

Appendix 1

Council Questions to Cabinet Members 17 April 2012 Questions and Responses

Question 1

Councillor Brian Gordon

Is there any particular reason why our Council does not have a Conservation Officer? It has been mentioned to me by certain environmental campaigners that such an Officer would be a considerable asset, particularly in dealing with planning and green space issues

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

Existing officers have sufficient experience and knowledge to be able to deal with ecological issues, as they may come up. In particular, the Council's two arboricultural officers (tree officers) both have specialised knowledge on ecological issues and officers seek their advice when appropriate. In cases where particular specialist advice on ecological issues is required then the Council would commission the expertise required.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Brian Gordon

I appreciate our officers do a good job, but at certain other council's, there are Conservation Officer. Could I request that we look at other council's and if it is felt there may be some need in the future for a Conservation Officer, then perhaps we could consider that again?

Answer by Councillor Joanna Tambourides

We manage very well without a specific Conservation Officer because our other officers have all the skills required. Something might change in the next few years and we will reconsider that matter again in the future.

Question 2

Councillor Alison Moore

What financial and other support are the council giving to the local community to enable them to run Hampstead Garden Suburb library, and what is the total cash value of this support?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The precise details of this support are in the process of being confirmed. The council is supporting the Residents Association to buy a suitable IT system to manage the library's stock, to purchase stock, and to manage the building. The Council has also provided training to the Association's volunteers. The funding to support the community library in 2011/12 – 12/13 is in the region of £25,500, which we anticipate will be reduced in 2013/14.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Alison Moore

Councillor Rams could you confirm whether that agreement has been signed or not?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

In terms of Hampstead Garden Suburb Library an agreement has agreed and signed the library opened today and has been a great success.

Question 3 Councillor Brian Gordon

Would you please update the Council on those aspects of the forthcoming Olympics which will beneficially involve Barnet, such as for example, the Olympic Torch being brought through the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The Olympic Torch Relay will pass through the Borough on 25th July entering the Borough from Brent at around 12.15, with a lunchtime stop at Middlesex University, and leaving the borough into Enfield at around 3.15pm.

A Project Manager has been appointed to co-ordinate the council's preparations for the Olympic Torch coming to the Borough. The key preparations are around planning to ensure effective crowd

and traffic management and communications and to ensure that there are coordinated preparations for community events along the route.

Councillor Longstaff is chairing a 2012 Community Steering Group- which has various internal and external stakeholders including: Middlesex University, GLL, Barnet School's Sports Partnership, Community Barnet, Arts Depot and faith organisations - who are working together to help facilitate community activities on the day of the Torch Relay and more generally over the Olympic period.

The Arts Depot have secured funding from the GLA as part of the North Finchley Outer London Fund bid to present a "spectacular" event on the day of the Torch Relay which will be a free event taking place in Victoria Park. They will also be running a youth festival over the first weekend of the Olympic period - 28/29 July.

The GLA has offered £50k to Barnet (and every other London Borough) to "dress" their areas and create an Olympic feel. The following areas will be included:

- **Parks and open spaces** - Barnet's Olympic Parks will be Heybourne, Victoria and Friary Parks – the latter two are also on the Torch Relay route. These will be "dressed" to host 2012 related activities through Olympic stencils and flowerbeds arrangements in selected areas.
- **Transport hubs and town centres** – Olympic lamppost banners will be used to decorate town centres and key transport interchanges across the borough and the area around the Town Hall.
- **Local areas** – 2012 bunting will be distributed to community groups, schools etc to decorate street parties and events. A portion will be distributed via the Pledgebank. LBB will also have bunting for decoration of key buildings.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Brian Gordon

It is good to know there is so much activity in the Borough which will be connected with the Olympics. I just wonder whether there could be any lasting benefits in terms of jobs, more income, something to look back on in years to come to see how we benefited in the longer term.

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Councillor Longstaff is leading a panel which is looking at those sorts of issues and I am sure that he'll work closely with colleagues to ensure that happens. Sadly Barnet has had a raw deal from the Olympics, we were promised 100 meters of cycling track, which was then taken away from us. We are paying for it and should see some benefit from it, sadly we've seen very little.

Question 4

Councillor Colin Rogers

How much did it cost to remove the railings at the pedestrian crossing on East Finchley High Road at the junction with Church Lane and near Martin primary school?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

This work forms an integral part of footway improvement and street furniture de-clutter in the area in line with TfL policy. Furniture items such as guardrail panels are pre-cleared for paving relay and no additional costs have been incurred.

Question 5

Councillor Brian Gordon

Would the Leader please highlight one or two of this council's major successes in the municipal year 2011 to 2012.

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

The council has successfully managed the budget in difficult circumstances to save money for the tax payer whilst minimising any impact on residents. We are on our way creating a better organisation that delivers excellent value in all that it does.

The council has continued with ambitious housing reforms that will make sure that social housing delivers help whilst it is needed to those who need it. Our allocations policy has been well received,

the housing team has been successfully reconnected with Barnet Homes and new tenancy/rent policies are in the pipeline.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Brian Gordon

Do you not feel that there is a certain minority of wingers about, who never lose an opportunity to criticise the council and I am quite sure the silent majority of people are satisfied with what we do. Maybe we should work, all of us, whatever party a little bit harder to promote our council in a positive way, so people really will understand the benefits of what we do?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

Councillor Gordon is quite right, people do not generally look at the whole picture which is what we all have to do on this side of the Council. Of course if you ask someone do you want to pay a bit more for this the answer is no, but on the other hand if you ask them do you want a slightly better service they'll say yes and of course the two are mutually exclusive and we have to find our way through this kind of difficulty.

Question 6

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Does the Leader of the Council believe in collective Cabinet responsibility and, if so, what are his views on Cabinet colleagues who deny their previous voting record, on car park charges for example?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

Collective responsibility is always important and voting records and the subject of said votes are in the public domain. It would be hard to imagine that anyone would deny how they voted.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Kath McGuirk

If a Cabinet Member misleads the public on his voting record or her voting record, and a Cabinet colleague is also exceedingly rude to a member of the public in public, what action are you going to take?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

That would depend on the circumstance, I assume that is hypothetical question.

Question 7

Councillor Ruben Thompstone

Would the Cabinet Member please explain how Barnet Council has frozen council tax for the last four years running?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

For the last two years, we have been assisted by the Conservative-led Coalition Government and have delivered on our manifesto promise to freeze Council Tax for two years. This Council has kept Council Tax down through a relentless drive for efficiency; ensuring services deliver value for money. Only 17% of the cuts are from service reductions proving that we're making savings from efficiencies and smarter use of taxpayers' money.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Ruben Thompstone

Would the Cabinet Member like to forecast Council Tax increases over the next two years?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Medium Term Financial Strategy forecast Council Tax increase at 2.5% for the 2 years and is below the current rate of inflation. This forecast along with our track record, demonstrates our commitment to keeping Council Tax under control.

Question 8

Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

Can the Cabinet Member tell us how many people have been re-housed by Barnet Council in either council housing, housing association properties or the private rented sector since the introduction of the new housing allocations policy, and how many people are still waiting to be re-housed, including those that the council are actively assisting to find a home?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

The new allocations scheme became operational from 1 April 2011. Since then the following number of households have been re-housed:

- Council Housing: 441
- Housing Association: 498
- Private Rented Sector: 187
- Total: 1126

There are 1252 households that have been banded, of these there are 752 that we are actively assisting to find a home, and a further 500 in the lowest priority band that have a reduced priority, for example because they are intentionally homeless, and are unlikely to be housed. There are a further 500 households who have applied for re-housing but where a banding decision has not yet been taken due to ongoing investigations.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Charlie O-Macauley**

Could the Cabinet Member explain, what he means by '...because they are intentionally homeless, and are unlikely to be housed.' Is that the Cabinet Member will leave residents to sleep on the streets?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

No

Question 9**Councillor Ruben Thompstone**

Would the Cabinet Member please advise on how the recently improved Henley's corner upgrade adjacent to my ward has impacted traffic flow in the area?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Benefits have included average time savings per vehicle across the three junctions of between 2½ and 4 minutes at peak times and two thirds reductions in average queue lengths

Transport for London will be carrying out surveys over the coming months to further quantify the benefit to road users. Provisional data from the London Congestion Analysis Project indicates that there has been a favourable effect on traffic flow with reduced delays. Anecdotal evidence has also been favourable.

Henlys Corner is an example of Conservative Politicians delivering . The scheme was completed on time and on budget under close scrutiny from Mike Freer MP and myself . It is symptomatic of the success of Boris Johnson's Administration in delivering Capital projects for the benefit of Londoners.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Ruben Thompstone**

Would the Cabinet Member offer observation about how this might have progressed under a different London Mayor?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

I am not sure Henlys Corner would have progressed at all under a different Mayor. Under Boris Johnson's administration the project progressed, there was full and frank consultation within the Borough, with local Ward Members, with Kinloss Synagogue and with many others. The project was delivered on time, on budget and seems to be working extremely well, as I'm sure many Members of this Council will have experienced as they traverse the Borough.

Question 10**Councillor Colin Rogers**

Why were the railings at the pedestrian crossing on East Finchley High Road at the Junction with Church Lane and near Martin primary school removed whilst negotiations with the Walksafe N2 campaign were still ongoing?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The railings were removed following an objective assessment of the local conditions as part of a separate and coincidental programme of work in the area to improve the footway and rationalise street furniture. This is an approach that is being applied consistently throughout the borough wherever footway relays are undertaken and is in line with TfL policy on “shared space” and particularly addresses the safety issues raised across London by cyclists who too often have been killed and injured by being crushed against railings.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Colin Rogers

While Councillor Coleman is accentuating the important nature of consultation, while the safety railings were being dismantled, our very own highway department was in the midst of an holistic assessment of the very school crossing, which has been started by a 2000+ signature petition. Of all the people involved in this fundamental appraisal, no one was informed or asked about the removal of the railings. Why was it the parents group Walksafe, the Martin School governors, the PTA, the local police and Councillors, not asked about their views?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Sadly, this work is funded almost entirely by TfL and TfLs policy now is proceeding as standard. There have been many incidents sadly of cyclist killed and injured by being crushed between vehicles and railings. The thinking now of TfL officers is to pursue the shared space agenda as particularly demonstrated down in South Kensington in Exhibition Road. I think the jury is out on the concept of shared space, I'm highly sceptical about it but this is the current web of professional officer thinking, not that professional highways officer thinking is always the right way to proceed in my view.

Question 11

Councillor Ruben Thompstone

Would the Cabinet Member please advise on how the use of Barnet's green spaces and parks is supported by the Council in the last four years?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Among the achievements of the current Conservative Administration in the last four years in our parks and green spaces has been how Barnet has been pro-active in maximising funds by obtaining grant fund awards. There was the investment of £1.12 M to deliver the 11 playbuilder schemes.

We have worked with local community groups and friends of parks to deliver an excellent play area in Mill Hill park (and particular thanks must go to Mrs Claire Zinkin and her Committee) from lottery funds and £24K from Barnet taxpayers . A similar grant will fund a new play area in Lyttleton playing fields.

The introduction of self management of allotments with the first signing of the lease with Brook Farm, with the rest to follow during 2012/13 has been welcomed by users.

We have delivered a 3 year programme to revitalise seven miles of the Dollis Valley Greenwalk including 15 bridges, refurbishment of the decoy pond at Brent Park with a new viewing platform, 2 further play areas at Riverside Walk and Windsor Open Space. As well as works to 5 entrances, repair and improvement works to paths, management of vegetation and trees, treatment and removal of invasive species alongside significant improvement to signage . This was funded by a significant grant from Boris Johnson and using TfL monies and we look forward to future projects of this nature funded by the Mayor of London .

Minor improvements in parks include :-

- Ravenscroft Park rebuilding of steps and installation of all new seating and bins.
- Brunswick /Waterfall walk widening existing footpaths and resurfacing.
- Sunny Hill Park widening existing footpaths and resurfacing.
- Ditch maintenance at Hadley Green.

Delivery of successful community events in parks for a number of years and looking to allow residents greater access to parks for their own family and celebratory events .

- New seats and bin replacement programme which has been running for the past 8 years and is continuing with the installation of traditional lionhead seats.
- Resurfacing of footpaths across green spaces.
- Refurbishment of the exterior and interior of pavilions.
- Replacement programme for old rose beds and changing them over to low level and low maintenance shrub beds.
- New fencing/gates within parks and open spaces.
- Eradication programme of invasive weeds across green spaces
- Bulb planting/ naturalising of bulbs within grass areas for spring colour.
- New and improvement to café facilities across the borough within Greenspaces
- Tennis and ball court refurbishment.
- Pond clearance and refurbishment

I could go on

Supplementary Question

Councillor Ruben Thompstone

Would the Cabinet Member offer observations about how this might have progressed under a different London Mayor?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

I and many residents of outer London Boroughs and Barnet in particular, have been grateful for the investment put into Greenspaces and parks. There was a huge web oriented consultation exercise, where residents voted, about a couple of years ago now, and that resulted in significant investment from the Mayor of London in the Dollis Valley Green walk, which I'm sure many Members have experienced. There's the improved children's playground in Riverside Walk, the improved cycling facilities, improved pedestrian signage and the street trees that have been planted directly as a result of savings the Mayor of London made by scrapping the Londoner propaganda sheet.

Question 12

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Given that nearly a third of Wards in Barnet have a branch of Greggs, in addition to dozens of independent bakeries across the Borough, will the Cabinet Member offer his support to scrapping the unfair pasty tax?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

I do not believe the tax now being applied to all hot take away food is unfair, indeed it closes a loophole. To quote the Prime Minister, "I don't think it's fair, for instance, that the small businessman running the fried chicken takeaway is having to charge his customers VAT, but the big supermarket is not having to pay VAT for their fresh hot chickens."

Supplementary Question

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

I think the Cabinet Member has rather missed the point. The 'pasty tax' is yet another tax that the government has imposed on Barnet businesses, big and small, as well as hard pressed local residents. Has he actually has pasty recently?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

I don't think the eating habits of decision makers is anything to do with the decisions they make. But if Councillor Schneiderman is that interested, I can say the last time I went to Greggs was a couple of weekends ago, just before Boris' visit and I had a steak bake, it was very hot and in my mind it was classed a hot takeaway and I was quite happy to pay the increased VAT.

Question 13

Councillor Ruben Thompstone

Would the Cabinet Member please advise on how public transport in Barnet has improved over the past four years?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

On the tube network , so vital to many residents of this Borough , Transport for London have recently (5 March 2012) released information advising that delays across the London Underground network are at their lowest since 2003/04 according to the latest performance figures and that, lost hours due to delays have fallen by almost 40 per cent since 2007/08. Good news for the many users of the Northern and Piccadilly lines resident in Barnet.

The upgrade of the Northern line is underway. When the upgrade is complete in 2014, line capacity should increase by a fifth and journey times reduce by 18 per cent.

Bus service reliability as measured by the average excess waiting time (i.e. the length of time passengers wait in excess of the ideal) for high frequency routes serving Barnet has reduced to 0.9 minutes in 2010/11 from 1.0 minutes in 2008/09. (2.1 minutes in 1999/2000).

Bus service improvements have included the introduction of a new service (324) between Stanmore and Brent Cross in 2010 (providing a service for Colindeep Lane) . An improved bus service to Barnet General Hospital is being introduced.

Countdown real time bus information is now available on streets and via the internet and text message from bus stops. Additional stops will be provided with the facility to display the information. The hated bendy bus has gone and a new Routemaster is being introduced which received an enthusiastic welcome when it visited the Borough a couple of months ago.

The transformation of London Overground (formerly the North London Line) has benefited many in the South of the Borough . The Oyster card has been extended and has become the method of payment for most users allowing substantial savings to be made by TfL in the back office as cashless payments become the norm in so many areas of life . A transformed Kings Cross station both below and above ground is used by many residents , only the other week I attended the opening of the new Western concourse by Boris Johnson and Justine Greening .

The disappointment has perhaps been Network Rail where improvements have been slow therefore in my view proving the point that there services should be transferred to the Mayor of London .

I could go on

I look forward to another four years of improvements in public transport

Supplementary Question

Councillor Ruben Thompstone

Would the Cabinet Member offer observations about how this might have gone under a different London Mayor?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

There have been significant improvements to public transport. One has to bear in mind that these are largely funded by the receipts from the fare box, which fund the capital investment across many areas particularly the underground. Should there be a reduction in any way, in the income received from the fare box, that capital investment will dry up and the residents will not be able to enjoy the improvements to the Northern line and Piccadilly line in particular.

Question 14

Councillor Pauline Coakley-Webb

What are the plans in the medium term for the services provided by the Mill Hill Depot – where will they be and at what additional costs?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

By the time we must vacate the Mill Hill Depot (2016) I expect Pinkham Way to be available. There will be no extra costs

Supplementary Question**Councillor Pauline Coakley-Webb**

Given that there is four years to go still to this date 2016 for Pinkham Way to be available, if the waste plant doesn't go to Pinkham way, will the Mill Depot still relocate there with no problem, or would there have to be a plan b?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

I'm a little confused about Councillor Coakley Webb's question, because her party's policy as by expressed the 12 of the 14 Members of the London Waste Authority (bearing in mind that the NLWA is firmly controlled by the Labour Party) is to put the waste plant on Pinkham Way and the planning application for the waste plant and depot will be considered by the London Borough of Haringey in due course.

Question 15**Councillor Mark Shooter**

The Cabinet Member states in a recent press release :

"Free Schools can also play an important role in meeting the growing pressure for school places. The council will continue to engage with groups with proposals for Free Schools where there is a proven demand, a robust business case and available property."

There are plenty of school proposals with solid business cases and proven demand, but no property. What is the council going to do to ensure that land is available for our children's education in the future?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

In respect of free school proposals, the council does indeed take a supportive approach. Barnet was one of the first Local Authorities in the country to have a free school open, Etz Chaim. And Rimon (Golders Green) free school is due to open this coming September.

We are acutely aware of the need to ensure sufficient school places are available for the unprecedented demand we're experiencing. The investment strategy approved by Cabinet in November 2011 set out over £60m of investment in primary schools over the coming five years to help meet this demand and ensure that the council meets its statutory duty of offering places to all who apply to the maintained sector. The shortage and cost of available land is a significant issue in Barnet as it is in many other London boroughs, therefore our strategy is to invest in expanding successful existing schools on their current sites wherever possible.

To assist free school proposers, we share information about potential appropriate land opportunities as they come to our attention. Details of any sites that become available in council ownership, which are surplus to the council's requirements and may provide opportunities for free schools will be made available to school proposers.

Question 16**Councillor Charlie O-Macauley**

Can the Council make clear what it defines as volunteering?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The Oxford dictionary definition of a volunteer is 'a person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task'. Volunteering is strong and vibrant in Barnet – the number of residents who volunteer is above the national average – and takes many forms, from becoming a school governor to supporting the young and the elderly. Volunteering is an invaluable part of community life, as well as the local economy, and the Council continues to work closely with Community Barnet to encourage more people to give a proportion of their time to volunteering.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Charlie O-Macauley**

Does the Cabinet Member realise how many people have not been able to be a volunteer when they want to? Has he ever measured the number of volunteers in Barnet?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

I class myself as a volunteer. I volunteer for the Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade, which is wonderful organisation and has many outlets in Barnet. Barnet council does a lot to encourage volunteering. Last year we launched the Plegebank which is a tool by which residents can volunteer and get assistance from the council to help them in the volunteering. I don't have the exact figure or the number of volunteers in Barnet, but it is above the national average.

Question 17**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Can the Leader please tell the Council which council officers and which elected Members have read full un-redacted copies of the report written by Mr Bill Roots into the loss caused by the council failing to claim monies due to it from the FEFC?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

I understand that the Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer have seen the unredacted report. Two other Officers, one who dealt with an HR issue and another who dealt with a Freedom of Information Act request have also seen the unredacted report. I am not aware of any current elected Member who has seen it in such form. My belief is that the subject matter of the report is for the Head of Paid Service to have dealt with, in so far as it deals with individuals and the execution of their duties.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Councillor Cornelius has been aware that I have been asking and been refused a copy of this report since I became aware of its existence in 2010. It is only by chance that I discovered it had been realised to a member of the public. It is clear that the report was not even shown to the Audit Committee, nor I suspect were they even told of its existence. Not even the Leader of the Council appears to have been shown a copy. Can I ask that the Leader now ensures that the full report is made available to Members' on a confidential basis?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

I am not willing to make that commitment at the moment. I don't see that this is a matter for elected Members' to deal with. It has been dealt with by the Head of Paid Service and I don't think it is something that should be further exposed. I am slightly surprised that one has reached a member of the public, I wasn't aware of that and thank Councillor Salinger for informing me and there will be an investigation as to how that happened.

Question 18**Councillor Geoff Johnson**

Is it fair that a local community group has been charged £150 to hold an event in a local park for the local community?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Many Community Groups are allowed to use our Parks and Greenspaces for no hire charge, however a charge has to be levied to recover the council's legal and administrative costs, a practise followed by the council under the Labour and Liberal Democrat Administration as well as the current Conservative one. The Council makes no "profit" out of these charges.

Question 19**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Will the Leader tell Members how much was paid, to Mr Roots and when for the report drawn up by Mr Roots into the loss caused by the failure of the council to claim monies due to it from the FEFC?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

£ 6300 was paid to a company that employed Mr Roots on the 31st December 2009.

£ 900 was paid to a company that employed Mr Roots on the 8th March 2010. I am informed these two invoices refer to the investigation in question but that they are drawn in respect of professional services, rendered.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Brian Salinger

I can save the Leader from having an inquiry, it was in answer to an FOI request. Can I ask the Leader if he will investigate why in a letter to the member of the public he was told and I quote 'we have conducted several searches of the SAP finance system and can trace no payments to either Mr. Roots as an individual or his consultancy company W Roots Associates Ltd. It would appear Mr. Roots did not receive any remuneration for conducting this review and submitting his report. Perhaps he would like to investigate that.

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

There is no need to, ask soon I asked about this matter, the information was forthcoming very rapidly. There was no difficulty finding it and I am at a loss to know what you are really asking me Councillor Salinger.

Question 20

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

How many police officers and police community support officers are currently missing from a) Woodhouse, b) all of Barnet's Safer Neighbourhood Police Teams?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

Woodhouse currently has one Police Officer and four Police Community Support Officers against a full establishment of two Police Constables and six Police Community Support Officers.

Overall the strength for Police Constables in Safer Neighbourhood Teams is 42 and the Police have 38.9 in post (advert for the vacancies are currently running).

The strength of Police Community Support Officers is 126 and the Police have 85.8 in post. The shortfall is entirely down to PCSOs entering training to be police officers. There is a recruitment process for PCSOs currently being undertaken. The Police anticipate that by the start of the Olympics, they will be at establishment.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Alan Schneiderman

It is quite clear that Barnet has now lost half its sergeants, a third of its PSCOs and those that are in place are regularly forced to leave Barnet and work across London. Why has both he and the London Assembly Member allowed to get this bad.

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

If you read the answer you'll see that the complimentary number of sergeants will up to speed very as indeed will be the number of PCSOs. If you are willing to vote for Mayor Johnson you'll see that he hopes to increase the number of PCSOs by over 2000 in the next 4 years

Question 21

Councillor Dean Cohen

What is your opinion of the most recent Annual Audit Letter received by the Council?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The Letter is very positive in that

- The Statement of Accounts were issued with an 'unqualified' opinion and represented a true and fair view of the Council's financial affairs and;
- The council made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

2010/11 was the first year that councils were required to prepare their accounts under International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The Council planned very early for the move to IFRS and this was reflected in the outcome of the audit.

The draft financial statements and working papers were sent a month earlier than last year to the External Auditors – this was a significant achievement by the Council's team managing this and the working papers were of a high quality. This resulted in the issuing of an unqualified audit opinion.

The Auditors stated the following:

"We were presented with draft financial statements on 31 May 2011 and accompanying working papers on 6 June 2011. This is a month earlier than normal and we recognise the significant achievement by the Council's finance team in managing this. The working papers were of a high quality and the financial statements have been compiled in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2010/11 (the Code), based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). Co-operation in dealing with audit issues has been strong, such that we were in a position to issue this report in draft, based on a substantially complete accounts audit, on 15 July 2011."

There were 6 recommendations in 2010/11 compared to 7 in 2009/10 and 7 adjustments to the accounts in 2010/11 compared to 8 in 2009/10.

Value for Money (VfM)

The Council received an unqualified VfM conclusion confirming that the Council made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This was also made well in advance of the required deadline of 30 September 2011.

The Financial resilience of the Council was reviewed and the Council has shown that it is effectively planning to address known changes to funding. There are good levels of reserves to insulate the Council against future financial known and unknown challenges. Whilst the Council faces significant challenges in 2011/12 and beyond, the current arrangements for achieving financial resilience is robust.

Of the 25 areas of focus, the majority - 19 were green – indicating no cause for concern, 4 were amber indicating potential risks and/or weaknesses and 1 was rated as high risk. The report recognises the work that the council has and is still undertaking to improve contract management compliance.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Dean Cohen

Could the Cabinet Member advise how Barnet is ranked within London for value for Money

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

I am very please to confirm that Barnet is ranked 3rd in London for Value for Money performance, which given the low sum money we get from central government per head of population is an excellent achievement.

Question 22

Councillor Barry Rawlings

Barnet has been allocated the 5th lowest per capita spend for public health in the indicative 2012-13 budget. Will the cabinet join the Labour Group in writing to the Secretary of State to ensure a fairer allocation?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

As Councillor Rawlings will know, we have - from the very outset – opposed the proposal that Barnet's Shadow Public Health Funding Allocation be based on historic Barnet PCT spend. The quite inequitable effect this would have on Barnet's Allocation was conveyed in the very strongest terms to the Department of Health as long ago as last September at the very start of the process.

Since then we have continually pressed for our Allocation to be uplifted to reflect the historic underfunding by the PCT and I can confirm that I have already written to the Chief Executives of both NHS North Central London and NHS London and separately to the Department of Health expressing my very deep concern that the Shadow Budget does not redress this historic underfunding. I have also been in close contact with Barnet's Members of Parliament who like me are also extremely concerned about Barnet's proposed Allocation and who will be pressing in the strongest possible terms for it to be uplifted.

I am grateful for Councillor Rawlings' and his Party's support on this as the stronger our voice is to push for a funding settlement that is fair and enables the Council to fully discharge our new statutory responsibilities from 1st April 2013 the better. I understand that there will be a Consultation by the Department of Health on Public Health Allocations in June of this year and I would look forward to support on this from all sides of this Council.

Question 23

Councillor Dean Cohen

How is the Council performing in relation to debt collection?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Cabinet in January approved the new debt management strategy which clearly set out how consistent and transparent debt management arrangements will be applied to all sums owing to the council with the aim of maximising income and cash flow.

Whilst every effort is made to pursue debts there will be circumstances where debt will be irrecoverable, this is in part due to the very nature of the goods and services that the council supplies, particularly within Adult services where there is an obligation on the authority to provide care regardless of whether the individual has the means to pay for this care, and also in the current economic period, where companies are failing and leaving debts unpaid.

However, against this, debt recovery performance is improving year on year.

Over the last five years the write-offs as a percentage of billed debt has reduced from 1.66% to the current 0.64%. This current figure included debts that related to our legacy system and removing these brings the percentage down to 0.48%

In real terms, in 2007 the write-offs were just over £1m on billed debt of £60m while in 2011 the write-off value was £670k on billed debt of £105m.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Dean Cohen

Could the Cabinet Member also advise how London is ranked for debt right of?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

I am please to confirm that from the data available, Barnet's performance is line with other London Boroughs and given current trends we expect to be performing above the London average in near future.

Question 24

Councillor Anne Hutton

Given that David Cameron stated at PMQs last year that "**On Sure Start, the budget is going from £2,212m to £2,297m – that budget is going UP, that is what's happening**" – why is the administration determined to make savage cuts to our children centres despite overwhelming evidence that the first 3 years of life provide the main determinants for health, educational achievement and general life chances?

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

The total budget for Children's Centres in 2011/12 was £4.3m and will remain the same in 2012/13. We are suggesting changes to the distribution of funding for Children's Centres in Barnet and are proposing to redistribute the budget of £4.3m more effectively to meet the needs of vulnerable families through the delivery of community activities.

This funding proposal is intended to retarget money to the most disadvantaged areas and services for the most vulnerable families, reaching out to where those families are. These continue to be the priority for the Council, as early intervention through engagement with Children's Centre services can make a real difference to vulnerable children's life chances and reduce costs in future years.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Anne Hutton

I do worry that we may be over targeting and some may slip through the net. Can the Cabinet Member confirm that it is council policy not subsidise child care facilities operating from children centres.

Answer by Councillor Andrew Harper

As Councillor Hutton well knows, a consultation will be starting up shortly with a view to looking at proposals and collecting comments on proposals for re-allocation of the way child care subsidies are dispersed across of our excellent 13 children centres. Can I say that the steps that we are taking and will be taking in the coming months are, despite what was suggested in the original questions, entirely in line with the direction being given by the Coalition Government not least by the Children's Minister herself Sarah Teather, who said that it is part of the Government's aim to refocus Surestart children centres on those disadvantaged families they were originally set up to help by the previous Labour Government.

Question 25

Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

Does Barnet Council believe in giving people choice in public services, and if so why are Barnet residents not listened to when they say they want the option of paying for parking by cash?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

It is my view that Barnet residents want modern , efficient and cost effective public services that deliver more for less.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

Could the Cabinet Member please explain what he meant by cost effective when people are paying twice for parking. They are paying for the phone and they are paying back with their credit card and why are Barnet residents not listened to when they say they want to option to be able to pay by cash?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

My answer stands.

Question 26

Councillor Darrel Yawitch

Would the Cabinet Member outline any plans for Controlled Drinking Zone across Barnet?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

Following requests from the Police, local Ward Councillors, residents and businesses to create four new Designated Public Places, informally known as alcohol control areas, I will be submitting a report to Cabinet seeking approval to create a Borough wide Order.

The four new areas requested were Golders Green, Edgware, Burnt Oak and West Hendon, which are in addition to our existing zones of North Finchley, Finchley Central, Hendon and Cricklewood. Considering the extent of both proposed and existing zones and the impact displacement would have, a Borough wide Order will be proposed.

If Cabinet approve the proposal to create a Borough wide zone, after considering any representations received from a statutory consultation period, it is anticipated that a report will be submitted to Council in September for an Order to be made under seal.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Darrel Yawitch**

As the Cabinet Member I'm sure is no doubt aware my excellent Ward Councillors, Councillor Helena Hart and Councillor Scannell have been campaigning for many years for a Controlled Drinking Zone in Edgware which borders two other Boroughs that have Controlled Drinking Zones, suffers most acutely from this problem. If for whatever reason a Borough wide order is not approved would the Cabinet Member be supportive of an audit in Edgware?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

Yes I will.

Question 27**Councillor Alison Moore**

What is the anticipated cost of the review of traffic lights across the Borough?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

£100k has been identified from the Boroughs Local Implementation Plan (ie funded by Transport for London) funding to address the review of traffic signals and potential works identified, in line with the Mayor of London's policy of removing unnecessary traffic lights. Cost savings will accrue to the Borough as the amount charged by TfL for traffic light maintenance.

Question 28**Councillor Brian Salinger**

At the January 24th meeting of the Council, Council resolved to ask the Leader of the Council to meet with the Chairman of the Club (*Barnet Football Club*) with a view to resolving any differences that are perceived to exist between the council and the Club in order to secure both a short and long term future for the Club at Underhill.

Can The Leader please report back to the Council on the outcome of that meeting, and if it has not yet taken place, can he explain why and when he does expect it to take place?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I look forward to the meeting with the Chairman of Barnet Football Club which is scheduled for the 19th April. Diaries can be difficult to co-ordinate.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Brian Salinger**

Has the Leader read Mr. Kleanthous' latest comments on the Football Club website reprinted in last Friday's match programme? And will the Leader please circulate the notes of this meeting to all Members as soon after the meeting has taken place as is possible.

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

I will make a point of looking at the website and looking at his comments. I'm afraid I don't make a habit of looking at the website and I don't normally look at the match programme. I am not sure if the negotiations are to proceed that I should break any confidences I might receive during this meeting but I will undertake to inform the Member as to the outcome of the meeting.

Question 29**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What percentage of residents would need to oppose the policy of hiring out parks for private events before the Cabinet Member changes his mind?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

"Consultation is not a referendum" is one of my favourite quotes from Mr Ken Livingstone.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

I note Councillor Coleman's answer and I'm sure likewise Ken Livingstone has his favourite quotes from Councillor Coleman. The real issue is that given that the response to past consultation is overwhelmingly against it, surely it's just time to admit he is wrong and withdraw the stupid policy?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

On the contrary, a very authorised and specific campaign from 1 of the many parts we consulted on resulted in significant number of identical emails. This policy will be in the interest of all the residents of the Borough, to whom the parks and open spaces belong.

Question 30**Councillor Wendy Prentice**

On its last inspection Adult Social Services was rated an excellent service by the regulator. Are we still faring at the same level of excellence'?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

Like other parts of Local Government, Adult Social Care is no longer subject to an annual performance assessment and therefore the social care regulator CQC is not updating nor issuing further ratings of Councils. The last rating issued was for 2009/10.

Councils are however expected to be accountable to the public on their performance and Local Authority Adult Social Care are encouraged to produce an annual Local Account setting out how well people with social care needs are being supported. Barnet Council published it's first Local Account in February 2012 following on from a consultation with users and carers on what they would like to see included in it. (<http://www.barnet.gov.uk/local-account>).

Barnet's publication, *Your Local Account*, therefore sets out the key achievements for the financial year 2010/11 and 2011/12. It sets out 8 local commitments for users and carers together with a range of national performance indicators against which the public can judge our performance over the coming year. Barnet Adult Social Care and Health's performance continues to be amongst the top quartile for London councils across a range of national reported indicators, for example:

- Number of eligible people receiving self directed support
- Number of carers' assessments undertaken
- Overall satisfaction of people who use services with their care and support (87.8% compared to London average of 85.9%)
- Eligibility criteria for access to services remain unchanged
- Numbers of people receiving services remains broadly the same despite significant reductions to the Directorate's budget.

Most importantly we are very interested in customer feedback on Personal Budgets and support to Carers and will therefore be undertaking quarterly surveys to ensure we have a detailed understanding of customer needs and experiences of services which we will report on through the Corporate Plan and subsequent Local Accounts.

Question 31**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Will the Cabinet Member join us in lobbying the government to return the £500m taken from the health budget as a result of last year's underspends not all being rolled forward?

Answer by Councillor Helena Hart

This relates to the recent national media coverage (24 March) of the £900m reported under-spend in the NHS 2011/12 budget of which £400m has been rolled over into the 2012/13 budget.

The Department of Health has commented that the under-spend was down to greater than expected efficiencies in capital projects, including an IT scheme, but the Coalition Government's commitment to increase the NHS budget in real terms was still being met – with an investment of an extra £12.5bn over the course of this Parliament

The Council is keen to ensure that the Barnet allocation for health services is managed locally in accordance with local priorities. As members are aware, the Barnet health system continues to be very challenged financially and has been receiving financial support from other health systems who are operating with a budget under-spend. Our focus must remain on supporting our local health system to become financially sustainable for the longer term which we will be doing through ever closer working with the new Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group.

Question 32**Councillor Andrew Strongolou**

What further work are Adult Services doing with healthcare partners to increase integration?"

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

Health and Social Care integration is a strategic priority for the Local Authority and healthcare partners and is at the heart of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy which has been recently produced and endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Local Authority's commitment and intentions for health and social care integration have also been articulated in a recent outline strategic case for local health and social care integration. A joint Integrated commissioning plan is being developed for sign off by the Health and Wellbeing Board at its meeting at the end of May. This will deliver a work programme for local health and social care integration that builds on and extends work already underway. Initial work has focused on improving the coordination of services and outcomes for frail elderly people and increasing the integration of social care and GP delivered primary healthcare services.

Question 33**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

At a residents' meeting on the 20th March the Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships said of the Cabinet decision to introduce car park charging at Church Hill car park "I didn't vote for the charges – I voted for a consultation". Given that he has voted for these proposals no less than 6 times since 2010, including at two council tax setting meetings, two Cabinet meetings when the proposals were formally recommended to full council, and two cabinet meetings when the proposals were agreed for public consultation, could the Leader confirm whether he understands what his Cabinet Member means when he says he didn't vote for the charges?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

Yes

Supplementary Question**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

While I applaud the East Barnet Councillors for going to consult the residents after horse has bolted, can the Leader actually confirm that the vote on the budget was actually a definitive vote on the budget or a vote on the consultation on its proposals. On consultations versus referendum, can he agree with the referendum last week in East Finchley as definitive no against your parking policy

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

I think the word is no.

Question 34**Councillor Kate Salinger**

What arrangements are being made for the Olympic Torch relay?"

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The Olympic Torch Relay will pass through the borough on 25th July entering the borough from Brent at around 12.15, with a lunchtime stop at Middlesex University, and leaving the borough into Enfield at around 3.15pm.

A Project Manager has been appointed to co-ordinate the Council's preparations for the Olympic Torch coming to the borough and has set up appropriate governance for the delivery of the project. The progress of the preparations is being monitored by the 2012 Readiness to Deliver Board which is chaired by the Chief Executive.

The key preparations are around planning to ensure effective crowd and traffic management, communications and community and event management.

Traffic Management- A highways officer has been designated to facilitate the borough traffic management requirements. Plans are currently being drawn up to accommodate the necessary parking restrictions, traffic alleviation, identification of pinch points, bus diversions and other related issues.

Crowd Management- an operational officer in EPR has been designated to manage the specific duties to identify where large crowds will congregate, allocate crowd marshalls and barriers and ensure that appropriate steps are in place to protect the health and safety of members of the public; it is intended that the marshalls will all be LBB Street Scene employees.

Communications- Messages will be communicated to Barnet's residents and businesses regarding both the direct and secondary impacts of the relay and the opportunities for celebration through the associated events and activities along the route. A dedicated section of the website to show the route, activities for the day (and other information on the Olympics) will be established. In addition the route will be publicised on bus shelters and properties and business premises along the route will be leafleted to ensure they are informed.

Community Event Management - Cllr Longstaff has been asked to chair a 2012 Community Steering Group- which has various internal and external stakeholders including: Middlesex University, GLL, Barnet School's Sports Partnership, Community Barnet, Arts Depot and faith organisations - who are working together to help facilitate community activities on the day of the Torch Relay and more generally over the Olympic period.

The Arts Depot have secured funding from the GLA as part of the North Finchley Outer London Fund bid to present a "spectacular" event on the day of the OTR which will take place in Victoria Park and to also run a youth festival over the weekend of 28/29 July.

Question 35

Councillor Charlie O-Macauley

How many people are unemployed in Barnet? And how many of them are claiming Disability Living Allowance?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

13,400 people are unemployed (7.4%) of the population and a further 13,500 are unemployed but unavailable to work because of sickness or other barriers. 11710 people are claiming Disability Living Allowance.

Question 36

Councillor Stephen Sowerby

Would the Cabinet Member provide an update on Police efforts to tackle Youth Violence, Robbery and Murder in our Borough?

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

MPS statistics show that comparing the last 45 months of Mayor Boris Johnson (May 2008 – January 2012) with the last 45 Months of Ken Livingstone (August 2004 – April 2008) that:

- Barnet Youth Violence down 14.9%.
- Robbery is down 10.9%
- Murder is down 5.9%

Crime in Barnet has dropped overall by 17% in the four years that Boris Johnson has been Mayor and over 1,000 more police are on the beat across London.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Stephen Sowerby

Would the Cabinet Member say how supportive Labour has been in supporting the fight against crime in the Borough.

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

It was the Labour Party who didn't vote for tougher sentences for burglars. It's the Labour Party who didn't vote to adopt the Safer Community Partnership Strategy and it is the Labour Party who continue to suggest that it was the police force having cuts in number when in fact over the last 4 years the number of warranted police officers has gone up by 1000.

Question 37**Councillor Alison Moore**

Will the Cabinet member tell us what actions he will be taking to meet the governments "Green Deal" requirements?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

The Council recognises the importance of encouraging homeowners and businesses to introduce energy efficiency measures into their properties, and it is hoped that the Green Deal will provide an effective mechanism for driving market demand for such improvements. We recognise that such measures will help to address concerns about the cost of future energy bills, provide improved health for more vulnerable residents, potentially reduce carbon emissions, as well as delivering jobs and investment in the local economy.

The Council has fully participated in both the Mayoral Group for London Councils and the Future of London research project on the Green Deal. It has used this involvement to enable an internal scoping process to take place on how it can best engage with the forthcoming national Green Deal agenda. From May 2012 the Council will begin work on preparing an Outline Business Case to explore and consider the way in which the Council might support the market to promote uptake of the Green Deal amongst local residents.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Alison Moore**

Councillor Davey are you content that the council intends to commit to the least proactive of three options under the Green Deal? And are you confident that you will actually make the government deadline of this Autumn?

Answer by Councillor Tom Davey

I think we should watch this space as to what the future of the Green Deal actual is before I make any commitments in the Council chamber

Question 38**Councillor Hugh Rayner**

The Freedom Pass is invaluable to older adults in my ward and generally in this borough. Can you confirm it shall be retained?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The Freedom Pass funded by Barnet Council through the London Councils scheme will not only remain but the Mayor of London has promised to fund its extension to all over 60s. This will compliment the decision taken by Boris Johnson to allow the Freedom Pass to be used before 9.30 am and is good news for Barnet over 60s.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Hugh Rayner**

Thank you for your written answer which will be very reassuring for us elderly residents in the Borough. Can you join me in congratulation Boris for his promise not only to retain the Freedom Pass but to also make it available to everybody over the age of 60 and also to remind everyone that the concessionary travel in London was introduced by the GLC in 1973, not by Ken as he would have us think?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

I am delighted to emphasise the answer on Freedom Pass and also that the Mayor of London has agreed that the cost of extending the Freedom pass to all those over 60 will be covered by Transport for London and will not be a cost that falls on the Boroughs and the Borough tax payer directly. I also delighted to see that there are proposals to withdraw passes from those young people who have been granted free passes who then go on abuse those passes.

Question 39**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Would the Cabinet Member advise whether he was lobbied by any Member of the Cabinet between December 2010 and March 6 2012 to withdraw or modify his proposal to introduce charging in the boroughs' 7 remaining free car parks?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Discussions with Cabinet colleagues happen on a frequent basis covering a wide range of subjects.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

When did the East Barnet Councillors come to their concerns of the implantation of parking charges in Churchill Road car park?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Frequently and often.

Question 40**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

The increased taxes paid by pensioners after the budget mugging will result in less disposable income among the older population. How will this affect self-funders and those making contributions to their care and what is the estimated cost to adult social care?

Answer by Councillor Sachin Rajput

We have not done an analysis of the impact of this for individuals or adult social care income. The government have announced a freeze on the Age Related Allowance (ARA) and a move towards a simpler, single personal allowance regardless of age by freezing existing age related allowances from 6th April 2013 at 2012-13 levels until they align with personal allowance. There is no indication of when this will become aligned. The personal allowance in 2013-14 as announced in the budget will be £9,205 and freezing the ARA at £10,500 for those aged between 65 and 74 and £10,660 for those aged 75 or over, gives a difference of either £1,295 or £1,455. The loss for those reaching 65 after April 2013 on basic rate tax of 20% is an annual impact of £259. Based on the announcements it is assumed this will reduce each year as the allowances become aligned and will reduce to zero.

The personal allowances allowed under the Councils Fairer Contributions Policy and Charging for Residential Care have been increased in line with figures issued by the Department of Work and Pensions and Department of Health from April 2012. These amounts guarantee the level of income an individual will be left with before they are asked to contribute towards their care costs. Under Fairer Contributions currently for those receiving managed personal budgets, 22 % pay the full cost of their care, 36 % make a contribution towards the cost of their care and 42 % are assessed as nil contribution. We will be keeping these figures under review. The Care and Support White Paper is due in Spring 2012 and is expected to provide detail on a response to the long term funding of social care.

Question 41**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

How much did the consultation on hiring out parks cost?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Zero. There were no additional costs incurred as part of the events in parks consultation. This was carried out utilising the engage web-site and within existing resources.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

I note Councillor Colman's answer. But isn't zero actually the number of people other than Councillor Coleman who agree with this policy?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

There was a surprising number who agreed with it.

Question 42**Councillor Alison Moore**

How many trees were planted by the council across Barnet each year for the past 10 years?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Records are available since 2006, which detail that we have planted 1,527 trees in parks and streets up to March 2012.

Question 43**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Does the Cabinet Member for Environment agree with his Cabinet colleagues, Councillor Rams' and Councillor Joanna Tambourides' change of heart over the introduction of car park charging?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Councillor Rams and Councillor Tambourides (along with The Deputy Mayor) are as Ward Members quite properly carrying out local consultation with their residents on the best way of implementing agreed Council policy, I look forward to receiving their representations on behalf of their residents in due course . Frankly I wish all Members of this Council were as diligent in their Wards as my East Barnet Colleagues.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Would the Cabinet Member agree with me that there has been a recent referendum in the parking issue in the form of East Finchley by-election. And therefore given the resounding swing to Labour from Conservatives, that everyone in this Borough is opposed to your parking plans. Is it time to admit you are wrong? 18,000 signatures in a petition, are you ignoring them as well

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

The turn out was only 28%. Funny that the solid Labour voters of East Finchley couldn't be bothered to go to the polls.

Question 44**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What are the financial implications to the Council of ending the contract with Catalyst?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The CRC Exempt report of 7 November 2011 provides an analysis of the financial implications to the Council of ending the contract with Catalyst. The revised agreement with Catalyst contains a number of features which when implemented are expected, as stated in the report, to reduce

the future ongoing cost to the Council compared to the existing contract by £1million. This has been factored into the savings for Adult Social Care set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. However, there is also an expectation, based on current industry benchmarks and the Older Adults Pricing Strategy agreed by CRC on the 29th of February 2012, that further savings will be delivered through the Council being able to directly renegotiate the care contract with The Fremantle Trust. This renegotiation will examine the price per bed and the impact of the Borough-wide reconfiguration of day care services.

It should be noted that the ending of the existing contract between the Council and Catalyst will allow for the removal of the deficit clause in the Catalyst contract which has cost the Council significant sums to date. On the latter point, an analysis of the Catalyst business plan presented as part of the Arbitration hearing indicated that the contract could return a deficit in the future which the Council would have to contribute to – ending the contract removes this risk.

In summary, the implications are that the this Conservative Council has ended the ridiculous 'deficit clause' that the Labour/Lib Dem Council signed off, saving taxpayers a fortune in the process and protecting them from future risk.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Given that the negotiations have been going for years, why was the decision so urgent that it couldn't be properly call in and scrutinised.

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

This relates to the closure of Merryvale home and we do need to get a revised contract drawn up with Freemantle before that is done. I also note that this decision was subject to call-in back in November last year, but the opposition Councillors missed it and now are complaining that they can't call it in again.

Question 45**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Is it now council policy for Ward Councillors to carry out their own consultations on council decisions that have already been made in order to reverse those previous decisions?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

All Ward Councillors should consult their residents all the time in order to better represent them and to ensure good decision making.

Supplementary Question**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

We have 18,000 signatures and they are still rising against the parking policy of this council, that is a huge consultation. Once again despite the rhetoric from Councillor Coleman there was a referendum last week. when will you listen to as consultation and when will you listen to the people of this Borough?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius

We do all the time.

Question 46**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Will the review of parking in North Finchley town centre consider the option of a) cutting charges and b) introducing free parking periods for short-time use?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

This review, as part of the Boris Johnson funded Outer London Fund project will review all aspects of the North Finchley Town Centre

Question 47**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Is the Cabinet Member for Environment going to reverse his policy of introducing car park charging in the boroughs 7 remaining free car parks, and if not what does he think of Councillor Rams' statement that ""It is clearly not the right decision and I can't see any rationale as to how it would be. I personally haven't seen a campaign like this since I have been a councillor and that is why I'm so confident we will get the proposals withdrawn."?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Consultations about specific charging regimes are on going.

Question 48**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Has any assessment been made of the impact of the 'granny tax' on Barnet's 46,000 pensioners

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

No.

Question 49**Councillor Kath McGuirk**

Councillor Rams has said he won't resign from Cabinet even if charging is introduced in Church Hill car park. Given he is completely opposed to the policy (despite voting for it no less than 6 times), and has said so in public meetings, does the Leader agree that Councillor Rams' position as a Member of Cabinet has become untenable from the point of view of collective cabinet responsibility?

Answer by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of the Council

No.

Question 50**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Over a year ago Cabinet decided to commence discussions with the artsdepot Trust. Could the Cabinet Member list the meetings that both he and senior officers have had and their outcomes?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Until the Council adopted the libraries strategy in July 2011, officers were not in a position to commence detailed discussions with artsdepot. At that time, Cabinet agreed that a process should commence to see if a community library could be achieved in Friern Barnet. Resources were then diverted into this process. This, along with some staffing changes, did lead to a delay in progressing the work on the Arts Depot library. Detailed meetings have been occurring regularly between senior officers and the Chief Executive of artsdepot since late February 2012. The meetings took place on 29 February, 14 March, 2 April and 4 April. The meetings have concentrated on the preparation of a specification of requirements for the feasibility study for the landmark library (now out to tender), and preparations for the interim library, due to open on 24th April.

Question 51**Councillor Anne Hutton**

Over a year ago the Cabinet Member was instructed to establish a viable schedule for the creation of a Landmark library at the artsdepot – has he managed to get round to doing this and could he share it with other Councillors?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Until the Council adopted the libraries strategy in July 2011, officers were not in a position to commence detailed discussions with artsdepot. At that time, Cabinet agreed that a process should commence to see if a community library could be achieved in Friern Barnet. Resources were then diverted into this process. This, along with some staffing changes, did lead to a delay in progressing the work on the artsdepot library.

However, we are pleased to say do now have a way forward in terms of temporary provision and are progressing the longer term development of the landmark library, as can be seen from the report to Cabinet Resources Committee on 4th April, which gained agreement to the extension of artsdepot's lease on the site on the basis that a library will be provided. A project team is in place, and we've gained £1m for the area via the Outer London Fund. Quotations are currently being sought from architects to complete a feasibility study for the redevelopment of the artsdepot to create a landmark library. We anticipate that the study will be completed by end of June 2012: the results of this study will determine the complexity of the building works necessary and hence the timescale for delivery.

The Council and artsdepot are planning to bid for Arts Council England capital funding to assist in redeveloping the building to create the landmark library: details of the next funding round are expected very soon but until their decision-making timetable is published it is not possible to confirm a detailed plan to opening the landmark library.

Question 52**Councillor Barry Rawlings**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm the exact date that each of the submissions in the Community Library Process were received?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Proposals were received as follows:

- Hampstead Garden Suburb:
 - Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association – 8th January 2012
 - Friends of Hampstead Garden Suburb Library – 8th January 2012
- Friern Barnet:
 - Save Friern Barnet Library Group – 8th January 2012

Question 53**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

Now that the 2012/13 budget has been passed by Council, which aspects are Ward Councillors now able to launch their own consultations on with a view to having budget decisions reversed?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Councillors are perfectly free to consult residents on any aspect at any time and pass on views to the Cabinet and Council.

Question 54**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What assessment has been made of the risks of implementing the agreement with Catalyst and The Freemantle Trust?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

Throughout the negotiations with Catalyst, a comprehensive risk log has been maintained. There are a small number of risks regarding implementation of the new separate arrangements between the Council and Catalyst and The Fremantle Trust. The Council's needs have changed since the original contract was entered into which has resulted in beds having to be paid for which are not required. This is being addressed through a reduction in the number of beds that the Council will purchase going forward. This will be achieved through the full utilisation of the beds in the three new care homes to facilitate by the end of 2012, the closure of the old Merivale Care Home which originally was due to be demolished and rebuilt. The Fremantle Trust and Adult Social Care are working very closely together to manage the closure of this care home with full involvement of staff, residents and family members.

However the most significant risk going forward is the Council's ability to negotiate a more flexible arrangement with The Fremantle Trust at a 'benchmark' level bed price as the inflation provisions in the current contract (annual RPI based increase) have led to the price per bed now being well in excess of industry benchmarks. If The Fremantle Trust will not accept the need to reduce prices and provide a more flexible service model the mitigating factor is that their contract can be terminated by way of a 12 month notice period which will allow the Council to go to the market for a new service provider with a specification that reflects the changing needs of service users. All risks are set out in the Adult Social Care risk register.

Question 55**Councillor Alan Schneiderman**

What assessment has been made of current and future changes to service needs in the proposed property arrangements arising from implementing the agreement with Catalyst and The Freemantle Trust?

Answer by Councillor Daniel Thomas

The three new Catalyst care homes built under the terms of existing contract (Meadowside, Dellfield Court and Apthorpe Lodge) are both modern and flexible having been constructed to nursing care standards. Therefore as part of the negotiation objectives set out in the CRC report of 7 November 2011 the Council wanted to retain the use of these facilities beyond the initial contract period and to have flexibility in how they were used.

The lease agreement with Catalyst will provide for the homes to be available to the Council beyond the current contract but, break clauses have been included at years 10 and 15 for each of the homes to enable changing service needs to be accommodated. With many people now being supported at home for much longer than in the past, the need for mainstream care beds has been reducing nationally for a number of years and indeed, as a Council, Barnet has been purchasing a reducing number of beds in recent years. However, numbers are starting to increase again as the population gets older and the number of dementia sufferers and those in need of nursing care increases. The more flexible contract along with leases that can be curtailed earlier, if necessary, provides the Council with the ability to manage changes to service needs into the future.

Question 56

Councillor Pauline Coakley-Webb

How many emails have you received from residents on the issue of Friern Barnet library?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

Because I regularly delete my emails unfortunately I can not give you an exact number, I would estimate around about the 200 mark in total. Between April 1st and April 11th (when I am tabling this answer) I have received 25 emails. Sadly a few of these have been quite offensive but the majority have been well argued. I have also received 25 letters.

Question 57

Councillor Pauline Coakley-Webb

Could the Cabinet Member for Environment tell me how many emails he has received from residents or has had forwarded to him from Cabinet colleagues on the issue of car parking in east Barnet village?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

It is not my habit to discuss private e mails either from residents or fellow Councillors

Question 58

Councillor Pauline Coakley-Webb

What is the timescale for a fully operational library to be open at the artsdepot?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The council and artsdepot are planning to bid for Arts Council England capital funding to assist in redeveloping the building to create the landmark library: details of the next funding round are expected very soon but until their decision-making timetable is published it is not possible to confirm a detailed plan to opening the landmark library. Quotations are currently being sought from architects to complete a feasibility study for the redevelopment of the artsdepot to create a landmark library. We anticipate that the study will be completed by end of June 2012. The results of this study will determine the complexity of the building works necessary and hence the timescale for delivery.

Question 59

Councillor Pauline Coakley-Webb

How can the cabinet member justify allowing North Finchley library to remain open until a transfer to the Artsdepot but not apply the same criteria to Friern Barnet Library?

Answer by Councillor Robert Rams

The strategy agreed by Cabinet in July 2011 was clear that Friern Barnet library but not North Finchley library would close prior to the development of the landmark library. North Finchley library is one of the borough's busiest libraries, serving a wider area than Friern Barnet, and hence it would not be appropriate to close it until the landmark library is open. Residents who previously used Friern Barnet library are, in comparison to other library users, close to libraries at South Friern, Osidge and North Finchley libraries.

Question 60**Councillor Pauline Coakley-Webb**

Given the strength of feeling of local residents against car park charging - particularly relating to the proposed charges in Church Hill car park in East Barnet village - would the Cabinet Member for Environment please advise whether he feels he is "In Touch" with the concerns of local residents in implementing these charges?

Answer by Councillor Brian Coleman

Consultations are on going.

Question 61**Councillor Pauline Coakley-Webb**

Does the Cabinet Member agree that the Tories are weak on crime and does he agree that the local safer neighbourhood police teams are currently well below strength on numbers, noticeably reducing their visibility on the street and making it a haven for criminals with Barnet having the largest burglary rates in London.

Answer by Councillor David Longstaff

It is Labour who are weak:

It is Labour who didn't support the Council motion calling on tougher sentences for burglars.

It is Labour who didn't support the adoption of the Safer Communities Partnership Board Strategy 2011 - 2014.

It is Labour who continually attempt to create a climate of fear in our residents by making disingenuous suggestions that Police numbers are dropping, when in fact there will be over 1,000 more Police Officers in the MPA, since Boris Johnson became London Mayor.

Burglary is a crime that increases during an economic downturn. Had Gordon Brown done a Risk Assessment and an Equalities Impact Analysis on the perils of uncontrolled debt - borrowing £1.3 trillion and beggaring our nation - he and The Labour Party would have discovered that one consequence would be an increase in crime; and burglary in particular.

Tackling burglary is a priority for the Safer Communities Partnership Board, which Labour has refused to support in any way.