have subsequently changed this advice and are continuing to enforce in those boroughs, including Barnet, where they remain the enforcement authority.</p>
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<p>14</p>	<p>Mr Dix</p> <p>Given that the council (<i>in his view</i>) has yet again failed to meet its corporate performance objective to “stimulate high quality democratic engagement”, under the heading “More Choice Better Value”, what steps are the Council going to take to address this shortfall. In particular, how does the Council intend to improve the quality of democratic engagement with the residents of New Barnet?</p>	<p>David Seabrooke</p> <p>The Council has performance indicators for this as follows:</p> <p>Percentage of people who feel that they can influence decisions in their area (National Indicator 4) 2007/08 - 36% 2008/09 - 37.5% (2008/98 target – 38%)</p> <p>Percentage increase in resident satisfaction with opportunities for democratic engagement (Local indicator) 2007/08 - 26% 2008/09 – 29% (2008/09 target was 35%)</p> <p>Both indicators show improvement from 2007/08 levels to 2008/09, but have fallen short of the Council’s ambitious targets. Comparative data from 150 authorities in England is available and this indicates that Barnet’s score is exceeded by 26 other councils (of which 7 are London Boroughs). The maximum English score is a satisfaction rate of 56% (Coventry MBC) or 47% in London (achieved by LB Lewisham).</p> <p>The Council is running the Leader Listens scheme in which the Council visits a selection of local areas at a venue which affords people easy access, which answers residents’ questions and takes away specific action points. The Council also operates the Civic Network, which is an opportunity for all community representatives to come together and engage with each other and the Council. The Council has invested in taking part in social networking websites and have set up whereilive.org as a way to capture and respond to local people’s thoughts about living in Barnet. Details of Councillors and the surgery sessions are published to households in Barnet First magazine and on-line. There are three residents’ forums, Area Environment sub-committees and Planning sub-committees. There are set procedures for local residents to speak at area planning meetings and many others.</p> <p>In relation to major planning applications, the Council consults residents on in developing the strategic plan for each locality and on individual planning applications when they arise.</p>
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15	<p>Mrs Helen Massey</p> <p>Residents met officers on 24.2.09 to discuss their concerns about the conservation areas in High Barnet. The turnaround of the 34 bus at High Barnet church was seen as a stumbling block to improving that junction and Mr Finney advised that he would ask Highways to explore with TfL the options for turning the bus at the hospital or at the Arkley Hotel. Has there been any contact?</p>	<p>Nick Bell</p> <p>Several options for altering the junction have been put forward, but most of them require the banning of certain traffic movements which would displace traffic onto other roads. From a traffic perspective, taking the 34 bus up to the Arkley Hotel or to the hospital would add to congestion on Wood Street and would only be justified if there were a demand for this service from passengers. Various discussions have taken place with London Buses who are also currently considering diverting the 307 bus route from the Arkley Hotel to the hospital. There is limited stand space at the hospital and it could not accommodate both the 307 and 34. The 307 would be the preferred route to serve the hospital given the link this service provides to Enfield.</p> <p>In terms of the Barnet church junction, the 34 bus route is only part of the issue. Although the 34 is the only bus route which is scheduled to terminate at the church, various other routes also use the turnback facility to address problems with late running buses and the facility is also used for rail replacement buses. The only alternative route for these buses to turn round would involve residential roads and/or Stapylton Road. This is unlikely to be acceptable to residents, the Council or to London Buses.</p>
16	<p>Mr Gordon Massey</p> <p>Would the Council advise when the long promised review of the CPZ in High Barnet will take place?</p>	<p>Gavin Woolery-Allen</p> <p>The Council has the Chipping Barnet CPZ Review programmed for the end of June 2009. This will initially entail a questionnaire being delivered to all properties within the CPZ's boundary, with general questions asked about parking and the CPZ to determine the community's satisfaction with the CPZ and how it works for them. After the closing date for the return of the questionnaires (3 weeks after delivery) the Council will analyse the feedback with a view to highlighting and acting upon any issues which are significantly raised by the community.</p>

17	<p>Mr Gordon Massey</p> <p>I have twice asked Parking Control, by email, to confirm that the new arrangements for renewing parking permits mean that anyone renewing by telephone or internet prior to expiry of the old permit will effectively be paying twice for any period of overlap. Could I have a response please</p>	<p>Florence Reece</p> <p>Parking Control can confirm that when a new permit is purchased it starts from the next consecutive day from when the old permit runs out. This is set up on the computer system that is used for Parking Control.</p>
18	<p>Mr John Gardiner</p> <p>Could we please have a progress report on the future of the Market, with particular reference to the work taking place on the original St Albans Road site</p>	<p>Peter Cridland</p> <p>The Council are hopeful that the market can return to the St Albans Road site, which has had some work done on it, which could facilitate the return, but it will require Mr Walsh's co-operation.</p>
19	<p>Mr Howard</p> <p>The GLA planning committee last week were told that the future of Brent Cross (and the other three locations) as a superhub was to be abandoned because neighbouring boroughs were opposed to them.</p> <p>The committee were told that plans are now being drawn up for smaller developments across several suburban towns. The GLA is moving away from four superhubs to a constellation of town centres, reinforcing existing patterns of economic activity.</p> <p>Is there a secret agenda to make New Barnet one of the constellations?</p> <p>If yes when will the public be consulted?</p>	<p>Martin Cowie</p>

20	<p>Mr Green</p> <p>The GLA's deputy major for planning has abandoned the 'four superhubs' project for Outer London in favour of a town centre improvement scheme for outer London focussing on, in his words, "a constellation of town centres, reinforcing existing patterns of economic activity".</p> <p>Bearing in mind Barnet Council's past record of encouraging supermarket development in New Barnet – despite the gross unsuitability of such developments to the area's existing Victorian road network and suburban character (this is Mr Green's view) – I am greatly concerned that the Council may continue to erroneously classify New Barnet as either a 'growth area' (cf. the Local Development Framework Core Strategy - 10.06.08) or a 'town centre' (cf. Vibrant & Viable Town Centres - 25.03.08).</p> <p>Given that New Barnet does not meet any of the criteria for a town centre – except for retail space provision (solely due to the fact that it contains a Sainsbury's supermarket) – can local residents have a categorical assurance from Barnet Council that it will not be mislabelled as a "town centre" in either the GLA's plans, or the council's (presumably soon-to-be) forthcoming Local Area Framework?</p>	<p>Martin Cowie</p>
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21	<p>Mr McKenzie</p> <p>Please could the Forum tell me when the ASDA Gas Works planning application will be decided.</p> <p>And whether the Council is currently in dialogue with Tesco over their supermarket plans for New Barnet?</p>	<p>Martin Cowie</p> <p>The local planning authority is seeking to report the planning application to a Planning and Environment Committee in July. All residents who have written in wishing to speak at committee will be notified'.</p>