

COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS: 17 July 2013

Question 1 from Councillor Lavender to Councillor Taylor, Leader of the Council

The waste and fuel use procurements of the North London Waste Authority (NLWA) are possibly the most important decisions affecting the Borough in a generation, particularly in terms of cost and environmental impact.

Why did the Labour Administration instruct officers to spend Council tax payers' money seeking Counsel's opinion on whether the Council could avoid this matter being discussed by the Conservative opposition at full Council? How much did this legal advice cost?

This is not the first time this has happened, Counsel's opinion having been sought previously whether it was possible to publish an OJEU notice in relation to the appointment of Cornerstone, before the ability of the Conservatives to call in the decision to appoint them. What does the Labour administration feel the need to act in such an undemocratic fashion?

Will he undertake to refer any decision made by Cabinet to full Council?

Reply from Councillor Taylor

Councillor Lavender is already aware that he is mistaken. He is aware that the Labour Administration did not instruct officers to seek Counsel opinion on the question stated. I am therefore surprised he has asked this question.

When the Opposition asked to refer the matter to Full Council, officers took legal advice as to whether this was required under the Local Government Act 2000 and the associated regulations. This is prudent, given the complex legal environment within which local government and waste disposal matters have to be addressed.

The Council has engaged external solicitors and Counsel in relation to NLWA procurement and felt it appropriate to obtain their legal advice on the governance issue.

In 2008, the Conservative Administration at Cabinet agreed the principles on which the NLWA and Constituent Boroughs would work together in order to enable the contract for waste disposal services, which is required in 2014. This matter was not referred to Full Council, as it was and still is a function of the Executive. In any event the default position, under s13 of Local Government Act 2000, is that all decisions are executive decisions, save for those for which specific statutory provision is made to the contrary.

The Labour Administration will determine this decision making process when the precise decision making timetable is finalised.

Question 2 from Councillor Simon to Councillor Taylor, Leader of the Council

The Department for Communities and Local Government ended the financial year £217m over its spending limit and was fined £20,000 by the Treasury.

Margaret Hodge, chairman of the public accounts committee, said it was "a shocking example of incompetence".

Is there any impact of this on Enfield Council?

Reply from Councillor Taylor

I am sure that Members on both sides of the Chamber will be amazed that Mr Pickles has failed to control his budget and will join me in considering his occasional lecturing to local Councils to be now wholly undermined. I'm sure the loss of this money must have an impact on Enfield and other Council's.

Question 3 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Sitkin, Chairman of the Sustainability and Living Environment Scrutiny Panel

I refer to the answer given by Councillor Taylor to Councillor Lavender's question [1].

In your capacity as Chairman of the Sustainability and Living Environment Scrutiny Panel, the remit of which is to ensure that sustainability, green energy and carbon reduction matters are properly scrutinized, and given the public concern about the NLWA procurement, in particular the concern expressed by residents of your own ward, do you agree with the approach of the Labour administration to avoid an Enfield focused public debate about this issue at full Council? If you do not agree with the approach, what do you propose to do about it? In the alternative if you do agree with the approach, how is this consistent with your role as scrutiny chair and your role as ward Councillor?

Reply from Councillor Sitkin

I do not believe there is any attempt by the Labour Administration to avoid a public debate on this issue.

Could I remind Members opposite that in 2008 when the really big decisions, committing this Council to millions of pounds of expenditure, were being made, including the purchase of Pinkham Way for waste disposal, the Tory Administration referred this neither to Scrutiny nor full Council.

Question 4 from Councillor Sitkin to Councillor Orhan, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Can the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, tell the Council what her plans are for Garfield School and what this would mean for school children in the area.

Reply from Councillor Orhan

As colleagues well know, my department has through my Primary School Plans identified the need for more primary school places in Enfield and Garfield Primary is located in the heart of one of our key areas planned for regeneration 'The Ladderswood Estate'. Following my visit to the School, I was most impressed with the dedication and commitment to quality teaching by the Headteacher, her staff and Governors and especially so when I saw the enormous challenges the school site presented to them.

I am determined to build high quality schools for local children that the community will be proud of. Therefore I am proud to announce to this Council that we have now developed exciting plans to rebuild Garfield Primary School which will make the school much easier to run and provide an excellent environment for learning that our children deserve. My officers are currently drawing up the plans for the new build with the Headteacher, Governors and the local community. I know that we will all continue to work together in the interest of our children in Enfield.

Question 5 from Councillor Neville to Councillor Stafford Cabinet Member for Finance and Property

Is he aware of the most recent data published in early June by the Department for Communities and Local Government on Council tax arrears in England? This places Enfield in the 12th worst position out of 326 authorities, with arrears totalling £33,449,000 (thirty three million, four hundred and forty nine thousand pounds) as at March 2012, which is significantly worse than boroughs like Brent or Tower Hamlets and equates to an average of over £107 for every man, woman and child in the Borough and an average of £284 for each property in the Borough. Is he not ashamed to preside over such a poor collection record and what steps has he taken to improve the collection position?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

No, I am not ashamed at the Council Tax collection record in this borough.

Enfield has the 26th highest amount of Council Tax to collect in the country, which is unsurprising as we are the fourth largest London Borough. The data quoted is relatively old, and it is more useful to focus on the current position. In 2012/13, we:

- Met our target for in-year collection of Council Tax, which has remained strong despite the prolonged economic downturn the country is in.

- Met our ambitious target of reducing historic debts (over 3 years old) by 25%.
- Collected more arrears in 2012/13 than any other London Borough.

Our Collection Fund is in surplus. Collecting debt is taken very seriously and we are on course to deliver our target overall collection rate of 98% for 2012/13 charges. This is the joint 9th highest of the 32 London Boroughs. We are continuing our programme to reduce historic debts by 25% per annum and are on course to meet our current year collection target.

We do not give up early or easily on pursuing debts due to the Council, and we will continue to pursue debts that are due by any and every appropriate legal means. We have £4.7m of debts secured by Charging Orders on property and over £15m is either currently with bailiffs or has been returned uncollected by them. We offer help to those struggling to pay, including making payment arrangements when we can.

All this is being achieved at a time when the residents of this borough face the increasingly severe impact of the Government's welfare reforms. These reforms particularly affect this borough which has the highest number of Council Tax Support cases in London. We are determined to treat everyone in this borough – rich or poor, young or old – fairly, and we will do this using all appropriate and cost-effective means. This is a record to be proud of.

Question 6 from Councillor Brett to Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member for Environment

Could the Cabinet Member for Environment urge the Mayor of London to extend the low emission zone to outer London particularly in view of the North Circular Road having been declared one of the most polluted roads in London?

Reply from Councillor Bond

All of Enfield is covered by the Mayor's Low Emission Zone. However, despite this, the recent report produced by the campaign group Clean Air in London identifies the North Circular Road as the worst Road in London in terms of emission rates. It is not clear from the report precisely which sections of the North Circular are most affected and we will be raising this with TfL to get a better understanding of the problem.

Question 7 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Bond Cabinet Member for Environment

Would the Cabinet Member agree that planning magazine's article stating that Enfield's planning department will be going into special measures was an embarrassment to the authority? What steps has he taken to ensure that the planning department will not go into special measures?

Reply from Councillor Bond

The Planning Magazine article was misleading. Current performance on major applications in the last quarter exceeds 66% and performance over the period from July 2011 to June 2013 exceeds 38%. I would refer you to the scrutiny meeting you attended for details on the measures taken which are both robust and reflect value for money for applicants and residents.

Question 8 from Councillor Hasan to Councillor Orhan, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Can the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, give the Council an update on her Primary Expansion Plan (PEP) Initiative.

Reply from Councillor Orhan

I am pleased to be able to report that we are entering an exciting phase of my PEP as we move into the actual building stage of the programme.

Seven of the eight schemes have been given planning permission for all the building works and preparations are being made for the contractors to start on site. The focus is on discharging the planning conditions, finalising design and beginning contract discussions which includes establishing the final cost of each scheme.

One scheme, Grange Park, has planning consent for a single reception classroom which will be delivered for September 2013 to allow an increased reception intake to help meet increased demand for school places.

Very positive discussions with Governors about traffic mitigation measures for a complete expansion are ongoing and we are now in the position of being able to submit a planning application to deliver permanent extra capacity for September 2014.

Question 9 from Councillor Vince to Councillor Orhan, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People

Early last year I raised concerns regarding school lettings. Eventually I received assurances in full Council that all schools would be paid. However, I am astounded to discover that many hirers have not been charged or issued with permits and many schools have not been paid since January this year. Can the Cabinet Member inform the Council why we are in the same position as we were a year ago, and what checks has she made over the last year and why we are in exactly the same problematic situation? Would she inform the Council how much is owed to schools since January, how many schools have decided to leave the School Lettings Service (SLS) because of poor performance from SLS and why is this problem still ongoing despite her reassurances to the contrary?

The Conservative opposition is told repeatedly by officers that it is the executive that principally runs this Council not full Council. Be that as it may would the Cabinet Member please not treat the Council with contempt.

Reply from Councillor Orhan

I am happy to update Councillors regarding the lettings service and make sure that they have access to the correct current information. I am confident that we are not in the same position as we were last year and can confirm that payments of £198,705 have been made to Schools and £45,201 to Academies for the period January to June 2013. The most recent payments were made to schools & academies in mid June representing all payments received up to and including May 2013.

There are still a number outstanding payments to us (this amounts to £131,000), but as I informed you previously there will never be a situation where the figure is zero as the balance is set on the date the invoice is issued and there is always then a time lag for the receipt and processing of the income and its distribution to schools and academies. The outstanding balance has improved considerably from October 2012. The service has also reduced the number of outstanding invoices issued.

There has been a slight drop in the number of schools that have bought in to the service this year 53 Schools bought in last year and 47 so far this year.

The reasons given to us for opting out have been varied including, in one case, building work in the school and in 2 cases, part of new school bursar's role. In addition at least 3 new schools have decided to buy in.

However I can assure you that my officers are monitoring the situation to ensure that it does continue to improve. At the same time we are about to consult with schools regarding the future of the service so that any changes are in place for the next financial year. I will of course keep Councillors informed of any proposals.

Question 10 from Councillor Robinson to Councillor Taylor, Leader of the Council

Would the Leader of the Council comment on the success of the signing of the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

Reply from Councillor Taylor

Thank you Councillor Robinson for the opportunity to inform Council of the Enfield Armed Forces Community Covenant, which as you know, is a voluntary statement of mutual support between the local Armed Forces community and the local civilian population.

The Council, as community leader, has always been fully committed to supporting the local Armed Forces community.

In partnership with other local service providers, we possess the knowledge, skills and experience to help our servicemen and women and their families.

Through our collective provision of care and support services we are helping those who have and are continuing to do, their duty on behalf of the government and nation. In this way, we are also assisting Armed Forces personnel with their transition back into civilian life.

It was therefore a great honour and pleasure for me to be able to commit to signing the Enfield Armed Forces Community Covenant on Wednesday 26 June 2013, in this Council Chamber.

The signing ceremony was attended by numerous VIPs including:

- Brigadier Richard Smith CBE – as the senior military representative
- Commander Graham Turnbull – representing the Royal Navy
- Wing Commander Chris Owen representing the Royal Air force
- Colonel Hugh Purcell OBE – Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for Greater London
- Mr Brian Hargrave – Chairman of the Greater London Royal British Legion
- Superintendent Jonathan Speed - Enfield Metropolitan Police
- Ms Litsa Worrall - Chair of Enfield Voluntary Action
- Mr George Georgiou – Chair of Enfield Homes
- Dr Alpesh Patel - Chair of the Enfield Clinical Commissioning Group
- Huw Jones Chief Executive Officer, North London Chamber of Commerce
- Mr Nigel Court Divisional Manager of Fusion Lifestyle Ltd
- Major John Rodwell DL,
- Member for Parliament Mr Andy Love and
- Ms Joanne McCartney Member of the Greater London Assembly

Along with the Mayor, Councillor Anwar and Leaders of the Conservative Group, Councillors Lavender and Laban.

I am pleased to say that the signing ceremony went well, with almost military precision.

The whole event, along with the Armed Forces Day Parade on Sunday 29 June, has helped demonstrate the fact that the people of Enfield are proud of their national Armed Forces and their local servicemen and servicewomen.

Everyone I spoke to on the night was very appreciative of our efforts to explicitly demonstrate our respect for the Armed Forces.

The Enfield Armed Forces Community Covenant clearly demonstrates our shared and renewed sense of commitment to supporting those that have sacrificed and given so much to preserve the freedoms we enjoy.

I have written to the Member of Parliament for Enfield North, Mr de Bois, who mistakenly criticised the Council for not agreeing to sign the Covenant, when plans were in place to do so. I have asked him to publicly acknowledge his error but at the time of this reply to your question I am not aware of this happening.

Question 11 from Councillor Neville to Councillor Stafford Cabinet Member for Finance and Property

On 7th June you signed off a delegated action report for the sale of Southgate Town Hall. The financial implications of the report were incorrect by £1.14 million and this was evident on the face of the document as you subsequently agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny call-in on 24th June.

Can he confirm to the Council that:

- (a) he reads these reports before signing them and
- (b) that he understands financial implications sufficiently to be able to recognise obvious mistakes and challenge the officers accordingly

Does he not consider that to approve an important decision with such a glaring error in the financial implications, requires him to consider his position as Cabinet Member for Finance and accordingly will he resign?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

As I explained at the Call In meeting, this was an unfortunate error in one part of the report. The deal, as Councillor Neville knows from the Call-in, is completely sound, represents good value for money and is the first step in developing and improving the area around the Southgate Town Hall and Palmers Green Library site for the benefit of local people. I therefore understand fully both the cost of the deal, and its value. Given that the Labour Administration is both financially savvy and community minded, why would I resign?

Question 12 from Councillor Sitkin to Councillor Orhan, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Would the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People confirm that a future Labour Government would discontinue the practice of having non qualified teachers in the classroom of Free Schools?

Reply from Councillor Orhan

Labour colleagues rejoiced at the recent announcement by Mr Stephen Twigg MP that a future Labour Government will support local government to setting up new schools where they are needed most and particularly in areas with a shortage of places. His statement that a Labour Government will insist on high standards for all our children, with qualified teachers in every classroom and that the Labour vision will bind communities together and not divide them was a very welcomed statement.

Enfield Labour are committed to ensuring that all our Children & Young People are given access to high quality teaching and learning and I know my officers work closely with all maintained schools and a high proportion of academies to ensure that teachers are skilled and qualified to deliver on our commitment.

Question 13 from Councillor Neville to Councillor McGowan Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Care & Health

The report to the Cabinet for 19th June on the future of Honeysuckle House, indicates that out of 56 expressions of interest in the tender for future care provision at Honeysuckle House, only four were shortlisted and all four withdrew their interest and did not therefore make a bid before the tender return date. Can he explain to the Council:

- (a) why it took six months to report that fact to the Cabinet which meant that the original contract had expired and could not therefore be further extended without legal difficulty?
- (b) does he accept that the Council is now placed in a difficult position in terms of negotiating an interim contract with the present provider?
- (c) what are his views on the way in which this transaction has been handled?
- (d) is he satisfied that the actions are likely to represent best value for the Council in their outcome?
- (e) is anybody to be held to account for these failings?

Reply from Councillor McGowan

I thank Councillor Neville for his question

It is not unusual for a provider to express an interest in a tender process in order to obtain information, but then not submit either a pre-qualification questionnaire or subsequently a formal tender.

I would refer Councillor Neville to two Cabinet Reports on 24th April and

19th June 2013 which contained both Part 1 and Part 2 sections for reasons of commercial sensitivity, which detail the number of providers who submitted per-qualification questionnaires and where subsequent shortlisted.

The report on the 24th April identified an urgent need to secure an immediate provider to continue to manage the service at Parkview Home which was tendered at the same time as Honeysuckle. The need for interim contract arrangements for the management of Parkview House where essential to safeguard the vulnerable resident group and this was a priority over the arrangements at Honeysuckle House which remained stable.

The Council where placed in a difficult position with an unexpected failure of the market to respond to a normal tender process. The interrelationship between concerns suggested by providers as detailed in a part 2 report and broader issues of risk appetite and affordability in the care homes provider market were apparent. The emerging impact of judicial reviews on the cost of social care for the elderly, as well as regulatory developments on the sustainability of care organisations' financial models became more apparent during the tender. This almost certainly included concerns by care homes about the collapse of Southern Cross for example, the continuing difficult economic climate and the local market context in Enfield where we have a much larger number of care homes supported by a mixture of Self funders and purchasing by Inner London Authorities.

Prior to any Cabinet Report being submitted it was necessary to consider options and to have early dialogue with providers to establish if there was in fact a viable option for the continuing management of Honeysuckle by a viable care provider. To do anything less would have placed the Council and residents care at significant additional risk.

Councillor Neville will be aware that this report has been called in and is therefore going to be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny. During this time the decision of Cabinet remains on hold and the forthcoming Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting will provide an opportunity for Councillor Neville to debate all of the relevant issues, including those of a commercially sensitive nature

Question 14 from Councillor Oykenor to Councillor Taylor, Leader of the Council

Would the Leader of the Council confirm the intention to name the new street in Ponders End, created as part of the major regeneration initiative on Dujardin Mews?

Reply from Councillor Taylor

Charlotte Dujardin won individual and team dressage gold medals at the London 2012 Olympic Games with her horse, Valegro. She was born in Enfield and was part of the triumphant "Greatest Ever" Team GB which lifted the entire

nation in winning 185 medals in the Olympic and Paralympic Games hosted in London last year.

Following planning permission being granted for a new 38 property street in Ponders End on 18 June, the Council has confirmed this street will be named Dujardin Mews.

The developer carried out early consultation on this proposal, with local residents, to ensure there were no objections and further consultation will follow as part of the Council's normal Street Naming and Numbering process.

Question 15 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Goddard, Cabinet Member for Business and Regeneration

Would the Cabinet Member for Business & Regeneration join with me in thanking the Mayor of London and the Conservative led government for the recent announcement that the London Enterprise Partnership will give the necessary funds to deliver the third track which is crucial to the success of the Meridian Water Regeneration Scheme and the regeneration of the eastern side of the Borough.

Reply from Councillor Goddard

Indeed the provision of the resource for the third track is a joint effort of all parties including the Council, the GLA, our Local MPs, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Government. Given that it is the LEP that makes the allocation, my first thanks go to them and to officers for doing all the work to make the case.

The £27.5 million investment was announced recently and will fund a four train per hour service between Angel Road and Stratford. Enfield Council is now in advanced negotiations with the Mayor of London, the Treasury and Transport for London (TfL) to develop the plans to drive the regeneration of the massive £1.3 billion green eco-development Meridian Water.

It is pleasing to note that the GLA is at last spending the London allocation and spending it in North London. Perhaps in future there will be more joint working on devolution of resources, criticism of the work programme and devolution of the schemes and economic growth to cite but a few areas.

Question 16 from Councillor Simon to Councillor Orhan, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Can the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People tell the Council how many additional school places she has created through her Primary Expansion Plan (PEP) initiative and what it will mean to children in Enfield?

Reply from Councillor Orhan

I am proud of the hard work of my Director Mr Andrew Fraser and of all staff in my department on my Primary Expansion Programme (PEP) and happy to report that phase one aims to provide an additional 1,890 permanent school places, and increased capacity to support previous school expansions, across all year groups beginning in 2013/14 across eight schools.

We are also about to start phase 2 which will look at a further increase for primary and the provision of secondary places.

This will mean that there will be sufficient high quality school places in the right location for all our young people.

Question 17 from Councillor Neville to Councillor Stafford Cabinet Member for Finance and Property

On 26th June George Osborne announced that the Council tax freeze, due to come to an end next April, would be extended for the next two years. He said that would mean nearly £100 off the average Council tax bill for families.

The announcement means that Council tax bills will have been frozen for the five years and in Enfield, six years given the self-funded freeze under the last Conservative administration.

Conservative Councillors welcome this. Does Councillor Stafford welcome this announcement and what steps is he putting in place to ensure that the budget remains balanced given the government's strategic aim is to induce town halls to cut their expenditure by offering a grant to the Councils to pay for the freeze that is unlikely to cover the full cost?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

Public Services have already experienced 33% cuts in real terms, with a further 10% announced for 2015/16 in the recent Spending Review. The Council Tax Freeze Grant, whilst welcome, is one-off funding and therefore builds up pressures and problems for future years. Because of this reason, 35% of local authorities chose not to accept the Freeze Grant offer in 2013/14.

The Council has set a balanced budget and frozen Council Tax throughout the lifetime of this Administration and is well on course to deliver the same again in February 2014.

I have made no secret of the fact that difficult decisions will have to be made during the life of the next Administration – indeed the Council Tax Freeze Grant tends to mask this. We are working, as any responsible political party would, to identify how this can be achieved whilst preserving the quality of services, representing local people and supporting staff to do the best possible job they can.

Question 18 from Councillor Buckland to Councillor Taylor, Leader of the Council

Would the Leader of the Council comment on the current situation with regard to the reduction in services at Chase Farm hospital?

Reply from Councillor Taylor

I thank Councillor Buckland for raising this matter. As you will now have seen, a report was received at Cabinet on the 10th July on this issue which set out the context of changes and details of work undertaken by the Executive and Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel. I would refer the Councillor to the detail in this report.

I can briefly summarise that the Council commissioned an independent report on the changes which was reviewed by the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel recently. The Council has also written to the Secretary of State for Health.

The NHS have to make a decision in September on whether to implement the proposed changes at Chase Farm and the Cabinet have endorsed the taking of all reasonable steps by the Council in that regard to safeguard health care services for Enfield residents, include taking legal action if required.

We will continue to keep this matter under close review in the meantime.

Question 19 from Councillor Neville to Councillor Stafford, Cabinet Member for Finance & Property

Would he tell the Council:

- (a) Since May 2010 how many officers have left the Council's service as a result of disciplinary proceedings; how many officers, if any, challenged dismissal at an employment tribunal; what if any was the total compensation awarded
- (b) How many officers have left the Council's service on the basis of a compromise agreement. What were the grades of the officers concerned
- (c) How much was paid in total on any compromise agreements:
 - (i) excluding pension payments; and
 - (ii) including pension payments

Reply from Councillor Stafford

- (a) 48 officers have left the Council service as a result of disciplinary proceedings since May 2010. 5 officers challenged the dismissal and the tribunals made no compensation awards.
- (b) Of the above 48 officers, 1 officer graded scale 6 left the Council on a compromise agreement.
- (c) No monies were paid via the compromise agreement detailed in (b) above.

Question 20 from Councillor Neville to Councillor Stafford Cabinet Member for Finance & Property

Is he aware that on the afternoon of Tuesday 18th June there were two false fire alarms in the Civic Centre within the space of 90 minutes? Is he also aware that on that afternoon the trade unions had organised a demonstration outside the Civic Centre in their campaign against “blacklisting”? Does he agree that it was too much of a coincidence that these elderly fire alarms which are long overdue for replacement – should have been activated twice in the same afternoon helping to swell the numbers outside the Civic Centre and around the trade union banners?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

The two evacuations were due to faults with the fire alarm system. Both faults originated within a secure staff area of the Civic Centre, where Union protestors did not have access. The smoke detectors concerned have since been replaced, and all other parts of the fire alarm have been checked. Where further maintenance and/or replacement is needed, we will do that, as part of our ongoing maintenance programme for the Civic Centre.

Question 21 from Councillor Neville to Councillor Stafford, Cabinet Member for Finance & Property

In the light of the recent disclosures by the National Audit Office about the use of credit cards issued in the civil service and elsewhere in the public service, could he tell the Council the following.

- (a) How many Councillors are issued with Council credit cards?
- (b) How many officers by grade hold Council credit cards or P cards for procurement or other purposes?
- (c) How much was spent respectively on those credit cards or P cards?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

- (a) None

(b) 448 purchase cards are held across the Council.

(c) Last year (2012/13), we spent as a Council £1,285,561.03 on P cards.

It may be helpful to explain the purpose and background to this issue.

P cards were introduced at Enfield Council in 2008 and have a number of advantages. They:

- Enable payments to be made quickly and easily, avoiding a lot of the paperwork associated with low value purchases (e.g. purchasing emergency clothing for looked after children etc) whilst still maintaining appropriate controls.
- Improve the quality of management information available to managers and the procurement team.
- Increase the resilience on controls of that expenditure by ensuring card holders and their managers review purchases on a monthly basis.
- Use systems and processes that represent best practice in the financial services industry.

The Council does not have any corporate credit cards.

All requests for cards have to be justified by a business case and approved by the proposed card holder's manager, Assistant Director for that area and the Head of Procurement Systems and Information, before going to the Director of Finance for final approval and signature for the bank.

There are limits on what the cards can be used to buy, in order to prevent inappropriate use. There is also an individual transaction limit (normally £250) and a monthly limit (normally £1000). There is no credit available on these cards.

Every month, expenditure on the cards is reviewed by the Corporate Procurement Team. Any anomalies are identified and addressed with staff and their line manager. Staff who do not comply with the financial regulations for the cards have their card suspended. The Council's Strategic Procurement Board reviews compliance at every meeting.

Question 22 from Councillor Jukes to Councillor Bond Cabinet Member for Environment

In view of the growing number of complaints from residents, can he advise the Council of action taken during 2012/2013 under the specific enforcement project "Beds in Sheds" and state what action is to be taken in 2013/2014 to eradicate this serious problem?

Reply from Councillor Bond

A breakdown of action taken by the Enforcement Team in 12/13 is as follows;

Investigations carried out	–	139
No breach found	-	35%
No action can be taken	-	20%
Breach rectified after warning letter	-	15%
Formal Notice served	-	15%
Formal action authorised	-	05%
Properties still under investigation	-	10%
Prosecution files underway	-	14
Works in default action authorised	-	5

Proposed action working year 2013/14

Information the Council holds from the past year through up to date aerial photography, data correlation on fly tipping/rubbish and anti social behaviour in or near alleyways will allow us to maximise the use of recourses in areas identified as hotspots and reoccurring problem locations.

Planning Enforcement will

- Review all data collected to identify problem areas/hotspots
- Continue to investigate and take action on all complaints received from residents and partners
- Carry out high profile operations (more visual approach)
- Increase Notices Served
- Increase prosecutions/Use of proceeds of crime
- Increase works in default action
- Increase awareness (Press releases)
- Lead and encourage on partnership meetings and cross working
- Continue to provide feedback to partners to ensure compliance under regulations
- Continue to look for further ways to identify possible problem areas

Question 23 from Councillor East to Councillor Goddard, Cabinet Member for Business & Regeneration

What steps is the Council taking to ensure the biodiversity is being incorporated into planning and regeneration policy? What examples can he share?

Councillor Goddard

There is a very simple answer and that is the information you require is contained within our Local Plan – Enfield Core Strategy, our newly produced

Development Management Document (DMD) (March 2013) and all the planning policy documents on our website. These reports have explicit sections on sustainability and biodiversity as a requirement of the policy process. For example, Enfield's Core Strategy adopted in 2010 (particularly Core Policy 36 which sets out the Council's approach to protecting, enhancing, restoring or adding to biodiversity diversity interests in the borough. The (DMD) was approved by full Council in March this year for submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination. The DMD contains detailed policies by which all planning applications will be determined and will be a key vehicle in delivering the vision and objectives for Enfield set out in the Core Strategy. Once the DMD is finally adopted it will be used alongside the Core Strategy, area based action plans for the regeneration priority areas and the London Plan to determine planning applications. Chapter 10 of the document concentrates on policies to protect a wide range of open spaces, playing pitches, waterways, wildlife corridors, green chains, biodiversity and ecological enhancements, trees and landscaping collectively referred to as "green infrastructure".

Specific examples of how biodiversity has been incorporated into planning policy include DMD policies 78 (Nature conservation) and 79 which seek to protect ecological assets from inappropriate development. Policy 79 requires developments resulting in the creation of 100sqm of floorspace or one net dwelling or more to provide onsite ecological enhancements.

In addition to these general policies, over 40 individual sites which have London wide, borough or local significance for nature conservation are identified on the Proposals Map accompanying the DMD and are subject to policies which guide any development which may affect them. As part of the preparation of the DMD all of these sites, which collectively cover 1,554 hectares, were reviewed and boundaries confirmed by the London Wildlife Sites Board. In addition to these borough wide plans, further planning guidance on biodiversity is included in more local area based plans such as the Meridian Water Masterplan.

Our approach to biodiversity through the planning system contributes to meeting the objectives and priorities of Enfield's Biodiversity Action Plan adopted in September 2011. Finally, let me assure you that it is our full intention to meet our obligations and that officers will brief you on the detail should you so wish.

Question 24 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Bond Cabinet Member for Environment

Please could the Cabinet member make sure that his department will be sensitive in dealing with vulnerable residents in relation to his latest decision where the threat of wheeled bin removal is used to deal with households that cause the cross contamination of waste for example putting the wrong thing in the wrong wheeled bins?

Reply from Councillor Bond

Yes.

Question 25 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Goddard, Cabinet Member for Business and Regeneration

The number of vacant shop units in Enfield Town is increasing. Please could he explain what his department doing to reduce this and to attract visitors to Enfield Town.

Reply from Councillor Goddard

The administration is very concerned about the state of Enfield Town and other areas with a weak retail situation. We are in the process of completing a strategy that will come before Council in the Autumn that addresses the issues as far as we can. The limitations are obvious to all.

The Council is not the owner of Enfield Town. The private sector has not invested in creating the size of units nor in schemes to lift the Town but relies on the public sector to intervene at a time when Local Government is being squeezed. The shops run by the Council in the east are over 95% occupied. You might ask what the landlords in the Town are asking for in rent and premiums. In Enfield Town our occupation figures are around the 85.3% against a national rate of just under 86%. You might agree that this is one of the consequences of 5 years of no growth. The issues are very complex and for that reason we are putting together a comprehensive approach.

In the interim we were using the High Street Innovation Fund, via Enfield Business & Retailers Association (EBRA), to make 'pop up' use of some empty premises in the Town. However, fortunately, the empty premises have been let. Several new businesses are moving in (Morrisons to HMV - Foxton are now open following empty period after Noodle Bar, another Estate Agent has opened up at the library end of the Town.

Officers from Regeneration, Leisure & Culture are meeting Enfield Town Business Association (EBTA) regularly. EBTA have recently expanded and other partners such as the police and third sector also attend and so it has become a "Town Team". EBRA are commissioned by Regeneration's Business Team to assist EBTA develop increase footfall and vibrancy events in 2013/14. A series of events have been planned, with the local community, through to December 2013 in order to increase visitors and shoppers.

EBTA, with support from EBRA and the Council, are developing an intergenerational scheme to employ the over 50s as Enfield Town ambassadors to help shoppers, explain offers and reduce the fear of crime and they will mentor NEETs (Not in Education, Employment and Training) who will be given on the job soft and specific skills through work experience placements

with ET businesses.

Through the High Street fund we have funded an extension to the social media campaign – ‘We Love Enfield’ to build interest and advise people of offers to increase footfall.

I think this demonstrates that we are working hard to secure improvements in our Town centre and will continue to see this as a priority.

Question 26 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Bond Cabinet Member for Environment

The tennis courts on the A10 are well used by the community especially in the summer months. These tennis courts currently have weeds growing through the concrete some at least a metre high. Will he get his department to undertake a deforestation/clean up programme of the tennis courts?

Reply from Councillor Bond

The courts will be maintained as a part of the regular and routine maintenance programme for the summer season.

Question 27 from Councillor Neville, to Councillor Bond Cabinet Member for Environment

You are currently consulting on a much smaller scheme for the installation of road humps near St Paul’s School Ringwood Way which proposes two sets of humps before and after the bend in Ringwood Way:

- (a) Have you personally visited the site and when?
- (b) Are you aware that the accident data for Ringwood Way shows unsurprisingly that there have been no accidents in Ringwood Way over the past five years
- (c) Are you aware that the only accidents that have occurred in the vicinity are some distance from the school at the far end of Green Moor Link
- (d) Do you not consider it a waste of public money to install humps in such positions on a road which because of its topography and the extent of residents parking is almost impossible to negotiate at any more than ten miles an hour during school access and egress periods

Reply from Councillor Bond

- (a) Yes, last month
- (b) Yes

(c) Yes

(d) 20 mph zones are effective in reducing the speed of vehicles in roads surrounding schools. We will install them where they are necessary to keep children safe. History tells us that a lack of previous incidents is not a totally effective indicator of future accidents.

Question 28 from Councillor East to Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member for the Environment

What are Councillor Bond's thoughts on the regular cancellation of the meeting of the Green Belt Forum by Councillor Sitkin, and the fact that some residents in Chase Ward consider it to be a reflection of this Administration's lack of focus on Greenbelt issues and protection of the environment in Enfield.

What message would he like to give to residents who are concerned about this?

Could he also please confirm his commitment to engaging with our residents on matters that concern them.

Reply from Councillor Bond

Unlike the current coalition government, the Council is committed to preserving the Green Belt, which has been demonstrated through robust application of planning policy and targeted enforcement to protect this area. However, this administration is keen to ensure that we only hold meetings when there are items for discussion and warrant the incurred public expenditure.

Question 29 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Taylor, Leader of the Council

In his foreword to his bid submission for a cycle network for Enfield, a document amusingly entitled 'Mini-Holland – Enfield' Councillor Taylor sells Enfield as a place having 'few hills'.

The entirety of the London Borough of Enfield lies on the western side of the River Lea Valley, at its lowest point in the east the borough follows the River Lea and rises in the west to its highest point at Ferney Hill being 102 metres above sea level. In fact the Enfield Characterisation Study, published in 2011 describes parts of the Borough as having a landscape comprising gently rolling hills and the key topological feature of the borough being hills and valleys.

A perusal of the map of Enfield reveals the following road names and places (this list is probably not exhaustive): Stag Hill, Beech Hill, Ferney Hill, Vault Hill, Roundhedge Hill, Cuckolds Hill, Camlet Hill, Crews Hill, Hornbeam Hills, Plumridge Hill, Oak Hill, Clay Hill, Morley Hill, Forty Hill, Lavender Hill, Gordon

Hill, Four Hills, Holtwhites Hill, Windmill Hill, Slades Hill, Cat Hill, Merryhills, Hillyfields, Bourne Hill, Aldermans Hill, Bush Hill, Church Hill and Winchmore Hill.

Did Councillor Taylor draft this foreword himself, or was it prepared by the Council's press department?

Would it not be better for this bid submission to concentrate on cycle lane provision where it would be most economically useful and where it would most likely be used?

Reply from Councillor Taylor

Foreword

"Enfield Council believes that cycling delivers great benefit to the individual cyclist and to the wider community. Enfield is a great place to cycle with open countryside, decent terrain and interesting places to visit. There are currently only a small minority of trips which are cycled. Travel to work and school by cycle is not the norm.

In recent years, the Council has invested significantly in cycling and is working hard to improve conditions for cyclists including delivering one of the most ambitious and dense Greenway cycle networks in Outer London. However, to realise our vision for cycling and our potential for a ten-fold increase in the number of trips cycled, significant investment is needed and we welcome this opportunity to apply for mini-Holland funding.

This investment will not only benefit residents who cycle, but everyone who lives, works or studies in Enfield, as we will create a healthier, more economically vibrant and attractive environment for all. More people cycling, and cycling as part of their normal, everyday life, will not only improve health and air quality but will increase surveillance, reduce crime, improve access to employment and services, and reduce those killed and seriously injured on our roads.

Our plans to radically transform the town centres of Enfield Town and Edmonton Green, and to create a Cycle Superhighway along the A1010, will make these places better for everyone, with less noise and pollution from traffic and more trees and places to enjoy. Revitalising Edmonton Green will also enable us to address inequalities in an area that has some of the worst child poverty and life expectancy rates in England.

Our vision is to make the borough a better place to live and work, delivering fairness for all, growth and sustainability and strong communities, and mini-Holland funding will enable us to achieve this. We want to see a better balance of travel; one less wholly dominated by cars making short journeys and more populated by people on cycles. We particularly want to see groups of people

who are less likely to cycle - women, the young, and black and minority ethnic groups - taking to their pedals and we will work with these communities and involve them at every stage of the planning and design process. Only when visitors to the borough comment on how prevalent and inclusive cycling is in Enfield, will we be able to claim success - we can achieve that.”

Doug Taylor
Leader of the Council

Michael Lavender
Leader of the Opposition”

The text of the Foreword, which was submitted last week, is printed above. This does not accord with your observations in your question. The Conservative side received the submission on July 5th.

Question 30 from Councillor Headley to Councillor Charalambous, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure Youth & Localism

Edmonton Leisure Centre is dilapidated and the facilities and equipment are worn, not updated and expensive annual membership is £450. Can the Cabinet Member explain why Edmonton residents are being so poorly served and what he is doing about it?

Reply from Councillor Charalambous

Edmonton Leisure Centre is a little over 5 years old and is the Council’s newest Leisure Facilities. I think it is stretching a point to suggest that it is dilapidated.

It is well used and has a thriving membership, 50 plus user group and swim school membership. When Fusion took over as the operators of the Leisure Centres in Enfield they agreed an approach jointly with the Council to redevelop a number of the facilities. Whilst it was recognised that Edmonton Leisure Centre was relatively new, some work was planned as part of the Capital Development Project. This work will be starting in the autumn of this year.

The Council and Fusion work hard to monitor the equipment and Fusion have introduced a rolling replacement programme across Enfield's Leisure Centres. Fusion has also introduced a new maintenance regime for the equipment with improved call out times when equipment is broken.

With regard to Membership prices, the Council has introduced affordable Leisure initiatives such as free swimming for young people during the holidays, free gym use before 4pm for young people during the holidays and an extra free swimming session for older people. As well as this initiative the Council recognised that the full membership prices might be beyond some residents, so working with Fusion new off peak cheaper memberships have been introduced. The Council with Fusion continue to run the discount scheme (Energy Card) for those meeting the criteria and link closely with the 50 plus group in Enfield who continue to attract a discount.

I'm proud to say that Edmonton Residents will benefit from these developments.

Question 31 from Councillor Headley to Councillor Charalambous, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure Youth & Localism

Can the Cabinet member for youth provision clarify if the Youth Parliament was consulted about the closure of the skate park and Croyland Road ? Can he tell us what their views were?

Reply from Councillor Charalambous

Councillor Headley is mistaken in believing that there is a skate park in Croyland Road but if she is referring to the skate park at the junction of the A10 and Church Street next to Edmonton Cemetery she should know that the viability of any cemetery extension will be considered in the Autumn/Winter and if there is any displacement of the current skate park the re-provision of a skate park in nearby suitable location will be done with full consultation of the youth Parliament and users of the current facility.

Question 32 from Councillor Headley to Councillor Bond Cabinet Member for Environment

Pymmes Park has become a untidy public space with new Romany gypsies using the park making a mess littering and spitting seeds and breaking the public furniture. When was the last time the Cabinet Member crossed the A10 and visited the park without an officer and saw first hand why so many long standing residents feel so disgusted with the ill treatment of our public space which is an historic gift to the borough?

Reply Councillor Bond

I am sure I have visited Pymmes Park more often than she has visited Bush Hill Park ward. I was in the park at the beginning of July.

Question 33 from Councillor Headley to Councillor McGowan, Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Care & Health

Can the Cabinet Member agree that care packages need to be reformed so that the Council gets value for money ?

Reply from Councillor McGowan

I would like to thank Councillor Headley for raising this important issue with me. The need to deliver good value for money whilst at the same time ensuring we meet the Council's statutory responsible for securing good quality care and safeguarding vulnerable adults continues to be a significant challenge.

The Councillor will be aware from Cabinet reports and her work on the Vulnerable Adults and Older People Scrutiny Panel that Adult Social Care during 13/14 has planned savings of £7,587 million being delivered and a programme of £6 million for 14/15 already agreed.

These savings are being delivered through a combination of better procurement, changing the customer pathway through personalisation. Delivering improved choice and control, enablement services and delivering efficiencies in back office services. However we cannot be complacent, given recent government budget announcements, about the need to continue to provide good value for money whilst at the same time ensuring we do all we can to safeguard and provide care to vulnerable adults in Enfield.

Question 34 from Councillor Neville to Councillor Stafford Cabinet Member for Finance & Property

Can he tell the Council for each of the last three years since May 2010 how many temporary/ interim posts on "M" grades and above have been engaged and at what cost expressed as a total for each year and an average daily cost and showing how much of these totals is paid to agencies. and show the same information for the current year.

Reply from Councillor Stafford

Please can Councillor Neville clarify which posts he is referring to as the Council does not have a descriptor titled 'M' grade?

Question 35 from from Councillor Neville to Councillor Stafford Cabinet Member for Finance & Property

What is the total cost this year for incremental pay increases within grades across all staff?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

The estimated total cost for automatic incremental pay increases for Council staff in the financial year 2013/14 is £519,840.51. This cost is estimated due to the fact that staff movement and the cost of pension contributions could vary across the financial year. It should be noted that Council staff, whose salaries are determined by the National Joint Council, have received no national pay award for the last 3 years. This has not been the case for other sectors eg: teachers.