

Councillor Questions – 29 January 2014

Section 1 Questions for Cabinet Members

Question 1 from Councillor Pearce to Councillor Hamilton, Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing and Public Health

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has announced the protection of public health budgets. However Councillor Hamilton will be aware that her administration is proposing to divert certain funds from the new public health budget for purposes which are not directly related to obvious and real health problems. An example is the use of the health budget for pavement gritting. Given there are such known demands for real health care in the borough does she support the use of public health money for this purpose? Does she not agree with my view, that the use of such funds for purposes either remotely or unrelated to health, undermines the cross-party support for improved health care and undermines the arguments we have raised for greater health funding for the residents of the Borough?

Reply from Councillor Hamilton

I agree that Enfield has significant public health needs. Public health funding will not be diverted to areas that have a low impact on the public's health. The proposal about gritting was an early proposal which has been rejected, as it was not high enough priority relative to other needs. The alternative funding source agreed by Cabinet is the wider Winter Maintenance budget.

Public Health expenditure will continue to be reviewed against the mandatory and non-mandatory public health criteria to ensure evidence of effectiveness and cost effectiveness.

Question 2 from Councillor Savva to Councillor Stafford, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property

Would the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property inform Councillors, all elected representatives of Enfield and the borough's residents, of the level of Council Tax collection and arrears and how this compares with other boroughs?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

Enfield's overall council tax collection rate of 98% is the second highest in London, on a par with Bromley, Kensington, Richmond and Sutton and better than Wandsworth and Westminster. The council tax collection fund is also in surplus which demonstrates even better collections in recent years. With the sixth highest collectable amount and the second highest council tax support caseload in London, the council tax service uses the full range of recovery methods to recover debt which can often take some time to collect. For example, for council taxpayers receiving benefit, the council will apply for a deduction from state benefits rather than refer the debt to a bailiff. While this results in payment over a longer term, this also allows for regular automated payments to be made and a low cost of collection.

Last year we recouped c£6m in council tax arrears, the highest amount in London and fourth highest nationally. In addition, more than £5m of council tax debt is secured against people's properties and many debtors have agreed repayment plans in place.

Enfield will continue to take a responsible and cost effective approach to debt collection which is fair to all – fair charges and fair collection methods to ensure that the income we need to deliver our services is secured.

Question 3 from Councillor Neville to Councillor Stafford, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property

It has come to my attention that there are a number of proposals across the council to use part of the £12m plus budget ring fenced for public health purposes for matters which might appear to be somewhat remote from public health purposes. An example is to use the health budget for pavement gritting. Can he tell the council how much money he is proposing to divert in total from the public health budget as part of the 2014/15 annual budget, and for what purposes?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

In 2014/15 the Council will receive a £14.3m budget to be spent on Public Health. The majority of these funds will be required for known health commitments which had previously been provided by the NHS. The Council is carefully considering the allocation of the remaining budget and has already committed to support such health issues as childhood obesity and female life expectancy in deprived areas. The final allocation of the budget will be included in the Council Tax setting budget paper in February. The scope of Public Health is broad, and not confined to medical purposes. Similarly, it would be incorrect to suggest that Public Health funding is being diverted away from Public Health. With Public Health joining the Council; we now have far greater opportunities to target this funding on the Borough's Public Health priorities. It should be noted that use of Public Health funding was considered for the pavement gritting programme but it was subsequently agreed at Cabinet to fund this from the wider Winter Maintenance Programme.

Question 4 from Councillor Uzoanya to Councillor Oykenner, Cabinet Member for Housing

Can the Cabinet Member tell the Council how many properties sold under the Right to Buy are now owned and operated by private landlords?

Reply from Councillor Oykenner

As at December 2013 there are 2,264 non-resident leaseholders within the council stock. This equates to about 49.9% of the leasehold portfolio. This is at odds with the needs of many Enfield residents who need genuinely affordable properties to rent. Most of these 2000+ properties that were affordable will now be rented out at market rates. It also leads to less stable communities on our estates as many of these private tenants have no real stake in their local community.

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

How does he justify the lack of factual information behind the proposed reductions listed in the budget consultation that appeared in the recent edition of Our Enfield which to many would seem inadequate to enable anyone to form a reasoned view?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

The Council has a comprehensive consultation process with the aim of getting as many views as possible to inform the budget process. The insert in Our Enfield has been a feature of this process for many years and this year primarily seeks to identify which services are highest priority to the public. The consultation process also includes detailed presentations at all Area Forums, Scrutiny Panels and also specific groups such as the Over 50's Forum and Enfield Racial Equality Council so there are many ways that residents can challenge, scrutinise and engage in the budget process.

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

On 9 January 2014, 10 fire stations will close in London. The number of fire engines have been reduced by 14. Is London and are residents across London and within Enfield safe as a result?

Reply from Councillor Bond

We are obviously very concerned about any changes to the London Fire Brigade and the service it provides to our residents. (Joanne McCartney, the Assembly Member for Enfield and Haringey has also consistently opposed these cuts due to the impact they will have on London).

Whilst Enfield is not losing any stations or fire engines, there is a net reduction of two fire engines from neighbouring local authorities, which will have often dealt with incidents in Enfield. It is also of concern that the Fifth London Safety Plan 2013-16 highlights that with these changes, Enfield will have the slowest average first appliance performance at 6m:26s and I would urge the Mayor to reconsider these cuts to ensure the safety of the people of Enfield.

Question 7 from Councillor Lavender to Councillor Taylor, Leader of the Council

On 14 November 2013 a meeting of the Tourism and Town Twinning Working Party was held in Room 6 at 7:30pm. An item on that agenda was an audit of local leisure and culture provision. The report recommended the closure of libraries within the Borough.

This report was withdrawn at the meeting.

Interestingly following that meeting the agenda and reports were removed from the Council's web-site. In fact not only were the reports removed, but also the very existence of the committee meeting has been airbrushed in its entirety from the Council's calendar in North Korean fashion.

Will he please explain reasoning behind this lack of transparency and undertake to upload to the web-site, the existence of the meeting, the reports and minutes for the public record?

Reply from Councillor Taylor

Items for the agenda of this meeting are discussed with the Head of Leisure & Culture. The report on the audit of Leisure & Culture Provision May 2011 was included in an email about the agenda for the meeting in error.

Once the agenda had been published the Head of Leisure & Culture realised the error. An apology was made at the meeting; however, as this was an old report from May 2011, there was never any intention to discuss the report.

This is not a public meeting and therefore in line with other such meetings, the agendas and minutes are not published on the website. Of course this is not an executive meeting and there are no proposals to close any libraries.

Question 8 from Councillor Levy to Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member for Environment

Siberian wintery blasts may well hit the UK over the next few months. Given falling living standards under this Government and the likelihood of people needing to economise on heating this is bad news for residents. What is the Cabinet Member doing in terms of roads, in spite of savage Government cuts, to keep Enfield moving?

Reply from Councillor Bond

I approved Enfield's winter Maintenance Plan for the winter of 2013/14 back in the summer after much discussion and involvement with officers. The plan describes the arrangements that we have put in place to ensure the key roads throughout the borough are kept open to traffic during bad weather and involves Council Officers working with our Highways and Engineering Works Contractor, 'EM Highway Services' to provide 24 hour cover during the winter maintenance season, which is 1st November until 31st March.

Our winter maintenance service involves treating the public highway with salt, either to prevent ice from forming or to melt it once it has formed; and also to melt/remove snow.

Enfield grits 47% of its road network, referred to as the Priority 1 network, which comprises of major routes, all bus routes and especially hazardous locations. Due to the large additional cost, we would only consider gritting all the roads in the borough if heavy snowfall remained over a long period. The decision to commence gritting all

roads would be made by the Assistant Director for Planning, Highways and Transportation, taking into account existing salt stocks, the commitment required to maintain the priority 1 network and long range forecasts.

Our contractor has a large salt stock of 2,000 tonnes at their Brimsdown depot specifically for Enfield's roads and we have an additional 500 tonnes at our own Council depot, so we are well placed for dealing with this winter.

When there is a forecast for heavy snow fall with a prolonged cold spell to follow, resulting in snow remaining on footways for a number of days, arrangements are in place for the Council's Cleansing department to grit main pavement routes.

We have provided a dedicated winter service web page (Winter in Enfield) on the Council's web site to provide information to the public. This information comprises, gritting information and route plans, self-help guidance and the locations where the Council provides large salt bags, weather forecasts, policy guidance and a photo gallery.

Question 9 from Councillor Kaye to Councillor Orhan the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Councillor Orhan will no doubt be aware of the report from the National Audit Office, *Capital funding for new school places*, 15 March 2013 which confirmed that the previous Labour Government cut 200,000 primary places in the middle of a baby boom. It found: 'the number of primary places fell by almost 207,000 (5 per cent) between 2003/04 and 2009/10 despite the fact that 'between 2001 and 2011, the population of England and Wales showed the largest ten-year growth since the census began in 1801. She will also be aware of the report in Hansard, 11 July 2011, Col. 96W confirming that the previous Labour government cut funding for extra school places by a quarter. Between 2004 and 2009, Labour cut annual funding for new school places by £150 million, or 26 per cent. Funding fell from a peak of £566 million in 2004-05 to £419 million in 2009-10.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People will no doubt be aware that the Government has announced an extra £2.35 billion to create more school places. This is in addition to the £5 billion that is already being spent in this parliament. This means that between 2014 and 2017 schools in Enfield will receive a further £33,528,076. Since May 2010 Enfield Schools have received £102,036.

You now have a 3-year allocation of funding to spend on school places, you can now plan ahead and ensure every Enfield child has a school place. Will you please outline how and where this money is to be spent?

Reply from Councillor Orhan

Financial Monitoring Service (FMS) have checked this figure and can confirm that it should be £103,036,000 and is based on all capital grant allocations (including Oasis Hadley £20.073m) between 2010/11 and 2013/14. This information was already provided to the Conservative Members via the Assistant Director Corporate Finance on 6th January. The £33.528m relates to the Basic Need allocations for the 3 years

between 2014/15 to 2016/17 announced in December.

An estimated capital grant allocation of £8.7m per annum was assumed within the Schools and Children's Services (SCS) capital programme for this 3 year period. This is required to part fund the SCS school expansion scheme which is already part of the Council's approved capital programme. The additional grant funding of £7.428m will be used to reduce the unsupported borrowing currently required to fund these schemes.

As Councillor Kaye well knows the money received from the Government was not all allocated for school places. When this Administration came into office in 2010 we were determined to provide sufficient places whether the Government allocated us the funding or not and have used other sources of funding to ensure we meet our statutory responsibilities. As a result of this we have made plans going forward of how we are going to meet the continued demand for school places in the future and these plans have been made public as part of a series of Cabinet Reports on 20 June 2012, 5 December 2012 and 19 June 2013. We will of course update our plans now that this much needed additional funding has been provided by the Department for Education (DfE) and Councillors will be informed through the normal democratic process.

Question 10 from Councillor Brett to Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member for Environment

David Cameron on 8 January 2014 admitted during Prime Minister's Question Time that he supported the view that extreme weather was linked to climate change and added that it made sense to invest in flood defences. Let us hope that climate change deniers in his party will now be silent. Can Councillor Bond indicate what changes are being made in Enfield to protect people and property?

Reply from Councillor Bond

In 2012 Enfield Council published a Surface Water Management plan which sets out an action plan for managing flood risk in the borough. This identifies high risk areas of flooding and makes recommendations for reducing flood risk in these Critical Drainage Areas. Several of these recommendations are currently being followed up with funding support from Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee - in particular flood alleviation schemes for Enfield Town and area around Haselbury Road have been significantly progressed and could be implemented within the next 2 years. Enfield has also carried out several highway drainage improvement schemes in recent months to protect major roads including The Ridgeway, Whitewebbs Lane and Meridian Way from flooding.

In addition, two CCTV cameras have been installed this year at flooding hot spots to enhance Enfield's existing network of river level monitoring equipment i.e. Mollison (Prince of Wales School) and Bury Lodge. This equipment allows Enfield's emergency planning team to monitor flood risk in real-time and make informed decisions in response to the situation on the ground.

For several years, Enfield Council has been working with the Environment Agency to develop the Salmons Brook Flood Alleviation scheme. Works are progressing well on site which will result in a reduction in the risk of flooding to properties along Salmon Brook.

Question 11 from Councillor Smith to Councillor Oyken, Cabinet Member for Housing

The present Government recognises the need for more housing to be provided in appropriate locations. The previous Conservative administration in Enfield also recognised this and therefore established the Meridian Water proposals to create 5,000 new homes, the regeneration of the Ladderswood Estate and initiated proposals for Ponders End in addition to preparing some smaller sites in Town and Chase wards.

Authorities that deliver new homes are awarded a New Homes Bonus. Following the delivery of 2,010 new homes (including affordable homes) and the bringing back into use of 47 long-term empty properties, the total amount allocated by Central Government to the London Borough of Enfield under the New Homes Bonus since its introduction in 2011-12 including the 2014-15 provisional figure, is £8.2 million. This is not an insignificant amount of money and if used wisely can assist in the delivery of even more homes creating a virtuous circle of regeneration and financial reward.

Would the Cabinet Member please confirm exactly how this sum has been spent and (in relation to the 2014-15 provisional figure) how this is budgeted to be spent).

Reply from Councillor Oyken

The Council is fully committed to the delivery of more homes in the borough and as you will know continues to progress a number of major housing renewal schemes including the Alma and Ladderswood Estates.

The Council has been awarded £8.2m of New Homes Bonus (NHB) so far. You will recall that the Government fund New Homes Bonus by a top-slice from the existing Local Government Finance Settlement which adds to the reduction in Enfield's existing Government grants.

I can confirm that the £8.2m NHB confirmed to date has been specifically allocated in respect of:

- Money set aside to bring empty properties back into use £0.5m
- Provision for homelessness and temporary accommodation initiatives £3.0m
- Regeneration – development of new homes in Ponders End and Meridian Water £2.5m
- Strategic Planning and the development of Area Action Plans

enabling new Development Areas to be identified £1.0m

- The allocation of uncommitted 2014/15 NHB is still to be finalised but will be split between homelessness initiatives and supporting regeneration at Meridian Water £1.2m

Question 12 from Councillor Simon to Councillor Georgiou, Deputy Leader of the Council

Can the Deputy Leader of the Council inform the Council of any outcomes resulting from the Deaf Area Forum held on 26 November 2013?

Reply from Councillor Georgiou

I can confirm that the first Area Forum for the deaf community was held on 26th November 2013.

The forum was very well attended and the feedback received at the end of the meeting was extremely positive.

The agenda was set by members of the deaf community and Council Officers provided a great deal of information.

In addition Daniel Alei (Manager Southgate Fire Station) attended and spent some time on what the Fire Service does and how those who are deaf can feel safe and be safe in their homes.

I am now able to inform Council that at the forum the Fire Service received 12 referrals and are fitting 12 Special Fire Alarms to residents' homes in the borough. These alarms are specially designed to make deaf people aware of smoke in their homes. The alarms will be fitted by one of our local fire fighters who have been trained to sign.

I am sure all members who attended the forum would recognise the success and the manner in which this Council has engaged with the deaf community and also provided a very real positive outcome for the deaf community.

I would like to thank all those involved, in particular the residents who attended.

I have asked for a further Forum to be arranged.

Question 13 from Councillor Kaye to Councillor Orhan, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

In 2010/2011 the Government awarded Enfield Council the following grants for Educational Expenditure:

- Modernisation Grant, £2.508m
- Primary Capital Grant £7.435m
- Basic Need Grant £6.491m

In 2011/2012 the Government awarded Enfield Council the following grants for Educational Expenditure:

- Basic Need Grant £5.561m
- Basic Need Additional Grant £10.436m
- Maintenance £4.664m
- Oasis Hadley Grant £6.941m

In 2012/2013 the Government awarded Enfield Council the following grants for Educational Expenditure:

- Basic Need Grant £9.464m
- Basic Need Additional Grant £10.796m
- Maintenance £4.180m
- Early Years Education £1.099m
- Oasis Hadley Grant £13.132m

In 2013/2014 the Government awarded Enfield Council the following grants for Educational Expenditure:

- Basic Need Grant £7.266m
- Targeted Basic Need Additional Grant £7.530m
- Maintenance £4.083m

- a. Will the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People concur with my mathematical calculation that the grants awarded by the Government amount to in excess of £101m over the last four years?
- b. Will she confirm the amount of the sums promised and not delivered under the previous Government's Building Schools for the Future Scheme and agree with me not only are those promised but undelivered sums far exceeded by the financial support provided by this Government but also that given these grants do not contain the conditions and strings attached to the Building Schools for the Future Programme, that these grants have facilitated a much swifter delivery of school places than could ever have been achieved under the failed Building Schools for the Future Programme.
- c. Will she join with me in recognising the coalition parties' commitment to education and their role enabling schools to be built now?

Reply from Councillor Orhan

- a. Figures listed were provided to Conservative Members' office via the Assistant Director Corporate Finance on 6 January and are correct.
- b. I am happy to confirm information we have already given you regarding the total amount of grants received. However, I do need to reiterate that these grants were not all to provide school places. They also included much

needed capital investment in our school buildings and to complete the provision of one of our secondary Academies. Regarding funding for Building Schools for the Future, I can confirm that the total amount was £110m. I am surprised that I have to remind colleagues that this money, that was stopped by the coalition Government in 2010, was to be allocated for secondary schools and making much needed improvements to their buildings. It was not about expansions, and certainly not about providing primary school places.

c. No.

Question 14 from Councillor Cazimoglu to Councillor Oyken, Cabinet Member for Housing

Would the Cabinet Member for Housing inform the Council of the new deal signed with British Gas and how this will benefit many Enfield residents?

Reply from Councillor Oyken

The contract for this proposed scheme is not yet signed. Unfortunately, the preferred bidder, British Gas, are currently reviewing their Energy Company Obligation (ECO) obligations in light of recent changes to energy company carbon reduction targets announced by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), in early December 2013.

If agreed, this private sector project will focus on bringing in ECO funding into Enfield. This will be achieved by working closely with British Gas to install insulation, boiler upgrades and other applicable measures for private sector homes (owner occupied and private rented) in the Edmonton area.

This will:

- Improve the thermal comfort of people's homes
- Reduce health inequalities in Enfield
- Support local jobs and businesses.

With regard to our Council stock, ECO works are planned to the four blocks at the Exeter Road Estate, together with Welch House and Woolpack House.

The works will include Insulated Roof Covering, External Wall Insulation and new Double Glazed Windows to 300 flats (including 45 leaseholder units). These measures will help to reduce the fuel consumption for the residents of these flats typically by 40%, which will significantly help to alleviate fuel poverty issues.

We continue to discuss these proposals with British Gas and hope to conclude contracts for these works in the near future.

Question 15 from Councillor Kaye to Councillor Orhan, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People will be aware of the concerns in the South West of the Borough about the need for more local primary school provision. Ashmole Academy, albeit in Barnet, is ranked as one of the most successful secondary schools in the country. In view of this growing demand in the immediate area for more primary school places, it has announced that it is actively considering the development of a Free primary school on the site. The proposal is to have the school open for September 2015. Before it can start, the school Ashmole Academy is required to apply to the Department of Education for the funds for the construction and to demonstrate that there is sufficient interest to fill the school.

Does the Cabinet member for Children and Young People support this initiative? If so, is the Council prepared to provide the data evidencing the need for more pupil places in the area to the Department for Education?

Reply from Councillor Orhan

I would like to remind Councillor Kaye of the 2 Council reports dated 20 June 2012 and 19 June 2013 that outline this administration's proposals for meeting the need for pupil places across Enfield and include the plans for the south west of the borough. When they were written they did not include any planned developments in our neighbouring Local Authorities and at that time we were not aware of any plans to expand Ashmole Academy. They are public documents and as such are available for anyone considering applying to the Department of Education (DfE) to open a free school. They provide the data demonstrating the need for more places.

With regards to Ashmole Academy proposals, I am aware that they contacted us directly to inform us of their intentions and we have responded to them as we have to other groups interested in opening a Free School. (I am sure I do not need to remind Councillors that Local Authorities do not have a role in approving or disapproving of such applications to the DfE in the initial stages).

Now that they have informed us of their intentions we will be looking at our strategy for school places in the area and considering the impact of the proposals for Enfield children and young people.

Question 16 from Councillor Sitkin to Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member for Environment

Could the Cabinet Member for Environment give an update on the Mini Holland bid?

Reply from Councillor Bond

Enfield was one of only 8 boroughs short-listed to proceed to the final stages of the Mayor's £100m 'Mini-Holland' initiative to transform cycling in outer London. Our bid was submitted on 13 December 2013 and proposes a £35m package of measures aimed at getting more people cycling, improving the health of residents and supporting economic activity in our town centres and regeneration areas. The measures aim to provide safe, high quality cycle facilities across the borough, but focus on making significant improvements in Enfield Town, Edmonton Green, the A1010 corridor and Green Lanes.

The proposals were presented to Andrew Gilligan and a panel of experts on the 20 January 2014 and we expect to hear whether we will be one of the four boroughs that have been successful before the end of March 2014. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Councillor Laban for her support.

Question 17 from Councillor Vince to Councillor Orhan, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

At the last Corporate Parenting Committee, which you were unable to attend, it was agreed that Enfield would have its own pledge to Care Leavers (as well as the National Pledge). Would you please confirm that you have now signed this Pledge?

Reply from Councillor Orhan

I am fully committed to the Enfield Care Leavers Pledge, which I signed on 18 November 2013, prior to the Corporate Parenting Group in December 2013.

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

Will the Leader of the Council congratulate the residents of the borough who were given awards in the Queen's New Year Honours list?

Reply from Councillor Taylor

I would like to congratulate those residents of the borough who were given awards in the Queen's New Year's Honours list. It is always heart-warming to see recognition of commitment, dedication and hard work.

Question 19 from Councillor Prescott to Councillor Doug Taylor Leader of the Council

In the financial year 2012-2013, the Council awarded voluntary organisations and community groups £7,614.042 of public money. At a previous council meeting on the 19 September 2012 the Conservative Group tabled a motion in relation to the improvement of governance issues concerning these arrangements. This motion was never reached because of the Labour administration's tactic of agenda management and filibustering to avoid proper scrutiny.

Will Councillor Taylor confirm who in the council is responsible for documenting grant agreements (including the stipulated outcomes) and who in the Council is responsible for contractual compliance, monitoring the performance of outcomes and/or value-for-money monitoring. What involvement have councillors had in this process? We fear that in many instances there has simply been a case of handing out cash with little or no requirement (or effort made by the Council) to monitor or prove any outcomes.

Reply from Councillor Taylor

I would like to thank the Councillor for bringing to wider attention the continued commitment Enfield Council provides in supporting the delivery of services to local people via our partners in the Voluntary Sector. Unlike many other local authorities, we have not simply closed the door on partnership working with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) but have correctly seen the opportunity to deliver services with them as a key component in supporting our residents in these very testing times.

We have revisited existing working practices with the VCS and developed a VCS Framework document in consultation with them, "Working in Partnership", that sets out clear principles for our approach that are underpinned by a focus on fairness, transparency, consistency and the demonstration of evidence of need and measurable outcomes as fundamental tenets of how to agree service delivery with the sector.

The Council takes the issue of accountability of funds in all spheres of delivery very seriously and we have worked with officers across Departments to develop a more robust approach to the performance management of funds than those we inherited from the previous administration. This aim, whilst hugely challenging is critical as funding becomes ever scarcer and more difficult decisions need to be taken. At present, each Department has responsibility for the grant funding streams it sponsors and are committed to regular performance management of agreements to ensure that stated outcomes are reached and budgets awarded are accounted for. Eligibility criteria, where not prescribed from Government, are developed to be robust and ensure that we do all we can to maximise value for money for the local authority. Officers in the Legal Department provide support and guidance during the development phase of grant programmes to ensure compliance with statutory regulation and also to test against our own stated strategic aims as an administration.

All grant funding streams are made available to regular audit and where recommendations are made for improvement they are taken forward and necessary action taken. Indeed we have looked to increase the degree to which audit are involved in providing an assessment in how we do business that is rather more robust than it had been historically.

Councillors with portfolio responsibility are involved in the design and implementation of grant funding opportunities within their designated departmental areas. To give a current example, in the case of our two new flagship grants programmes, the Member-led Enfield Residents Priority Fund and the Enfield Community Capacity Building Fund, a bespoke Cabinet sub-Committee is employed to scrutinise all potential grant awards coming forward and agree their awards, often seeking clarification on matters pertaining to them before doing so to ensure the effective deployment of funding. This is in addition to a quality assurance process for bids received that is enacted by officers upon receipt of prospective funding applications. We have demonstrated our commitment to develop and enact good practice when we recently engaged in a corporately led, transparent and inclusive 'competitive grants process' to provide refreshed non-Departmentally specific infrastructure agreements. These agreements featured for the first time fully measurable, timed outputs and outcomes directly linked to the receipt of funding payments and began

the process of moving us away from the old style 'core funding' agreements that proved difficult to evaluate and were not fit for purpose.

The corporate teams in administering grant funding streams such as these apply robust, best practice quarterly performance management monitoring of those agreements and will not release funding until evidence of a previous quarters outputs/spending has been provided.

Support is also offered to partner organisations to consider their longer term sustainability as part of the partnership work we engage in with them to ensure where spend is one-off it does not necessarily mark the end of the activity and alternative external funding sources can be considered.

This has created a benchmark environment by which all Departmental activity of a similar nature can follow as existing agreements wind down and new commissioning intentions are developed across the Council to meet future need. It forms the basis of our desire to create a consistent and transparent approach to grant spending in line with our own stated objectives across the Council that will deliver accountable and appropriate services for local people to access and benefit from.

We also continue to look positively at how we can maximise effectiveness structurally as an organisation to make processes even more transparent and coordinated as we seek to remodel the functions of the local authority to meet future demands.

Question 20 from Councillor Cole to Councillor Goddard, Cabinet Member for Business and Regeneration

Can the Cabinet Member update the Council on the current position with regard to Broomfield House?

Reply from Councillor Goddard

Despite the fire damaged condition, Broomfield House remains on the Secretary of State's list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest at Grade II* and the focus of Broomfield Park, which is on English Heritage's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. As such it is part of the National heritage and alterations to it are protected by legislation and would require the approval of both English Heritage and potentially the Secretary of State.

Under this legislation the Council, as the owner of Broomfield House are obliged to consider all options for its restoration. Restoration, as we all know, would involve significant costs. Meeting the totality of these costs would clearly be beyond the scope of the Council's budgets in this time of austerity.

This is why the Council, working in partnership with the Broomfield House Trust and others from the local area, made an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund last year to secure a quantum to support the restoration of the House. Although this application was scored very highly, the quantum of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)'s budgets combined with competition from larger nationally significant projects meant

that the HLF felt unable to approve the application. This was a huge disappointment for the Council, for the Trust and for local people generally.

Since then we have confirmed with the Trust that we would all still like to find a way of securing the necessary level of funding to get this project moving and to that end the Trust, supported by the Council, have been pursuing a number of funding bodies. A reasonably large sum is to be raised, so these efforts will take time to bear fruit. In the meantime the Council continues to manage the site.

However, it has become clear that over the next 12 months a decision on the future of the House must be made.

Question 21 from Councillor Vince to Councillor Orhan, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

On several occasions I have raised the matter of the shortcomings within the Schools Lettings Service and how this was undermining the income to our schools. Following this, an internal audit has been undertaken which vindicates my concerns. However there is no recommended action plan proposed to the Audit Committee to further improve the service given the report states that 'the future provision of services is currently under review'.

If the Schools Lettings Service is under review why has this not been identified in the budget process? What consultation has taken place with service users?

Reply from Councillor Orhan

I would like to thank Councillor Vince for her continued and persistent concern for the situation regarding the Lettings Service. I want to remind her that we also shared the concerns regarding the issues raised and we asked for internal audit to look at what we had done to remedy the situation and suggest possible ways forward. My officers have put considerable additional resources into exploring a number of solutions that have in our opinion raised the question as to why we are continuing to offer this service in the current financial climate. I would like to remind Councillor Vince that our core purpose is to support our schools in raising the achievement of our pupils and not in raising income for them. I understand that all Councillors at the recent Audit Committee were in agreement with that priority and we have now started the process of consulting with the schools who buy into our traded service about our offer for 2014/15.

Question 22 from Councillor Keazor to Councillor Charalambous, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Youth and Localism

Can the Cabinet Member update the Council on progress on the Ordnance Road Joint Service Centre?

Reply from Councillor Charalambous

The construction of the new Joint Service Centre, now known as "Ordnance Unity Centre" following the Name the Facility competition with local residents, is

progressing well. The former Ordnance Road Library has been demolished and all excavation and ground works for the new building have been completed, with the foundations for the ground floor now in place. The contractor started work on the building frame in January 2014, following some more detailed design workshops with key stakeholders and is on track to complete the development in Summer 2014, as planned.

The temporary library and Kettering Hall remain open and well used by local residents during this construction period, following which both services will re-locate to the new building. With regards to preparing for the opening of the new facility, NHS England has identified a community dentist to re-locate to the new facility once complete, to provide specialist dental services to those patients who may experience difficulty getting treatment in a typical high street dentist. The procurement for the GP provider is ongoing and a contract is expected to be awarded in Spring 2014, so the provider has a period of transition in the current Ordnance Road Surgery premises until the move to the Ordnance Unity Centre.

Question 23 from Councillor Smith to Councillor Oyken, Cabinet Member for Housing

The Internal Audit plan of Enfield Homes has revealed that in relation to the recommendations of the 2011/2012 audit plan, of 12 recommendations, only three had been implemented, seven were still being progressed and two were not implemented at all. Is the Cabinet member for Housing satisfied with this and if not what action does he propose to take to remedy this situation?

The Internal Audit plan of Enfield Homes for 2012/2013 has made 34 recommendations, six of which are categorised as being of high importance.

Furthermore eleven of the recommendations concern Health and Safety, of which three are categorised as being of high importance. Two of these recommendations concern the lack of a centralised asbestos register and the risk that records concerning asbestos are not accurate or up to date. What is worrying is that the audit revealed that the Head of Health and Safety was aware of these issues at the outset of the review.

Given the shortcomings in implementing previous recommendations, and the importance of the fresh recommendations to the safety of tenants and contractors, what action does he propose to take to ensure that these recommendations are in fact implemented?

Reply from Councillor Oyken

I am informed that the current position, in relation to the 2011/12 recommendations, is that 11 of the 12 have now been implemented and the last likely to not be actioned on the grounds of efficiency and following legal advice. For the 2012/13 recommendations 24 of the 34 are now implemented with the remaining 10 in progress. On the main health and safety recommendations, Enfield Homes is working jointly with the Council to bring elements of this service together and expects to complete this before the end of this financial year.

The new management team of Enfield Homes have given renewed priority to implementing these actions and I will expect to be kept updated on the progress I have asked for as the remaining recommendations are actioned in the coming weeks.

Question 24 from Councillor Taylor to Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member for Environment

Could the Cabinet Member give an update about enforcement of the spitting ban in Enfield?

Reply from Councillor Bond

You may be aware that the bye-law was introduced as a result of public concern and over 4000 people responded to consultation with almost 99% in favour of the ban. It is of serious concern to many people. However, we may have scored an "own goal" this week with our letter to football clubs. We have no intention of prosecuting football players or anyone playing organised sports. On the contrary, we want to give the "red card" to poor health and encourage people to get fit and make use of the fabulous parks and open spaces in the borough.

Update:

- Spitting bye law came into force on 8 December last year.
- 5 x actions taken
- No additional costs
- 4000 consultation responses - 98.8% in favour
- Developing a fixed penalty notice option - quicker and more effective

Enfield is only the second borough/ area in the country to introduce the spitting ban (Doncaster is the first but they haven't implemented yet).

Question 25 from Councillor Smith to Councillor Oyken, Cabinet Member for Housing

Enfield Homes' tenant satisfaction survey carried out in July and published in December, reveals that only 45% of general needs tenants considered that Enfield Homes listens to views and acts on them and only 47% of general needs tenants considered that service charges provide value for money. Why does Councillor Oyken believe this to be the case?

Reply from Councillor Oyken

I am sure you would like to join me in congratulating Enfield Homes for achieving their highest ever customer satisfaction levels ever at over 74%. I should also point out the higher levels of satisfaction amongst tenants with the Repairs and Maintenance service (78%) meaning that Enfield Homes tenant's satisfaction with repairs is in the top 25% for London.

These high levels of satisfaction do not obscure the fact that there are a number of

areas where further improvements can be made.

It is my belief that we need to examine the way that we consult with our residents to ensure that people from all ages and backgrounds are able to contribute to improving the services. To that end, Enfield Homes have begun a review of the way it delivers resident involvement. The review will look at ways of increasing involvement and of interesting younger members of our community and will provide interim recommendations by the end of March which aim to increase satisfaction. In relation to the 47% satisfaction achieved in the area of service charges being value for money, I would agree that this finding is disappointing given that 73% of tenants regard rent levels as value for money.

I will ask Enfield Homes to further investigate this matter as it is our intention to maintain the improvements in services that we have made in recent years.

Question 26 from Councillor Lavender to Councillor McGowan, Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Care

How can Councillor McGowan justify the comment in the budget consultation document that the Council is doing 'more with less' when one of the reasons for the 'less' is that a sixth of debts due to his department in relation to the provision of social services care, remain uncollected? (Source: Agenda Item 8 at Older People and Vulnerable Adults Scrutiny Panel).

Reply from Councillor McGowan

I'd like to start by saying that in Adult Social Care we are dealing with some of the most vulnerable people in our community and that our priority remains to ensure that those people receive the support they need to remain safe. We continue to see increasing demographic growth including safeguarding investigations. Despite this we have delivered efficiency savings of £2.9million whilst maintaining service levels and quality with satisfaction levels amongst the highest in London.

Nevertheless we also recognise that the collection of fees and charges from service users that are reinvested back into the provision of services is essential. I'd like to make two points in order to respond fully to the question asked:

Firstly, Adult Social Care generated approximately £15.3 million of income through fees and charges last year. A proportion (around two thirds) of this debt at any one time is recorded as not yet paid, but may not be due for payment.

Our invoicing team works very closely with front line services and where there is a build-up of debt, early contact is made with service users in an appropriate way. By intervening at an early stage we are able, in most cases, to resolve any difficulties people may be having in meeting the cost of their charges. There are unfortunately cases where legal recourse does need to be sought but these are rare.

Secondly, a large proportion of Adult Social Care debt which builds up over quite a lengthy period of time specifically relates to charges which the Council lodges against the properties of people receiving care, consistent with Government

Guidance. Where people do not have sufficient funds to pay their residential care costs but do own a property, the Council will meet these costs on their behalf. We have a statutory obligation to offer this to people. The value of this deferred debt is substantial in any given year but is always recouped once the property is sold. It would be wrong, therefore, to suggest that this remains uncollected. Indeed, since your administration ended in 2010/11, Social Care debt has been reduced from £4.5m to £3.4m, some 24%.

Question 27 from Councillor Hurer to Andrew Stafford, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property

1. What checks are currently being carried out to ensure that where more than one surname is registered at an address only single Housing Benefit etc. is paid?
2. Where there are several recipients of other benefits registered at one address, is a cross check done with respect to the number of bedrooms and the number of individuals allegedly living at these premises. Are these premises cross checked with the planning department to ensure that they are noted as being an HMO (House of Multiple Occupation)?
3. How many visits have our officers carried out over the last 12 months to ensure that the individuals noted as living at the address actually live there?
4. Are names of benefit applicants checked against passports?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

1. Because benefit is paid against property units, including HMO's, only one housing benefit claim per property unit can be paid at any one time.
2. HMO property units are identified as a result of information received from Planning. If multiple claims are received for one address, or one property unit, a visit will be undertaken to confirm the situation. If as a result of the visit a new property is confirmed as an HMO then the Planning Department is advised. Any newly banded property units following a split of a property we receive from the Valuation Office for which no planning permission has been granted are referred to Planning Enforcement immediately.
3. Over 7,300 visits have been made to benefit claimants in the last 12 months.
4. All applicants have to provide photographic evidence of identity. Foreign nationals must present either a passport or national identity card as a form of ID.

Question 28 from Councillor Neville to Councillor Stafford, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property

The Audit Committee on 9 January 2014 received a report from the external auditors dealing with the certification of various claims, including those for housing benefits

which disclosed that the council was to be charged some £19,000 in additional fees as a result of a series of some 40 errors in the computation of those claims. Could Councillor Stafford tell the Council whether he regards this level of error with associated additional fees as acceptable?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

The additional fees charged by the external auditor related to additional sampling they requested to undertake following the identification of six errors in their initial audit. As the external auditors explained at the recent Audit Committee this is not unusual as the claims are very complex. As a result of the additional sampling the auditors concluded that they were human error and the subsidy claim was revised slightly and submitted. The District Auditor also explained at the Audit Committee that the controls on the benefit claim were good. Enfield Council takes quality assurance of the 137,000 benefit claims and changes in circumstances it receives each year very seriously and has robust checking procedures in place.

Question 29 from Councillor Neville to Councillor Stafford, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property

At the Audit Committee on 9 January 2014 the external auditor reported that progress on resolving objections to the council's accounts for 2012/13 which had been programmed to be completed before the meeting, had been slower than he had anticipated and that there was a good deal more investigative work to be undertaken.

Does he recall that on the last occasion the Labour party controlled the council prior to 2002, the then District Auditor found it necessary to issue a Report in the Public Interest against the council, believed to be the only one in Enfield's 49 year history.

In the circumstances, is he relieved that the last Labour Government abolished the auditors' powers to surcharge errant councillors?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

A Conservative Councillor is the principal objector to the accounts. Given Councillor Neville's membership of the Audit Committee, he is aware that the District Auditor has given his Audit Opinion on the Accounts – no issues were identified – and therefore the accounts give a true and fair view of the Council's activity during financial year 2012/13.

The principal reason the audit cannot be closed is because of the objections the Conservative Councillor continues to raise. The issues raised in the objection to the accounts were discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 November 2012, and dealt with exhaustively there.

As to the Public Interest Report, issued over a decade ago, it is obvious from the awards, audits, reviews and prudent financial planning undertaken across the Council in Finance and other departments that those bad old days are well behind us. This Administration made that clear in its manifesto and from the outset when we

were elected. That continues to be the case, and will be for the future.

Question 30 from Councillor East to Councillor Charalambous, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Youth and Localism

At the Council Meeting of April 2011 and being aware of the work being undertaken by a firm of consultants to audit local leisure and culture provision, I asked Councillor Stafford the following question to which he gave the following answer.

“What does Councillor Stafford think of the strong opposition to his suggestion that there may be “...too many libraries in Enfield...” and could he explain how much support is there for his view within the rest of the Labour administration? Further, residents in Enfield Lock have expressed dismay at the suggestion that they may lose one or both of their libraries; to what degree do Councillor Uzoanya and the other Enfield Lock Councillors support the Administration's strategy on libraries, and will they side with Enfield Lock residents in a campaign to keep the libraries at Ordnance Road and Enfield Island Village open, or will they be muzzled?”

Reply from Councillor Stafford

“There are no immediate plans to close any of the libraries in the Borough. However, the Library & Museum Service is currently undergoing a Leaner Review to explore and develop strategic options for the future delivery of the service. As yet these options are not formulated and no decisions have been made, but once we are in a position to do so these will be presented through the Cabinet process in the usual way.

I did state at Area Forums that there was a possibility of closing 3 libraries. I do not deny this. Closure is an option that the Leaner Review will consider. As yet no decisions have been made. When the final recommendations are formulated they will be extensively consulted upon.

Consideration will obviously be given to the views of local Councillors and local residents.”

The report from Knight, Kavanagh and Page was produced the following month in May 2011.

Specific Business recommendations in relation to libraries are as follows:

‘There should not be a presumption for retention of all libraries’...’The need to retain all (as opposed to a smaller number of) libraries be reviewed in light of their individual strategic roles, community value, economic costs and, difficult as it may be, that options to improve the overall service through judicious pruning rather than cuts across the board be considered’.

Furthermore there was a recommendation that only a fraction of the savings be reinvested in the library service.

I was wondering whether Councillor Charalambous has been given long enough to consider the recommendations in this report and when proposals will be put forward in relation to library provision in Enfield so that the views of local councillors and local residents can be heard.

Reply from Councillor Charalambous

The information provided within the Knight Kavanagh & Page report was used to inform the consultation exercise undertaken as part of the development of the 2012 Library Strategy and also feed into the Leaner review of the service. As you will be aware, the Library strategy agreed by this administration was that there was to be no closure of libraries during this administration. In fact this administration has opened an additional library unlike your last administration which closed one.

Can I also draw Council's attention to the fact that during this administration we are spending or have agreed to spend £10.85m (£6.4m on Joint Service Centre/Ordnance Road Library and £4.45m on Palmers Green Library) in the improvements to our Library Service.

Any future changes to the Library Strategy will be for the new administration in May.

Question 31 from Councillor Lavender to Councillor Taylor, Leader of the Council

I refer to Question 26 from Councillor Cranfield to Councillor Taylor, Leader of the Council answered by him at the Council Meeting dated 7 November 2012

Can the Leader of the Council define the word 'Pleb' and can he give us an example of when this word would be used in Enfield?

Reply from Councillor Taylor

I suspect the Councillor is referring, by inference, to Andrew Mitchell MP, the privately educated, Cambridge educated, investment banker. As you know, he resigned for allegedly using this word to denigrate the police in Downing Street.

The word dates back to Ancient Rome and was a term for the non-aristocrats who could not stand for high office. Today it is value laden, derogatory and suggests inferiority.

Despite a splash of eau de Cologne, the stench of Tory elitism has resurfaced vividly with this term.

I would advise Members opposite to refrain from referring to Council staff or residents with this term. My side requires no such advice.

Your answer to this question was given at a time when Andrew Mitchell unequivocally denied using the term 'pleb', yet you still saw it fit to have a planted question put at Council and provide a gratuitously offensive answer.

On 16 December 2013, PC Keith Wallis appeared at Westminster Magistrates' Court charged with misconduct in a public office, accused of falsely claiming to have

witnessed the incident. On 10 January 2014, PC Keith Wallis admitted misconduct and says he will offer his resignation from the force.

Now that the Leader of the Council is better apprised of the facts rather than armed with pure prejudice, will he take this opportunity to supplement or correct his answer and apologise.

Furthermore, on reflection and having re-read his first answer has he learnt any lessons from this incident on how to better to conduct himself in public office?

Reply from Councillor Taylor

I thank Councillor Lavender for his question. The last thing I would want to be is unreasonable in word or print - so to remind him of what happened:

19 September 2012 – Andrew Mitchell MP, then Chief Whip, had a row with police officers who would not let him cycle through Downing Street.

20 September 2012 – a national newspaper reported he swore at officers and called them 'plebs' who should 'learn their place'.

21 September 2012 – While denying the use of the word 'plebs', Andrew Mitchell apologised for being disrespectful to the officers.

25 September 2012 – A police log confirmed the reports of his action.

17 October 2012 – David Cameron told the House of Commons that what Mr Mitchell 'did and said' was wrong.

19 October 2012 – Mr Mitchell resigned, accepting he had used bad language towards the police officers.

16 December 2012 – Keith Wallis, PC, pleaded guilty to misconduct when he claimed to have witnessed the 'Plebgate' incident. David Cameron said 'It is completely unacceptable for a serving police officer to falsify an account of any incident'. That is obviously right and I agree with the Prime Minister.

When I answered the Question put to me in November 2012, I based my response on the available evidence, and I refer you to the statement of David Cameron on 17 October 2012 in the House of Commons.

If, as widely reported at the time, the term 'pleb' was not used but bad language was used, directed at the police officers on duty; then, at the very least, as David Cameron rightly said, this was wrong. A senior Government representative needs to be mindful of their duty to foster justifiable respect for the police.

My reply at that time clearly states that he allegedly used the term 'pleb'. I remain of the view that this is not an acceptable word to use. It is for David Cameron, not me, to decide whether his decision to accept Mr Mitchell's resignation was hasty and ill-advised or proportionate.

Question 32 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member for Environment

Will he tell the council, since May 2010, how many individual road humps/tables have been proposed and how many have actually been installed following consultation?

What were the total costs of designing and consulting? (Please show separately):

- a. The schemes incorporating the road humps/ tables, as consulted upon.
- b. The schemes as implemented, if different.

What was the total cost of implementing all such schemes, excluding the design and consultation costs referred to above?

Reply from Councillor Bond

The information requested by Councillor Laban is not readily available and would take several days of officer time to produce, particularly as they would have to manually review every one of the schemes implemented since May 2010 to compare the plans proposed at the consultation stage with the final designs. If Councillor Laban really feels that the significant cost that will be incurred in answering her question is justified, I will ask officers to provide her with an answer as soon as possible.

Question 33 from Councillor Neville to Councillor Stafford, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property

In his reply to question 17 at the council of 27 November 2013 he stated that the current recorded cost for sick pay for 2012/3 was in excess of £345,000 in respect of the average 8.43 days average per employee. Does he believe that the council can afford this level of sick pay and what steps is he taking to ensure that sickness absence is better managed and reduced to private sector levels?

Can he confirm that the £345,000 only relates to the cost of sick pay and therefore does not include the cost of agency staff covering such sicknesses where such is necessary?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

The average number of sick days per full time equivalent is now down to 7.9 under Labour from 10.3 under the Conservatives in 2010. This reduction has been achieved through the introduction of a more robust sickness absence management process which includes the introduction of a telephone referral system, earlier intervention, mandatory occupational health referrals of long term sickness cases and targeting the worst cases.

The average of 7.9 compares favourably against Local Government figures of 9 (CIPD 2013 survey).

I can confirm that the figure of £345,000 represents the costs of agency staff covering the sickness absence. Is Councillor Neville proposing that this figure should be reduced by the Council stopping the sick pay of staff suffering long term illness such as cancer and strokes and will this be part of the Conservative manifesto?

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

He will be aware that I have asked several questions about the cost of employment agency workers as compared with those for directly employed staff – which for various reasons he has been unable to answer. Perhaps I could put the question in a slightly different way which might hopefully elicit an answer. Since May 2010 how much has the council spent on agency employees and separately how much has it spent on interim management posts?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

The average yearly agency spend since 2010 has been £14 million. To achieve savings, agency staff and interim management posts are now engaged under one contract. The information we hold does not provide an interim management category. As such, it is not possible to provide accurate separate data on how much has been spent on interim management posts.

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

In his reply to my question 22 of the meeting of 27 November 2013 he said it was not possible to assess “how many of the identified redundant posts have been directly attributable to the Leaner Programme”. In his answers to my recent questions on redundancies arising from the Leaner Programme he has maintained that it is not possible to identify how many posts have been declared redundant as a result of this process. I am sure he will agree that the acronym “Leaner” is well understood to mean a smaller operation and as such it is surprising that he is unable to identify the number of redundancies which have occurred as a result of the leaner process, the more so because we know from an earlier answer that over £1.5m has been spent by the administration since 2010 on consultants for leaner. Can he now answer the question how many posts have been made redundant since 2010 under Leaner and if it assists him in answering that question how many have been made redundant for other reasons unconnected with Leaner?

Reply from Councillor Stafford

It is not possible to distinguish between redundancies that have been implemented as a direct consequence of the Leaner agenda and those that have not. However, I can confirm that 155 staff have been made redundant since 2010. This figure does not reflect the true number of deleted posts as 97 staff who would have been made redundant have been redeployed, 21 staff have been granted flexible retirement and a significant number of posts have been deleted as the result of natural wastage. The combination of these measures has enabled the Council to avoid excessive

redundancy costs. Is Councillor Neville suggesting that the Council should be making more staff redundant thereby incurring additional redundancy costs?

Question 36 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member for Environment

Can the Cabinet Member for Environment, in his capacity as one of Enfield's representatives on the North London Waste Authority (NLWA), inform the chamber how much it has cost the tax payer to fund the latest NLWA cinema advertisement now showing at Cineworld Enfield?

Reply from Councillor Bond

The cinema advert ran in six north London multiplex cinemas for two weeks from 14 to 26 December, and was shown at a variety of films, including The Hobbit, Anchorman 2, Gravity 3D, Hunger Games, Saving Mr Banks, Mandela and many other children's and Christmas films.

The advert was shown 1,472 times across six cinemas in north London, at a cost of £13.12 per film showing or an average total cost of £3,218.77 per cinema.

Each showing in North London attracted an average of 85 people, which means the average cost was 15p per person per viewing.

Question 37 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member for Environment

Blue Badge holders have contacted me about the new parking system at Palace Gardens Car Park. They have complained that if they find the lower floor full up they cannot access the other floors without exiting the car park entirely, going round the one way system and entering the car park again. Please could the Cabinet Member explain what his department is doing to solve this problem?

Reply from Councillor Bond

It's good to hear that our car parks are full. What a shame your Group closed and sold others off within Enfield Town, thus restricting parking opportunities.

The bays were placed on the lower floor at Palace Gardens to make them as accessible as possible for Blue Badge holders to use the facilities Palace Gardens has to offer. However, we understand the difficulties that may occur if all the spaces are used and we are exploring options to try to negate motorists having to re-enter the car park.

Question 38 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member for Environment

Please could the Cabinet Member inform the chamber of the suggested amendments to Enfield bus routes that will be submitted to Transport for London?

Reply from Councillor Bond

As Councillor Laban is aware, the Enfield Transport User Group (ETUG) have undertaken an excellent piece of work looking at existing bus services in the borough and have suggested making some 28 changes to the network. I wrote to Isabel Dedring before Christmas seeking her support to continue working with Transport for London (TfL) on the Enfield Bus Service Review and am pleased to report that officers have already had a positive meeting with TfL to discuss how to take the project forward. Progress on this important initiative will continue to be monitored by both the ETUG and Public Transport Consultative Group.

Question 39 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member for Environment

Please could the Cabinet Member explain why he has proposed stopping the Bank Holiday Monday Domestic Refuse collections rather than negotiating to keep the service as it is?

Reply from Councillor Bond

At a time of unprecedented Government cuts, to save £85,000 of taxpayers money, without any changes to weekly refuse collection.

Question 40 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member for Environment

Could the Cabinet Member explain the total cost to the Council of introducing the spitting ban and the budgeted annual costs of implement the spitting ban?

What evidence does the council have of any cessation of this activity and is he aware of the number of cautions or fines issued?

Reply from Councillor Bond

The enforcement of this has been incorporated into existing enforcement contracts without charge.

As the ban was only introduced in December there has been limited enforcement, although we have 1 case for prosecution (not a footballer) and a further 4 being investigated.

Question 41 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member for Environment

Please could the Cabinet Member

- a. Update the chamber on the situation regarding the vandalism of the New River pump system?

- b. Confirm whether or not the Police were contacted regarding the fact that the New River water pump system was deliberately undone just before Christmas?

Reply from Councillor Bond

The pipe connecting the New River back-up pump to the New River Loop has been damaged though it is not clear what caused this. The pump has been switched off temporarily, meanwhile Highway Services are arranging for the pipe work to be repaired. It is anticipated that this work will be completed within the next two weeks.

The police were not contacted.

Question 42 from Councillor Laban to Councillor Goddard, Cabinet Member for Business and Regeneration

Please could the Cabinet Member explain what activities and work to date has taken place in relation to the Market Gardening Project?

Reply from Councillor Goddard

There are two strands that have developed over the last 12 months, the productive landscapes strand that is a sub-regional development, and the Market Gardening Project, now called Garden Enfield, which achieved the following outcomes with the Mayor's Regeneration Funding over the current financial year.

Forty Hall Farm - Growing Project

The Forty Hall Farm growing project commenced in early 2013, with the engagement of the Farm Manager in January 2013. A Horticultural Grower was in post by April 2013, and Horticultural Apprenticeship commenced in June 2013, thereby creating 1.5 jobs and one full time apprenticeship.

These resources enable the growing project to get fully underway in early spring, with the installation of two professional poly tunnels in April, and three acres of land in production by August 2013.

A packing area for the box scheme was set up in the old dairy and a cold store provided for storage of vegetables. Also, the provision of rainwater harvesting equipment means rainwater can be reused and conserve on water usage. Volunteer numbers have reached the project target of 50 people to date, with another 15 months of the project to run. Anticipated volunteer numbers are expected to reach a minimum of 100 with the introduction of the community growing schemes.

The launch of the organic vegetable box scheme, Enfield Veg Co, launched in November 2013 with 40 customers and is increasing week on week. The ultimate goal to expand the customer base to 120 customers by March 2015 is well underway. The scheme provides locally grown, freshly harvested produce at three drop off points around the borough, incurring minimal food miles in the process.

Work is progressing to establish a Community Interest Company as a social enterprise, to deliver and manage the box scheme. The framework for establishing this small business was discussed at Council on the 27 November 2013, and the Council adopted under report Constitution Changes: Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Order 2000 – Establishment of companies, Section 3.3.35(a) *“At the current time, the Assistant Directors of Corporate Governance & Legal are aware of the following projects for which approval will need to be sought, as part of their delivery mechanisms, to the establishment of a company:*

- (a) *Establishment of a Community Interest Company with Capel Manor College for a social enterprise vegetable box scheme as one of the milestones in the Market Garden Initiative grant agreement with the Greater London Authority (GLA).”*

The project has identified four potential new growing sites for development from January 2014 to provide opportunities across the borough, and in particular in regeneration areas, for learning and participating in community growing. The outcomes for local residents include improved skills in horticultural, social and economic, thus preparing unemployed people for re-entering the job market.

Education

The project aims to foster a passion and interest in growing, cooking and eating healthy food at an early age, leading to healthier diets and lifestyles for young people.

The project supports a now schools initiative, Grow Your Own, and has provided equipment and training for ten primary schools in this year alone, and has involved 270 school children to date.

There is a dedicated project support officer coordinating all work with primary schools and head teachers to develop food growing as a core part of the curriculum, with very high levels of interest from a further ten primary and five secondary schools for the coming financial year.

Skills Development

A key objective of the project is getting people into work, and by improving the skills base and raising awareness and interest in business opportunities connected to food. These options include food processing, logistics, teaching and marketing. Capel Manor College is a key partner in the delivery of the project, both through the work at Forty Hall Farm and through the development of horticultural training with an emphasis on food production. The project benefits greatly from the existing programmes and established reputation of the college.

Students are now able to utilise the growing project at the farm for hands on experience and training from the qualified grower and apprentice. The expertise and knowledge gained on the farm will also be transferred to the new community growing projects.

Large Scale Growing

The development of the major commercial scheme is progressing with a site sift to find a suitable location and to complete the final business plan.

Marketing

A Garden Enfield Food Event is to be held at City Hall on 5 March 2014 to showcase the project and promote the objectives and outcomes of the project to the wider food growing community across London.

Food Sector Development

The second strand which incorporates the Enfield work particularly the large scale growing, has been the formation of a food sector group comprising LBE, Broxbourne, Epping, Uttlesford, Herts and Essex representation, private sector growers and Lee Valley Regional Park and recently London Borough of Waltham Forest. This is one of the key sectors identified by the LSCC (London Stansted Cambridge Consortium). Various work groups and activities are being progressed with the objective of revitalising the food sector, identifying planning issues, employment development, energy and marketing.

Section 2 Questions to Scrutiny Chairs

Question 43 from Councillor R. Hayward to Councillor Sitkin, Chairman of Sustainability and the Living Environment Scrutiny Panel

On 4 December 2012 the Government passed the Electricity and Gas (Energy Companies Obligation) Order 2012 (the 'Order'). The purpose of this Order was not only to establish targets in relation to carbon emissions but also to reduce home heating costs for low income families. The Order confirms that the obligations set in the target must be achieved by March 2015. Hence at the date of this question, we are pretty much half-way through and nothing has been done.

Notwithstanding the off-repeated cry from the Labour Party about how green it is, how much it cares for those on low incomes and the pressures in household incomes, and how it wants to support local businesses, it was only on 24 December that the Council woke up to this initiative. Even then it has decided to roll-out this programme only in Edmonton, totally ignoring the needs of low income households, including those in your own ward.

Will Councillor Sitkin please confirm why no action was taken by him in his capacity as Scrutiny Chair to ensure that action was taken sooner and also confirm what action he took to scrutinise this decision to ensure that all residents to whom this initiative should have been directed, received the benefit, and not just the chosen few in certain areas of Edmonton.

Reply from Councillor Sitkin

Under this Labour Administration, Enfield is becoming a leading Council for sustainability in general, and for energy retrofitting in particular. Following close collaboration between our Regeneration, Housing and Environment teams and in line with our Enfield 2020 vision, the Council has been maximising all Energy Companies Obligation (ECO) opportunities within our borough.

In March 2013, for instance, the Council successfully leveraged up to £10 million for an ECO Phase 1 social housing project forecast to save residents up to £400 per annum on their fuel bills. On the back of this success, in autumn 2013 the Council ran a mini-competition for ECO Phase 2 targeting six more tower blocks. A contract was awarded in November 2013. Unfortunately, the Conservative Government's reprehensible decision to lower ECO targets means that the 'Big 6' energy companies may start to review their obligations in this area. If Councillor Heyward wants to scrutinise ECO, he should start an enquiry within his Party as to why his fellow Tories are so keen to betray the UK's national interest by undermining the energy efficiency work undertaken by progressive authorities such as Enfield under this Labour Administration.

Otherwise, the Council has also developed a highly innovative Private-Sector ECO Homes project building upon small-scale energy improvements delivered borough-wide through the RENEW project. Edmonton offers the greatest opportunity to deliver initial improvements at scale and with pace but if this pilot succeeds and ECO funding remains available, the intention is to roll our scheme out to other parts of Enfield. In the meantime, ECO remains available to all residents who meet the eligibility criteria. This information is provided on the Council's website.

On top of this - and in line with the ethos embodied in our Regeneration, New Directions and Enfield 2020 efforts - we are leveraging ECO to support local businesses and create new jobs, working in partnership with local colleges to train local unemployed and providing active support to 20 Enfield businesses. Eight have now gained PAS 2030 accreditation enabling them to join the green business supply chains we are building up in the borough.

With retrofitting, ECO and Green Deal having all been covered by scrutiny on multiple occasions, Councillor Hayward has clearly not been paying attention to the items scrutinised by the panel of which he is member. Given the success of our current programme, no one - including the panel's vice chair, his Deputy Leader - has seen fit to over-burden officers with additional scrutiny in this area. Imitation is the highest form of flattery and we are glad to see at least one Enfield Conservative supporting successful Labour policies.