

COUNCIL QUESTIONS – 9 JANUARY 2006:

ORAL QUESTIONS

Oral Question 1 – To the Leader of the Council from Cllr Gmmh Rahman Khan

To ask whether the Leader will comment on the outcome of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment?

Oral Question 2 – To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Councillor Engert

Why did the Council not follow up Thames Waters original concerns made in February/ March 2005 regarding the proposed siting of a skate park in Priory Park until November?

Oral Question 3 – To the Executive Member for Health and Social Services from Councillor Dobbie

To outline recent achievements in Social Services.

Oral Question 4 – To the Leader of the Council from Councillor Hare

To ask if he will overrule ill advised plans to abandon street cleansing for a day.

Oral Question 5 – To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Quincy Prescott

What consultations have been conducted and what progress is being made on the proposed installation of a skateboard park in Priory Park?

Oral Question 6 – To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Newton

Please would he detail what measures are taken to ensure that recyclables put out for collection by conscientious residents are recycled as intended?

Oral Question 7 – To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Bax

To describe how the council is encouraging local residents across the borough to increase recycling through the Area Assemblies incentives scheme.

Oral Question 8 – To the Executive Member for Housing from Cllr Hoban

Please confirm the current funding status of the agreed programme of works for both council tenants and freeholders within the government's 'Decent Home Standards' programme, with particular reference to the Suffolk Road Estate programme.

Oral Question 9 – To the Executive Member for Housing from Cllr Bevan

To ask how the transfer from rent books to swipe cards is proceeding, and what benefits it offers those who are using the new cards?

Oral Question 10 – To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Williams

Would he make assurances that the chimney currently being repaired in Clyde Road, N15 will not be used to house mobile phone masts.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 1 - To the Executive Member for Crime and Community Safety from Cllr Aitken

With regard to the Neighbourhood Wardens what discussions have taken place with the Council's Head of Personnel to address the concerns about redundancy, temporary contracts and training? When will the Council be in a position to confirm future funding arrangements for the Warden Service?

ANSWER

There are no plans for any wardens to be made redundant. All warden posts are covered by permanent staff except three posts which are being covered by wardens on fixed term contracts that will end in March 2006. We will seek to recruit to these posts permanently.

2006/7 funding has been agreed.

Written Question 2 - To the Executive Member for Housing from Cllr Beacham

Does the Council:

a, attempt to prioritize emergency repairs of Council tenants' heating systems for those who are vulnerable - e.g. elderly residents, people with disabilities and expecting mothers?

ANSWER

The service standard required from our gas contractor partners is same working day attendance if reported by noon and next working day if reported after noon. If the tenant is vulnerable then the same level of service applies to weekends and bank holidays. If the contractor is unable to restore the heating system, temporary heaters are supplied.

b, have systems in place to identify vulnerable residents when they are reporting heating system breakdowns for instances where residents do not identify themselves as potentially vulnerable?

ANSWER

Tenants currently ring the gas partners direct and are asked if they are elderly/disabled if the response is likely to be delayed by more than 24 hours because of an intervening weekend/bank holiday. We have plans to redirect callers to the Councils call centre when IT links have been established. The necessary routines will be built into the call centre scripts to ensure that vulnerable tenants are identified.

c, Has the Council ever evaluated the effectiveness of temporary emergency replacement heating provided and is the Council satisfied that it adequately provides sufficient heating in all weather conditions?

ANSWER

The majority of heating systems to Council housing are gas fired and therefore the most appropriate alternative, if the gas system is temporarily unavailable, is portable electrical convector heaters which are safe and effective. The standard is for 2 heaters to be provided but additional ones can be supplied in exceptional cases. Calor gas heaters present a health & safety risk in terms of fire and potential for explosion.

Written Question 3 - To the Executive Member for Enterprise and Regeneration from Cllr Bloch

Given the conflict with the its policies for retaining and creating jobs, why has the Council decided to terminate its lease contract for Pembroke Works early?

ANSWER

The Council has not terminated its lease nor entered into any other contractual arrangement. The lease still has 40 years unexpired at a very modest rental income to the Council. Preliminary negotiations have been held to determine whether it would be appropriate, and financially more advantageous for the Council, to sell the freehold interest, so allowing the property to be redeveloped. This is wholly dependant on planning permission being obtained. Permission would only be granted in accordance with planning policies regarding employment and the integrity of the planning process will be maintained. A planning application has recently been withdrawn on the advice of the Planning Service. There are no other applications or negotiations in progress at present.

Written Question 4 - To the Executive Member for Enterprise and Regeneration from Cllr Davies

How many planning appeals have been won and lost against the Council in each of the last four years and what is the average cost to the Council of a planning appeal which is unsuccessfully fought?

ANSWER

The total number of appeals is as follows;

Year	Allowed (lost)	Dismissed (won)	Total
2002	21	36	57
2003	24	60	84
2004	52	80	132
2005 (up to Nov)	41	85	126
Totals	138	261	399

The appeals are handled in one of three ways, written representations, Informal hearings, and via Public Inquiry. The majority are dealt with by written representation. The average cost of defending appeals is broadly the same irrespective of the outcome. On average the routine work is done in house and costs around £150k per year i.e. two planning posts plus a further £50k in legal costs. In addition to this, defending Public Inquiries on average costs a further £20k in legal fees, and up to a further £20k for consultants, which may be required to provide specialist information. The total cost of an appeal dealt with at a Public Inquiry is therefore an average of £40k. Costs can be awarded against the Council if our decisions are considered unreasonable this would at least double the costs to around £80k, awards of costs against the local authorities however are rare.

Written Question 5 - To the Executive Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Engert

a, How many temporary buildings are currently in use at schools in the borough for teaching and where are they located ?

b, How many more have been applied for through planning and of these how many have been approved this year ?

c, With regard to each of the current and approved temporary buildings, how long have they been there and for how long it is anticipated to be in use ?

ANSWER

Special and Primaries

School	No. of Temps	Current use	No. Awaiting Planning Permission	How long on site	How long anticipated use
The Vale at Lancasterian	1	Teaching		3years	To be determined under AMP programme development during 2007/8
William C Harvey	1	Teaching		5years	To be determined under AMP programme development during 2007/8
Broadwater Farm	2xdouble	Teaching		5years	To be determined under AMP programme development during 2007/8
Mulberry		Teaching		10 years	To be determined under AMP programme development during 2007/8
Rokesly Infants	2	Teaching	(2 for next phase of building works for 1 year)		Until Nursery is replaced
St. Gilda's		Teaching		10years	Diocese to prioritise
Crowland	To be determined	Provide temporary			

		school whilst fire damaged building is repaired			
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This is from a total of 74 special and primary schools.

Secondaries

Between 2000 and 2004 some £40m of capital expenditure was invested across the secondary estate. Over the last 18 months we have been successful in submitting and achieving funding under the BSF programme. The actual investment figure is still to be finalised but is likely to amount to some £160m. Seven schools detailed below have some temporary teaching facilities between them. All the units will be replaced under the Building Schools for the Future programme due to start in financial year 2007/8.

John Loughborough, Pupil Support Centre, Highgate Wood, Hornsey School for Girls, Northumberland Park, Park View Academy and White Hart Lane

Written Question 6 - To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Edge

Please would he detail :

1. how much of the £400k allocated by the Council for the Better Haringey campaign will be spent on (a), poster campaigns (b), information leaflets (c), magazine (d) newspaper adverts (e) stationary and other merchandise (f) branding work clothes and vehicles
2. detail a timetable for the spending.

ANSWER

An additional £400k has not been allocated or approved by the Council for the Better Haringey campaign. It is therefore not appropriate or possible to provide details of what the money will be spent on or when.

Written Question 7 - To the Executive Member for Housing from Cllr Featherstone

How many scheduled repair jobs have been lost because of the upgrade of the VAX repair database? What efforts is the Council taking to ensure continuity and quality of service as a result of these loses?

ANSWER

To our knowledge, we have not lost any repairs jobs due to VAX.

The VAX repairs database is still in use; it is scheduled to be phased out in March 2006 after its replacement, Task, is implemented at the end of February 2006.

Were VAX to fail, repairs jobs details could be obtained from OHMS reports (all repairs jobs are initially logged in OHMS and passed to VAX), allowing operatives to respond to repairs jobs.

When VAX was then made available, the jobs would be resent from OHMS to ensure they existed in VAX.

Written Question 8 - To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Floyd

How many fatal or serious accidents have taken place on Crouch End Hill in the last three years?

ANSWER

There have been 5 killed or seriously injured personal injury accidents on Crouch End Hill during the previous 3 years. This information is obtained from the London Accident Analysis Unit (LAAU), who are a part of Transport for London.

Written Question 9 - To the Executive Member for Finance from Cllr Gilbert

What is the total cost of staff overtime to cope with the licensing applications following the introduction of the new licensing laws. Does the government's funding to pay for additional staff overtime and other costs cover the Council's total costs.

ANSWER

From the date of the beginning of the transition phase for the new licensing regime (the first appointed day - 7/2/05) to now, the total expenditure on the licensing function by the Enforcement Service is £240k including legal and estimated committee costs. An additional £30K was spent on developing the Council's statement of Licensing Policy.

Of this the total amount spent by the Enforcement Service direct on overtime is £10,439 but a further £78,222 has been incurred on temporary staff.

The Licensing function budget was revised to reflect the Council's position of maintaining a licensing response that now reflects the fee structure introduced by Government.

The Government is not specifically providing any grant funding to cover the costs of the new regime, it is assuming that costs will be covered through fees and charges.

Written Question 10 - To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Hare

Please would he give the Overall carbon dioxide balances of the mixed recyclable collection of glass and of the Council's green waste and food waste collections. Would he please give a full breakdown of his working.

ANSWER

It would be very difficult to undertake a full carbon dioxide life cycle analysis on the collection of mixed glass and green/organic waste. This type of analysis would require the Council to buy in technical expertise and the parameters of the study would have to be clearly defined.

However, on a more general level I can respond accordingly: -

Collection of Mixed Glass

Mixed glass is crushed for use as aggregate within the construction industry. This prevents the need to mine and transport virgin materials thereby, making the whole process more carbon efficient. The treatment of the Council's mixed glass is undertaken at a purpose built facility in London, satisfying both the proximity and self sufficiency principles as set out in the Mayor's and NLWA's municipal waste management strategies. .

Green and Food Waste

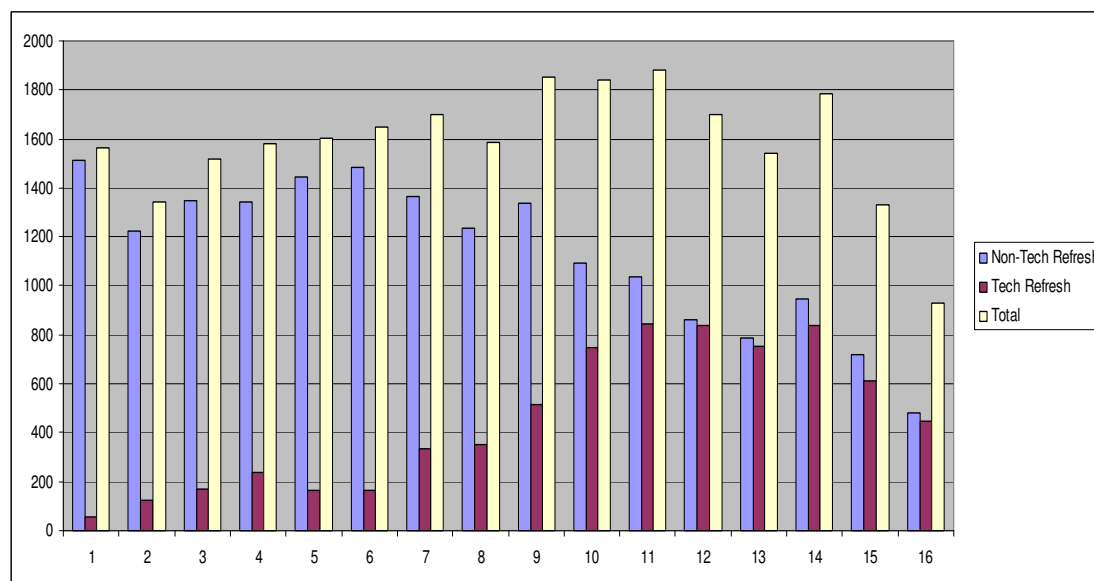
The Council's green and food waste is composted locally (in Edmonton), within an in-vessel composter at Edmonton, once again, satisfying the proximity and self sustainability principles. The gaseous emissions from this compost plant will be almost entirely carbon dioxide and water (steam). However, if this waste was landfilled it would also generate carbon dioxide emissions, but more importantly, the organic fraction would break down to form methane and leachate. It is worth noting that in terms of greenhouse gasses and the effect on the environment, the US EPA states that methane is over 21 times more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon-dioxide.

Written Question 11 - To the Executive Member for Organisational Development and Performance from Cllr Hoban

a. How many faults were recorded (i) the month prior to and (ii) the month following Tech Refresh in each of the Council departments refreshed which were recorded by the IT help desk and/or the Tech Refresh help desk.

Please see table below which shows all calls for the 16 weeks from 5th September 2005 to 23rd December 2005.

We are unable to split calls by Business Unit due to the limitations of the NIS Helpdesk application.



b. How many of the faults were resolved from the time they were recorded (i) within an hour (ii) within three hours (iii) seven hours or more.

These timeframes do not represent our SLA with NIS. The data recorded can not be interrogated to provide such an answer.

Our contract with NIS covers resolution times based on Priority, for example Priority 1's should be resolved within 2 hours of being passed to NIS.

c. How many hours of work have been lost as a result of Tech Refresh and the down time of Council computer systems?

It takes between 10 to 15 minutes to swap old equipment for the new refreshed equipment. The Deployment Schedule selected between 25 to 80 staff on a daily basis for the 16 weeks between 5th September and 23rd December 2005.

There were some system problems in the first few weeks of Deployment which were restricted to refreshed Users only. The impact of these cannot be itemised but was limited by careful management of the deployment.

Written Question 12 - To the Executive Member for Organisational Development and Performance from Cllr Oatway

Since its recent introduction:

a. how many people have successfully logged on to watch a webcast of a Council meeting or part of a meeting.

Webcasting was launched in October 2005. Viewing figures are made available to us on a monthly basis and December figures are not available at the time of responding. Statistics are based on numbers of viewings, rather than the identification of individual people.

ANSWER

During October and November there were 591 viewings of webcasts. Of these, 124 were live viewings, whilst 467 were of archived meetings.

b. how many downloads of a planning applications PDF and associated files have been inaccessible online because of technical problems preventing their successful download?

ANSWER

The Council does not currently monitor this and is therefore unable to supply any statistics. However within 7 months a total of 5% of Building Control applications were received online, and 2% of Planning applications. We are also displaying all planning applications history back to 1947.

There are 25,000 related planning documents online - these are PDF letters, notices, maps and photo images. Since go live in March 2005 we have received approximately 400 complaints by the public regarding online services. Nevertheless this was drastically reduced following server changes in November this year.

c. Has the Council made any estimates of how many people having been prevented from viewing planning application documentation online because of these difficulties?

ANSWER

The Council does not currently monitor this and therefore unable to supply and data. However, the number of visits to www.Haringey.gov.uk/planning-mainpage.htm are as follows: -

Period	Number of visits	Number of complaints
Estimate		
August 2005	2248	90
4%		
September 2005	2361	120
5%		
October 2005	2544	
150	6%	
November 2005	588	5
1%		

Written Question 13 - To the Executive Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Newton

To provide a breakdown by year, gender and ethnicity of students in a) The Tuition Centre b) The Pupil Support Centre.

ANSWER

These figures relate to the end of the autumn term 2005:

Additional data

(a) Tuition Service:

Year Group	Number of pupils
Reception	1
1	1
2	1
3	1
4	3
5	2
6	2
7	3
8	4
9	38
10	36
11	63

Ethnicity and gender information to be provided separately due to a computer difficulty.

Please note that these figures relate to December 2005. The numbers at the Tuition Service have been significantly reduced as a result of pupils being offered school places. The most up to date figures are not available due to the proximity to the beginning of term as a number of pupils are in the process of being placed.

(b) Pupil Support Centre:

The total number of pupils on roll was 69. The breakdown by year group and gender is shown in the following table:

Year group	Male	Female
7	2	0
8	5	0
9	19	3
10	21	6
11	17	5

Written Question 14 - To the Leader of the Council from Cllr Winskill

Of the 40 meetings held in the Council Leader's office per month, can he tell us for how many the new television is in use?

ANSWER

I am always grateful to Councillor Winskill for the interest and concern he shows in my heavy workload. However, unlike Councillor Winskill I do not actually count the number of meetings I am involved in nor the number of times the television set in my office is used. What I can confirm is that the television, or more accurately described as a plasma screen display, is used frequently. I will give some examples; for presentations; for the viewing of the information and promotional DVDs received from central and local government, and voluntary and other organisations; as well as for updating myself and colleagues on local and national news and events through television broadcasts. Councillor Winskill will be further interested to know that whilst watching an archive of a webcast of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee I had the added pleasure of seeing his performance. Should he wish I am more than happy to provide feedback.

Written Question 15 - To the Executive Member for Housing from Cllr Simpson

Can he please provide an overview of the Council's policy regarding temporary accommodation. How long on average must a family be resident in the borough in temporary accommodation before being provided with a permanent residence?

ANSWER

Households that approach as homeless may be offered emergency accommodation on prima facia if they satisfy the basic criteria i.e. eligibility, homelessness and a possible priority need. The offer of emergency accommodation would be pursuant to section 188 as an interim duty whilst an assessment of their application is being carried out. The government target time for assessing a homeless application is 33 working days.

If a household is given a positive decision with a duty to accept, then the household is offered second stage temporary accommodation, such as a Private Sector Leased (PSL) managed by the Council or a Registered Social Landlord (HALS). In some cases we also use Council managed hostels or Council owned permanent accommodation which has proved to be difficult to let.

Many of the PSL & HALS properties have leases which run for a duration of 3 years or more. In an attempt to sustain and stabilise communities households are not moved from their temporary accommodation until the lease expires. Information with regards to lease expiry dates are communicated to households in order for clients to have some idea of how long they can expect to remain in their temporary home.

We now have a number of temporary accommodation properties whose leases run for 10 years with possible renewal at expiry. In most cases the quality of leased properties is good and in many cases better than many of the properties that are becoming available for permanent accommodation. We are therefore developing a “temporary to permanent” scheme, hoping to capitalise on new government policies.

The waiting time for households moving into permanent accommodation varies depending on the length of the lease on the T/A property and the needs of the household. Families requiring larger properties will undoubtedly remain in T/A for far longer than those requiring one bedroom accommodation. This is mainly due to the lack of larger size permanent stock being available.

In addition households with specific requirements in relation to needs, area and type of property may remain in T/A for some considerable years whilst suitable permanent accommodation is sought.

The waiting time for all approved households, irrespective of bedsize will vary depending on how active a household is in terms of bidding. If households bid through ‘Fast-Lets’ and are realistic in terms of their points level and chances of success, re-housing times can be approximately:-

1 beds	6months – 1 year
2 beds	18 months – 3 years
3 beds	3 – 5years.

Written Question 16 - To the Leader of the Council from Cllr Williams

If he will list the awards of grants, covering the last five years, made to outside bodies on which members of the Council Executive were Council representatives, indicating what role, if any, such members of the Executive played in the award of such grants to those bodies on which they sat.

ANSWER

In the time available and because of the amount of research required I am unable to provide the information requested in time for tonight’s Council meeting. However, I consider that this is a piece of valuable research to undertake and I have already requested that officers provide a comprehensive response as soon as the data can be compiled. Because of the nature and volume of this data Councillor Williams will, I am sure, understand that the information may not be provided within the timescales laid down by the Council’s Constitution.

Written Question 17 - To the Executive Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Bax

Could he inform members what the Key Stage 2 results are for Haringey?

ANSWER

The new DfES figures provide confirmation of the official Key Stage 2 results for 11-year-olds, showing that many schools in the borough achieved excellent results in their summer examinations. The proportion of 11-year-old pupils gaining the required standard of Level 4 or above in English, maths and science has improved since 2004.

Results in English continue their upward trend, rising from 70% in 2004 to 73%; nationally scores rose by 1% to 79%. In maths results also continue to rise – up from 67% last year to 68% this year. Nationally results are up to 75%, an increase of 1%. In science results improved by 1% to 78%, nationally they remained at 86%.

In English tests this year many schools have seen big increases in the number of children reaching Level 4 or above. These include:

- Broadwater Farm up from 35% to 69%
- Alexandra up from 46% to 79%
- Stroud Green up from 71% to 89%
- Nightingale up from 59% to 72%
- Rokesly Junior up from 76% to 90%

Among the Haringey schools scoring well above national averages in English were Belmont Junior, Coldfall, Coleridge, Our Lady of Muswell, Muswell Hill, Welbourne, Rhodes Ave, St Ignatius, Tetherdown, and St Martin of Porres. All saw 80-90% or more of their pupils gain Level 4 or above.

There were big improvements for many schools in maths too, with several recording a higher proportion of pupils than ever before reaching Level 4 or above. Success stories include:

- Broadwater Farm up from 28% to 63%
- Alexandra up from 46% to 83%
- Muswell Hill up from 78% to 92%
- South Harringay Junior up from 52% to 71%
- St Gilda's RC Junior up from 67% to 84%
- Weston Park up from 78% to 93%

St James, Rhodes Avenue, St Michael's N6 and many other schools also scored well above the national average in maths with 80-90% or more of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in the tests.

The following schools have seen the proportion of children achieving Level 4 or above in science increase:

- Stroud Green up from 65% to 87%
- Nightingale up from 57% to 76%
- Bounds Green Junior up from 63% to 71%
- Mulberry up from 54% to 66%

In addition St Aidan's, West Green, St Paul's RC, Welbourne, Lea Valley and many other schools scored well above the national average in science with 80-90% or more of their pupils achieving Level 4 or above in science.

DfES 'value added' performance measures released this week highlight the excellent strides made by many pupils between Key Stages 1 and 2.

Haringey's value added score is 100.4 compared to national score of 100.2. Value added figures help to make a fairer comparison between schools because they measure the progress pupils make between Key Stage 1 (age 7) to Key Stage 2 (age 11). League tables published by the DfES show Haringey placed joint 42nd out of 150 Local Authorities in the value added league tables – this compares to a position of joint 72nd last year.

Written Question 18 - To the Executive Member for Children and Young People from Cllr J Brown

Could he give an update to members on attendance figures for Haringey's primary and secondary schools?

ANSWER

Haringey had seen marked improvement in both primary and secondary attendance. Primary attendance has improved from 93.37% in 2003/04 to 93.59% in 2004/05. This is equivalent to 30 more children attending school for a full year.

Secondary attendance has improved from 91.25% in 2003/04 to 91.37% in 2004/05. This is equivalent to 10 more children attending school for a full year. As a result Haringey's secondary schools have one of the highest attendance rates among London boroughs.

These figures reflect this Labour Council and the Government's determination to ensure no child is left behind and truancy is reduced still further.

Written Question 19 - To the Executive Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Rice

Could he inform members how much money Haringey's schools are going to receive following the announcement of the Dedicated Schools Grant?

ANSWER

The Government has announced figures for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) – a ringfenced budget for schools – which has set out funding for each school for the next two years. Here in Haringey this will see a 6.8% per pupil increase in 2006/7 and 6.9% in 2007/8 on the year 2005/6 figures. This amounts to an additional £144,495k in 2006/7 and £156.327k in 2007/8.

To enable us to establish final individual schools' budgets, we will need pupil number data from schools which will be recorded on their PLASC return on 19/01/2006. Following receipt of this information, and consultation with the Haringey Schools Forum on the level of schools centrally held budgets, we will be in a position to provide an indication of each individual school's budget by mid February, with final 2006/07 school budgets being released in early March 2006.

These percentage increases demonstrate the commitment of the Labour Government and Labour Council determination to raise educational standards.

Written Question 20 - To the Executive Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Dodds

Could he update members on the recent APA inspection of The Children's Service?

ANSWER

Carried out jointly by education watchdog Ofsted and the Commission for Social Care Inspection, the 'Annual Performance Assessment' (APA) was the first to include combined ratings for education and children's social care services.

The final report found that the services that are delivered, consistently exceeded the baseline requirements of service users.

Services were judged on how they maintain and improve outcomes for young people. Based on these criteria Haringey's education services received a three star rating out of a possible four. Social care services for children received a two star rating, while Children's Services as a whole received a three star rating.

The outlook for the future of children's services in the borough is also bright, with the council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people given another three star rating.

Areas praised by inspectors included the work undertaken with other agencies to improve the health of children and families and the rate of improvement achieved by children attending Haringey's schools. Leadership from council members and management was also highlighted, emphasising the importance of this Labour Council's focus on educational standards as they key to social justice and keeping children safe.

Inspectors concluded that: "The council has a strong vision and high aspirations for children's services underpinned by clear strategic planning. There is a strong focus on outcomes, sustaining progress and improving performance in considerably challenging areas. Local priorities are clear, realistic and reflect national priorities. Resources are well targeted to priority areas."

This report puts us in a very good position for the future and is a reflection of the progress made over the last five years and the bright prospects for Haringey's children as this Labour Council's agenda of improving school standards works to diminish social inequality.