

COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS
1 APRIL 2009

Question 1 from Councillor Taylor to Councillor Vince, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services

"Will Councillor Vince update the Council on progress to date on the acquisition of the proposed site for the new Academy in Ponders End and what work has been done since the last Council meeting to confirm the suitability of the site?"

Reply from Councillor Vince:

I am pleased to be able to let you know that the council has agreed with National Grid the Heads of Terms for the acquisition of the site in Ponders End for the proposed Academy. National Grid have now engaged expert contractors to prepare the site for sale and lawyers for both parties are working on the contract which is due to be signed in June. At the same time our architects are working with Oasis Community Learning and a wide range of other stakeholders to develop initial control plans for the site that will provide excellent all-age education and community services and make a real contribution to the emerging place-shaping vision for Ponders End. Our ambition for the proposed Oasis Academy Hadley to move to Ponders End in September 2012 is on track.

Question 2 from Councillor Lamprecht to Councillor Vince, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education.

"Will Councillor Vince update Council on the position of secondary school transfers?"

Reply from Councillor Vince:

"Enfield again participated in the PAN London Co-ordinated Admissions System. All London authorities, together with Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey and Thurrock authorities exchanged information about applications to each other's schools and worked together to reduce the number of children receiving multiple offers.

Enfield Council, along with all of our partners worked hard to ensure parents in Enfield were sent their information on National Offer Day, 2nd March 2009. I am pleased to advise Councillor Lamprecht that 94% of Enfield children have been offered a place at one of their preferred schools.

The impact of coordinating admissions across London and surrounding authorities, together with the work undertaken to increase the number of school

places in the borough has meant that we have again been able to offer every child living in Enfield a secondary school place for September.

I would like to thank Jo Fear and all the School Admissions Team for making sure every parent was informed on time.”

Question 3 from Councillor Taylor to Councillor Lavender, Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Safety

Can Councillor Lavender indicate what the current thinking of the Council is to the possible sale of assets in Ponders End in terms of the place shaping exercise. Will the Council ring fence these assets for the use of Ponders End residents to enhance their quality of life?

Reply from Councillor Lavender:

“The council does not have any plans to sell assets in Ponders End.

The council has been considering, as part of its Placeshaping plans for the Ponders End area, the possibility of acquiring assets to support our plans for the benefit of local residents and the local community.

The residents of Ponders End are still smarting from the broken promises of the previous administration which promised to hypothecate the proceeds from the disposal of Howards Hall to other community related initiatives in Ponders End. Of course the Labour Party had spent all available revenues and had to suspend its capital programme in toto with the result that that promise, along with many others was broken.

Councillor Taylor will be aware that under this administration we suffer no such limitations.

I am pleased to say that the council has agreed significant funds as part of its capital programme for investment in Placeshaping in the borough which will amount to £19.7m over the next 5 years and is making excellent progress with its Master Planning work for the Ponders End area.

These initiatives are to be consulted upon shortly. I believe the residents of Ponders End will be overjoyed at our proposals.”

Question 4 from Councillor Joannides to Councillor Vince, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and Education.

“Would Councillor Vince inform Council about the new Children in Care Council?”

Reply from Councillor Vince:

“Care Matters: Time for Change (DOES 2007) stated that each local authority should put in place arrangements for a ‘Children in Care Council’ with direct links to the Director of Children’s Services and Lead Member.

The aim of this requirement is to strengthen the role of the corporate parent and give children in care a forum to express their views and influence the services and support they receive.

In Enfield, the Children's Rights Service run by Barnardo's was given additional funding from the Care Matters grant during 2008-9 to set up a Children in Care Council. They employed a sessional worker who contacted all children in care aged 8 years and above to see if they would be interested in taking part in a council. 21 children expressed an interest.

They were invited to a planning day on 21st January at the Civic Centre which I attended. This was designed to help them understand the purpose of the new council. This group helped to plan the launch of Enfield's Children in Care Council which took place successfully on Saturday 28th February at the Civic Centre attended by the Joint Acting Director of Education, Children's Service and Leisure, Andrew Fraser and myself.

For the future, Barnardos were successful in winning the contract for providing a Children's Rights service 2009-2012 and the arrangement and support of the Children in Care Council has been included in their new contract.

The Children in Care Council will meet every 8 weeks on Saturdays or during school holidays with visits and speakers designed to increase the capacity of the young people to advocate for the care population as a whole.

A programme of contact with the corporate parenting group is being devised with either young people attending corporate parenting meetings or adults being invited to attend the young people's meetings.

All of the above is so that we can build further on the very effective process we have in Enfield for listening to the views of children in care and responding to the views on both the design and delivery of services.

Young people on our council will be encouraged to make links with other children in care councils in neighbouring boroughs. They will also now be able to better link into the overall process of capturing the views of children and young people in Enfield."

Question 5 From Councillor Simon to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment & Street Scene

Can Councillor Neville explain what is his policy in relation to cycle routes: why the borough is making such limited progress in installing them; and whether he will give a commitment to specific achievements for new routes in 2009/10.

Reply from Councillor Neville:

"The policy is to support cycling in the borough through a programme of cycle training; promotion; and appropriate engineering measures, including cycle routes.

The previous Mayor developed the London Cycle Network in an attempt to encourage commuter cycling in particular. Several sections of this network have been implemented in Enfield, including segregated sections of cycle track along both Bramley Road and Enfield Road. However, these high cost interventions are not necessarily an effective use of public money, particularly as the evidence suggests that they have done little to increase cycling. Recent surveys on the Bramley Road - Enfield Road cycle track showed a maximum of 9 cyclists per hour using this route.

Nevertheless, TfL allocated further funds during the 2009/10 financial year to try and continue this link along the A110. However, because of limited road space it is difficult, if not impossible, to safely continue the route along Slades Hill, Windmill Hill through Enfield Town and along Southbury Road. Some of the funding (£110k) was therefore returned to TfL so that it could be reallocated.

In 2009/10 funding has been allocated to two LCN Schemes, which it should be possible to implement:

- A scheme at the Chase Road/Bramley Road junction, which also brings about wider improvements for other road users - £50k
- A cycle track through Arnos Park - £115k

In addition, funding is also available for the following cycling schemes in 2009/10:

- £60k for cycling training
- £15k for cycle parking
- £48k for the development of the Enfield Leisure Cycle Route Network, which will form a safe network of routes linking the council's parks and open spaces.
- £25k of Greenways funding for National Cycle Route 12.

It is significant that the new Mayor, who is a keen cyclist, does not favour continuing to invest in the LCN. I entirely support the shift outlined in 'Way to Go!' towards more integrated and targeted interventions to make cycling safer, easier and more appealing. I have long argued for cycle routes that do not use principal roads where road space is limited, by diverting such routes through residential streets better safety levels can be achieved without reducing road space on principal roads. This includes creating more civilised streets through the removal of excessive guardrail etc., providing a safe network of Leisure Cycle Networks for cyclists to gain confidence as well as high quality training.

Question 6 from Councillor E Savva to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene

"Would Councillor Neville like to comment on the performance of the Highways gritting service during the recent period of snow?"

Reply from Councillor Neville:

"I am very pleased to tell Council that Enfield's Highways Gritting Service - outsourced to Fitzpatrick Ltd three years ago - performed to an excellent standard during the recent spell of snow and freezing temperatures.

Approximately 155 miles of our salted network was successfully kept open and available to traffic throughout the period. This was in sharp contrast to some of the other boroughs across London.

1st February delivered the most significant snowfall for a decade and the weeks following brought an extended period of freezing temperatures. The last time winter temperatures were lower was in 1996/97.

Highway Services were well prepared for the extreme weather conditions that occurred during the early part of February 2009. The contractor's salt stocks were at their maximum, their gritting fleet was fully operational and an order for additional salt deliveries was already in place before the first snowflake fell. Between the 1st and 2nd February, Enfield completed in excess of 5 heavy gritting operations and employed an additional snowploughing vehicle throughout the network for added effectiveness. During this time over 170 tonnes of salt was used. Following the initial period of snow, during which the priority was to secure the salted network, Enfield worked with bus operators to assist in the clearance of their premises and facilitate a speedy reinstatement of bus services. Enfield's Winter Maintenance team ensure the safety of road users throughout every winter between the months of November and March and beyond if necessary."

Question 7 from Councillor Simon to Councillor Hurer, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

Can Councillor Hurer explain whether targets are being met for replies to correspondence to his services and to Revenues and Benefits Service in particular, for the general public and for members; and if they are not, why? What monitoring arrangements are in place, across the council, to ensure compliance with members' enquiries standards?

Reply from Councillor Hurer:

"Each Director is responsible for member enquiries affecting their department. You specifically ask about the Finance and Corporate Resources Department and, for this department, member enquiries in 2008/09 have been answered in an average of 10 days.

In respect of Revenues and Benefits correspondence from the public, for the six months ended 28th February 2009, benefits correspondence (including that from the Department for Work and Pensions) has been answered in an average time of 9.2 days and council tax correspondence has been answered in an average time of 5.3 days. These answering times are elapsed days from receipt to answer and include weekends, Bank Holidays etc. and represent some 57,938 items of Revenues and Benefits correspondence.

I am satisfied both with performance in answering replies from members and from the public."

Question 8 from Councillor Adams to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene

"Would the Councillor Neville like to comment on the recent tree planting in the Hertford Road?"

Reply from Councillor Neville:

"I am pleased to say that in line with Enfield Council's commitment to creating a cleaner and greener Enfield, the Hertford Road Tree Planting Programme has been successfully completed ahead of schedule with a total of 351 trees being planted along the Hertford Road (A1010) this season. A small number of plots were relocated to accommodate underground services but the majority were planted as planned. Species were specially selected to enhance the urban environment and to be compatible with varying soil types. All trees are now part of a 12-month aftercare programme, which includes watering throughout the summer months. Should any trees die during this time then they will be replaced at the contractor's expense."

Question 9 from Councillor Bond to Councillor Prescott, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

In the October of 2008 this side called in the decision by the Cabinet Member for Environment to stop advising residents that their street was going to be the subject to a renewal programme for street lighting.

It was agreed at this meeting that after a period of time that this decision would be brought back to Overview and Scrutiny for a further review. Early 2009 was the date given.

Can Councillor Prescott advise the Council what date will Overview and Scrutiny be able to look at this decision again and can he explain what is causing the delay in its return to Overview and Scrutiny?

Reply from Councillor Prescott:

"The feedback on this item was originally scheduled to be considered by Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2009, but has now been moved on to our next meeting on 22 April 2009. No specific date was given at the original call-in meeting in August for the report back and we have obviously needed to wait for the review of the trial period to be completed by the Director and Cabinet Member for Environment & Street Scene before being able to receive any feedback. The reason for the original delay was that due to the timetable for the submission of information within Our Enfield, the trial was not able to commence until November 2008 with the information being placed in Our Enfield and the columns actually being installed in December 2008."

Question 10 from Councillor E Savva to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene

"Will Councillor Neville inform Council of the approach being taken to promoting cycling in the borough?"

Reply from Councillor Neville:

"The council is promoting cycling in the following ways:

Enfield Festival of Cycling - this year's the Festival will be held on Sunday 21st June. Following the success of last year's event, it will again be held at the Lee

Valley Athletics Centre, as a major part of the week long Lee Valley Festival. Building on the success of the previous 2 years, the Festival is expected to be well attended and provides a family focused introduction to the benefits of cycling.

Cycle Training - Enfield School of Cycling has been providing cycle training to Enfield residents since 1994. This training included one to one, on road training for adults and children over 10½ and teaching adults to ride from scratch.

In 2007/8 a national review of cycle training was carried out and National Standards were implemented, bringing a much-needed consistency to all organisations providing training. These standards have now been branded "Bikeability"

So far this financial year 2008/9, we have provided individual Bikeability (formerly one to one, on road) training to 122 young people and 25 adults and trained 35 adults and people with special needs to ride from scratch. We have also delivered Bikeability Level 1 training to 371 pupils and 77 of them received additional training to Level 2.

We are also about to pilot an innovative scheme whereby parents of children undertaking Bikeability training can also receive on road cycle training, separately in small groups, working from the school. This scheme is intended to give parents the confidence to cycle with their children thus increasing take up.

Early in 2009/10 we intend to re-structure our School of Cycling and recruit additional casual instructors to enable us to substantially increase our capacity to deliver Bikeability training, reaching much greater numbers of Year 5 and 6 pupils.

Develop the Enfield Leisure Cycle Route Network

In liaison with Sustrans, the UK's leading sustainable transport charity, and local cyclists the council is developing the Enfield Leisure Cycle Route Network. This network will run through many of Enfield's parks and open spaces and along towpaths. It will also link these parks and open spaces using quiet back street routes. By providing safe and pleasant cycle routes people will be encouraged to cycle, and develop the skill and confidence to cycle on busier routes. This network will also improve access to our green spaces in a sustainable way.

Members should be aware that Sustrans are currently carrying out consultation on the proposed network as a whole. More detailed design work is underway for part of the network linking Hadley Wood with Enfield Island Village, and funding is in place to start designing other sections of the network.

Work on amending the Council's byelaws to allow cycling in parks on designated routes is well advanced, and officers will be consulting park user groups on its proposals. The council is also progressing a proposal to introduce a BMX track in Jubilee Park."

Question 11 from Councillor Bond to Councillor Lavender, Deputy Leader of the Council/ Sustainable Communities & Employment & Place Shaping

Would he not agree that congratulations should be given to the residents and officers who did so well in getting so many people to vote in the recent London wide ballot to see what extra funding could be found for Arnos Park. In recognition of their efforts, and given the amount of money in the reserves, could he not find some amount of money for an Arnos Park project agreed with local residents?

Reply from Councillor Lavender:

“Yes and Yes.”

Question 12 from Councillor Pearce to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene

“Will Councillor Neville inform Council of any developments in promoting recycling in the borough?”

Reply from Councillor Neville:

“I am pleased to announce that with effect from April the range of items capable of being recycled in the borough will be expanded. It will in future be possible to recycle Tetra Paks (fruit juice and soup cartons) and a wide range of plastic containers. This development when added to the present range of materials collected from the kerbside means that Enfield residents will have one of the largest ranges of recyclables for doorstep collection, it is to be hoped that this will further increase our already high rates of recycling in the borough.

It is intended that there will be a borough-wide outdoor advertisement campaign using bus shelters, bus backs, vehicle livery and billboards during the summer months to promote this expansion of recyclable material.

In addition consultation letters regarding siting of recycling bins and instructions on use are being issued to residents of all flats who are about to receive new services from April/May onwards, including the introduction of recycling facilities to 16,000 households. Residents of flats will be given a specially designed blue bag to hold items for transfer to recycling bins provided.

There will be an ongoing editorial in Our Enfield and Enfield Homes Magazine - every issue planned for 2009

As a trial Sainsbury's, Enfield will be operating a till receipt campaign during April – June promoting their bring site facility.

All of this is in addition to earlier promotions such as:

Christmas Recycling Promotions: Direct mail was sent to all residents receiving kerbside collection to promote tree recycling; a full page Christmas Recycling advert appeared in the Enfield Independent, Advertiser and Gazette. Plus vehicle signs appeared on most Refuse/Recycling vehicles.

General Recycling Promotions: A Starve Your Bin Campaign advert in the Enfield Independent, Advertiser and Gazette (Backed by Recycle For London). Plus vehicle signs on most used Refuse/Recycling vehicles. A high profile and positive media coverage in all local newspapers and nationals, including the Daily Mail, The Guardian, Daily Telegraph, Evening Standard and BBC London.

A launch of a commercial paper/cardboard recycling scheme.

5000 children have received 'Waste Education' via an assembly or workshop through the recycling and environment programme since September 2008.

Finally a survey is being carried out on bring sites to make them more aesthetically pleasing and remove any under used banks now recycling from home is widespread across the borough.

Question 13 from Councillor Bond to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment & Street Scene

Can he tell the Council when the lights are due to be switched on, on top of the water fountain in Enfield Town?

Reply from Councillor Neville:

"The lights on top of the fountain will be connected by 3 April 2009."

Question 14 from Councillor Boast to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene

"Would Councillor Neville comment on the claims by Councillor Chris Bond and Joan Ryan MP regarding the proposed changes in refuse collection in the borough?"

Reply from Councillor Neville:

"I assume Councillor Boast is referring to Joan Ryan's comments in the January section of her "Annual Report and 2009 Calendar" (issued under a House of Commons crest!) which was sent to various households in Enfield North. In that report Ms. Ryan claims, "I have campaigned for the last 7 years to get the council to introduce wheelie bins..." Ms. Ryan subsequently claimed in a press article in the Enfield Independent that it was her campaign that had caused this administration to move ahead with a wheeled bin pilot. I am sorry to have to tell the council that once again these are yet more misleading claims made by Ms. Ryan and by association Councillor Bond, both of whom are pictured in the January page of the calendar alongside a wheeled bin.

These claims are wholly false. The truth of the matter is that although Joan Ryan raised the issue in a letter distributed to Enfield North residents just 3 years ago in February 2006, we were already investigating a move to wheeled bins, such work having started in autumn 2005. I confirmed this to her in a letter dated 4 March 2006 in which I also refuted a large number of misleading claims she had made about our environment performance, to which I received no response.

The council's record on waste management and recycling is a good one as evidenced not by party political rhetoric, but by various reports from the independent Audit Commission and by annual surveys of customer satisfaction. The reality, which Labour members and Ms Ryan find impossible to accept, is that we have done a far better job in managing the environment than they did, and have substantially improved on the Audit Commission's last rating of their performance – "Poor" - and have seen a rise in customer satisfaction from a level of just 48% during their last year of office."

Question 15 from Councillor Simon to Councillor Kaye, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture, Olympics & Voluntary Sector

Can Councillor Kaye explain why the ground floor at Thomas Hardy House is not in use? What cash or opportunity cost does this involve?

Reply from Councillor Kaye:

"The ground floor of Thomas Hardy House is being developed as a performance and exhibition space. Business planning is being conducted and will inform the next steps".

Question 16 from Councillor Boast to Councillor Rye, Leader of the Council

"Who is ultimately responsible for the success or failure of Enfield Council?"

Reply from Councillor Rye:

"Councillor Rodin, according to the local press, believes Enfield's achievement in achieving 4 stars in the recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment is entirely down to the efforts of staff. I quite understand neither he nor his predecessor as Leader, Councillor Taylor wish to take responsibility for the failing council we inherited in 2002 and wish to blame the staff for that poor performance.

Whilst Councillor Rodin may be following a lead from his Prime Minister who fails to apologise or take responsibility for the catastrophic recession Britain is in, I disagree with him.

I am pleased to congratulate the staff of Enfield Council on their hard work and commitment in providing good quality services to our residents, but they can only succeed when they have strong political leadership and clear policies to deliver. This Conservative administration provides this; sadly his Labour administration did not."

Question 17 from Councillor Constantinides to Councillor Neville, Cabinet Member for Environment & Street Scene

People living in the residential roads in the vicinity of North Middlesex University Hospital are suffering from severe parking problems. Can Councillor Neville please inform the Council what plans he has to deal with these problems and set out the timetable for these plans to be implemented?"

Reply from Councillor Neville:

“The pressure for on-street parking around the North Middlesex Hospital has been a problem for some time, particularly since the Trust started to charge staff for parking. However, the situation is clearly much worse at the moment because of the reduction in the number of on-site parking spaces during the construction works, which are currently at their peak. I understand that the Trust will soon be providing some additional temporary parking in both Commercial Road and Watermill Lane to try and ease the situation.

The Trust were required to provide funding as part of their planning permission (via a s106 Agreement) to cover the cost of preparing a preliminary design and consulting on parking controls in the area. Further funds become available if a decision is subsequently made to implement these controls.

The council has been undertaking a review of the priorities within its Parking and Enforcement Plan (PEP). The aim of this review is to ensure that appropriate policies and strategies are in place to resolve the complex parking position across the borough in a way that meets the needs of those who live, work and visit Enfield. The consultation period on the PEP finished at the end of January and officers are currently working on a report to bring back to Cabinet in the near future. The conclusions of this review will help to inform future decisions about a wide range of parking issues, including future Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs).

Although at a very early stage, it is also worth mentioning that the Trust have started early discussions with officers to look at the possible provision of additional parking within the hospital grounds as part of the realignment of services following the Trust’s review of clinical services.”

Question 18 from Councillor Rodin to Councillor Lavender, Deputy Leader of the Council/ Sustainable Communities & Employment & Place Shaping

When will Councillor Lavender be meeting the Traders who are trading from Council owned properties following their request for a meeting with him, which was contained in the email from Councillor Constantinides of 11 March 2009?

Reply from Councillor Lavender:

“I do not propose to meet the traders until such time as due process has been followed in relation to rent reviews.

Councillor Rodin will be aware that rents for business premises are negotiated at periodic intervals. Those intervals can typically be around 7 years after the previous rent review. The landlord will commence negotiations demanding a rack rent. Councillor Rodin will know that a rack rent is the full open market annual value of a holding. The proposed rack rent will be considerable higher than the prevailing rent. The proposed increase will reflect the fact that rents have not been increased in the interim or have not kept up with the rack rents. Any well run business will have budgeted for such an increase. It is then for the tenant to negotiate with the landlord by adducing evidence of what the tenant can and cannot afford. The landlord will then take into consideration the behaviour of the tenant, the prevailing market conditions and the ability to re-let the premises. The

tenant will also be mindful of the need to remain in situ where there is goodwill attached to the premises.

It is essential that the parties be able to conduct such negotiations professionally and without hindrance. Such negotiations need to be dealt with on an individual basis with the assistance of solicitors or surveyors. They should not be undertaken by megaphone across the Council Chamber or on the front page of the Enfield Independent.

Officers should be able to negotiate without being hamstrung by having their positions undermined by councillors.

Once the process is underway officers will no doubt request a political steer on what we want to achieve.

I can assure Councillor Rodin that I want to achieve a sustainable rental income which can be afforded by businesses, I do not want to drive businesses out and end up with empty premises and no rental income at all.”