

COUNCIL – 23 FEBRUARY 2009 - QUESTIONS

Oral Questions

Oral Question 1 - To the Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Safer Communities from Councillor Adamou:

What success has Haringey Council had in influencing Government policy on gambling premises?

Oral Question 2 – To the Cabinet Member for Resources from Councillor Scott:

Can the Council formally announce that plans to move the Council Chamber to Woodside House have been abandoned, not merely put on hold?

Oral Question 3 - To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Conservation from Councillor Catherine Harris:

Would my colleague, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Conservation be able to outline the usefulness of the newly opened Mary Neuner Road in Wood Green in easing traffic flow through residential streets such as Hornsey Park Road, and as such reducing the environmental impact on some residents homes, and update us on how current traffic could be encouraged to use it more frequently?

Oral Question 4 - To the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People from Councillor Alexander:

Considering that the Heartlands School project is now running two months behind schedule (as I believe that building work was scheduled to start in November 2008) can the Cabinet Member provide an update on where the project is now and give her assurance that the project will be delivered on time and the school will be ready to open to their first intake of pupils in September 2010?

Oral Question 5 –To the Cabinet Member for Resources from Councillor Mallett:

Following the award of the property maintenance contract to an outside firm, can we look forward to planned maintenance of and a systematic approach to the running of the Community Buildings portfolio?

Oral Question 6 – To the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People from Councillor Engert:

How many Serious Case Reviews is the Local Safeguarding Children's Board currently investigating?

Oral Question 7 - To the Cabinet member for Environment and Conservation from Councillor Dogus:

Can the cabinet member provide some further detail about the council's plan to spend an extra £ 2 million on street lighting in the borough this year?

Written Questions

Written Question 1 – To the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Aitken:

How much funding does the Council provide to services giving advice on teenage pregnancy? How many teenage pregnancies were there in Haringey in the past year?

ANSWER

How much funding does the Council provide to services giving advice on teenage pregnancy?

- The Council provides £44,700 for supporting and advising pregnant teenagers and teenage parents of statutory school age as well as work with schools on prevention.
- Through the LAA the Council provides £272,600 (£102,700 former NRF, plus £169,900 former LIG) to support the Teenage Pregnancy Strategic Partnership Board for a range of activities around reducing teenage pregnancy and supporting teenage parents. Approximately £34,000 goes directly to supporting teenage parents/pregnant teenagers aged 16-19, with the remainder being spent on prevention and early intervention.
- In addition, Connexions funds a full-time worker to work with teenage parents for post-16 education, employment and training provision and teenage parents have access to a range of universal services through the Children's Centres.

How many teenage pregnancies were there in Haringey in the past year?

The last year for which there is full year published data is 2006 and there were 236 teenage pregnancies which is published as being a rate of 63.7 per thousand.

Written Question 2 – To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Alexander:

Have any complaints been received by Haringey Council from Transport for London with respect to the gritting of the roads since 1st February 2009?

ANSWER

We have not received any complaints from TfL.

Written Question 3 – To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise from Cllr Allison:

With regards to the NDC donations to assist the intended Wards Corner development:

How much was paid by way of grants respectively for the purpose of facilitating land assembly and for other purposes connected with the intended development? To whom and when were the payments made?

ANSWER

Payments have been made totalling £1.5 million by way of Interim Gap Funding against evidence of payments made on land assembly and associated costs. There were two payments: in 2007/08, £874,343 and in 2008/09, £625,657

Written Question 4 – To the Cabinet Member for Housing Services from Cllr Baker:

For 2008 what is the total number of days that Council owned homes have been empty (i.e. total number of cumulative void days)?

ANSWER

For 2007/08 all general needs and sheltered housing properties with a tenancy commencement date during this time period 706 properties were let during this period with an overall average of 104.48 days vacant. This sums to 73 761 days void.

This can be broken down by VAV (void –available) and VUN (void unavailable). A VUN property is equivalent to a 'major works' void.

331 VAV were let at an average vacancy time of 63.39 days. This sums to 20,981 days vacant. 354 VUN properties were let at an average vacancy time of 140.36 days. This sums to 49,688 days.

There were 21 properties classed as NLET properties. These are dwellings coming back into use following a previous non dwelling definition. There was an average of 147.24 vacant days on these properties. This sums to 3,092 total days.

Written Question 5 – To the Cabinet Member for Resources from Cllr Beacham:

What percentage of Haringey's training budget has been spent on 'common purpose' leadership courses and how many staff have attended?

ANSWER

According to our SAP financial and purchasing records the council has not spent any money on sending its staff on 'common purpose' leadership courses last 3 years checked.

Written Question 6 – To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Wellbeing from Cllr Beynon:

How many people are currently waiting for adaptations or aids for their homes? How much has been spent by the Council last year on providing adaptations and how much was the original budget?

ANSWER

There are no waits for minor aids and adaptations. The total number of people whose major adaptations have not been fully completed is 220.

	Budget	Actual
2007/08	£000	£000
Disabled Facilities Grant	873	1,084
Council	1,689	1,648
Total	2,562	2,732

Written Question 7– To the Cabinet Member for Resources from Cllr Bloch:

Does the council recognise that there are serious health and safety issues occasioned by the lack of water, drainage and toilet facilities in the Arches, The Viaduct, St James's Lane, Muswell Hill and what steps does the council intend to take to deal with this lack of water, drainage and toilet facilities ?

ANSWER

There are 15 commercial units at this address located within the viaduct arches and which accommodate a range of business uses. The properties were marketed without water, drainage or toilet facilities and tenants proceeded with leases on this basis. Subsequently there have been incremental changes in use resulting in requests to improve the facilities with running water, drainage and toilet facilities. The Council is obtaining quotations from contractors for these facilities to be installed. The Council will consult all tenants and will proceed with the works only if there is majority support as costs will be recouped from tenants via the service charge.

Written Question 8 – To Cabinet Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Butcher:

What posts and resource was taken out of the pre-opening Budget for the Heartlands High School as part of reducing the budget from £394,000 to

£122,000 and what impact will that reduction have on the security of its opening date?

ANSWER

The original budget was constructed when the council was exploring federation with another school, and resources reflected work needed to establish a federation. It has been established that any federation arrangements will be set up once the school is operating. The headteacher has been appointed full-time from September 2009 and has agreed to some additional days in the summer term. The headteacher was planned to be appointed from April 2009. Most other staff will not be appointed until April 2010, although recruitment will take place for the remainder of 2009/10. This reduces accommodation costs for these staff. These changes will not in themselves have any impact on the opening date.

Written Question 9 – To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Wellbeing from Cllr Davies:

What current staffing levels of the Transitions team are against target and what his assessment is of the level of service that this team is able to provide?

ANSWER

At present we have two specialist social workers with dedicated managerial support. There are 40 cases of a mainly complex nature allocated to the social workers.

Written Question 10 – To the Cabinet Member for Housing Services from Cllr Edge:

How much will the installation of digital antennas on properties cost each leaseholder?

ANSWER

Based on the current specification, which includes access to three service providers namely, Turksat, Hotbird and Skyplus and more than 1000 audio and visual channels, the average unit cost for the works carried out in 2008/09 was £581.29. The Cabinet Member has recently met with Digital UK concerning our programme to ensure that the deadline for conversion will be met in the most appropriate way.

Written Question 11 – To the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Engert:

How many health visitors are there currently in Haringey's Children's Centres and how many vacancies for health visitors are there?

What is the Council doing to ensure that health visiting teams are fully recruited and universal health visiting services are able to be offered from Children's Centres?

How much money is spent on providing health visitors in Children's Centres? (I.e. how much funding does the Primary Care Trust contribute and how much does the Council contribute?)

ANSWER

The TPCT commissions Great Ormond Street Hospital to provide health visiting services. The current budget is approx £2.5 million in Health Visiting Services, which includes a new investment of £590k approved 2008/2009.

This funds:

HV Team Leaders	6
Health Visitors	33.1
RGNs	5
NNEBs	4.4
HVAs	7.8

There are currently 7.6 HV vacancies with an additional 5.2 Health Visitors who have been appointed but have yet to start. Contingency arrangements are in place with a full service offered to all children with a child protection plan and all children in need. All families receive a new birth visit and where there are concerns the visit will be carried out within 10 to 14 days. Duty desk arrangements have been strengthened, and families can contact a Health Visitor if they have concerns, and make an appointment at the clinic or arrange a visit. This forms part of the children's centre's core offer and is provided at either a children's centre, health clinic, or in the child's home.

Some Health Visitor services have been suspended because of the shortage of Health Visitors in Haringey, including later visits to families where there are no concerns, and education sessions offered from children's centres. The latter is regretted by GOSH, the TPCT, and the Health Visitors themselves.

The TPCT is holding fortnightly performance management meetings to monitor the situation. There is an ongoing recruitment campaign but recruitment has slowed since the trial and JAR inspection report. GOSH is reviewing the recruitment campaign and supplementing the service using agency staff, bank staff, and overtime. They are looking at including paediatric nurses on a community rotation to support Health Visitors and approaching other boroughs to see if they can assist with either practical support or offer of ideas on how to strengthen the Health Visitor team. GOSH are holding meetings with the Department of Health and Health Visitor Association.

No funding from the Children's Centres' grant contributes directly to Health Visitor provision.

The TPCT and the Local Authority are reviewing the joint health work in Children's Centres to strengthen and build the support offered to vulnerable children and families.

Written Question 12 – To the Cabinet Member for Resources from Cllr Gorrie:

The credit crunch is producing a well publicised squeeze on PFI funding. What specific projects are dependent on PFI, what actions have been taken by the Council to review the status of required PFI funding for those projects and what specific steps have been taken to review alternative approaches to funding? Can you please specifically comment on the NLWA bid?

ANSWER

The only current project that the council is involved in which may use PFI as a funding option is the project to procure new waste disposal facilities and this is being managed by the North London Waste Authority. As previously reported to Members an outline business case has been put forward to central government for PFI funding, this also included a value for money comparison with a prudential borrowing approach.

The issues and risks for NLWA on the future of PFI for this project were reported to the NLWA's meeting on 11 February. It was reported that the current market conditions are impacting on private finance solutions and a number of projects have struggled to reach financial close. Although the NLWA are at least two years away from the financial close of their project it was agreed that other funding options are explored and reported back for further discussion.

Written Question 13 – To the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Lifelong Learning from Cllr Hare:

Bruce Castle Oak is a tree of national importance. Despite this importance, the Council has had no management plan for the tree, and even appears to have no records of a very large branch lost some 20 or 30 years ago. The tree has some severe problems, however, with good management; it has a potential life expectancy of many hundreds of years. But the Council must take the right steps now. Will the Council commit to developing a 30 or 50 year plan for the long-term management of this tree, and to funding ground de-compaction and micro-rhizal nutrients injection this year at a cost of around £500?

ANSWER

The de-compaction works and installation of mulch will be completed spring 2009. To ensure the trees long-term future the Tree Section is preparing a 30 year management plan. The tree was recently subject to a decay detection test which identified a number of severe structural defects, including extensive internal decay.

Measures implemented will increase the trees lifespan and reduce the likelihood of major branch loss in the future. Works will include de-compaction of the soil, installation of a large area of mulch and edging board and crown reduction works. It is proposed to reduce the overall size of the tree by phased pruning at 5 yearly intervals over a 30 year period. The tree will be closely monitored to measure the effectiveness of the works.

Written Question 14 – To the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Mughal:

How many children were in short-term foster care and how long had they been in short-term foster care at January 2008, April 2008, August 2008, November 2008, February 2009?

ANSWER

Numbers of children in short term foster care on specified date

As at	Numbers in care	Numbers in short term foster care	Percentage
31/01/2008	420	142	33.81%
30/04/2008	428	152	35.51%
31/08/2008	430	152	35.35%
30/11/2008	457	179	39.17%
12/02/2009	464	179	38.58%

The definition of “short -term care” used is all those on section 20 and on interim orders. “Long term” for the purposes of this answer has been defined as those on Care Orders for whom the council has acquired parental responsibility. The problem with this definition is that all those on section 20 for however long are defined as short term – which means that the numbers/percentage given is too high. Within the time given we have been unable to answer this question in any other way. The answer to how long they have been in short- term care would require scrutiny of individual children’s records.

Written Question 15 – To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Newton:

Will the Cabinet member commit to piloting the new Specs3 digital average speed cameras to enforce 20mph speed limits to make our residential roads safer and reduce the use of humps to slow down traffic?

ANSWER

The ‘SPECS3’ camera technology has been recommended for approval by the Association of Chief Police Officers Traffic Enforcement Technology. The Home Office still has to provide legal approval for its use prior to any cameras being placed on the public highway in residential areas. And the estimated

cost of installing SPECS3 to enforce a 20mph zone would be between £250k-£1m, depending on the size and complexity of the system.

Transport for London has promised to work with London Boroughs in piloting 20mph zones where part of the enforcement will be use of these new cameras. We have met TfL to discuss the way forward on this but as yet no budget has been allocated by TfL to progress with any pilot schemes. Haringey has put itself forward for a pilot scheme if funding is identified. The exact location of any pilot scheme would be discussed and agreed with TfL.

Written Question 16 – To the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Oakes:

What is the current rate of vacancies in the Children's Social Services department? How many social workers left the service in the past month and how many joined the service?

ANSWER

The vacancy rate including agency staff is 3% and 31.7% excluding agency staff. 2 Haringey Council permanent Social Workers joined and 1 left in January 2009.

Written Question 17 – To the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Oatway:

The 16-19 Transfer will give local authorities the responsibility for commissioning education and training provision for 16-19 year olds in their areas. When will Haringey Children's Services be submitting their report to the Department for Children, Schools and Families on this transfer? Which sub-regional area is Haringey part of?

ANSWER

The arrangements for 16-19 transfer in London boroughs are different to those in other parts of the country. The Leaders of London Councils agreed to recognise the existing collaboration between local authorities through the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS). At a regional level a Shadow Regional Planning Board was formed by ALDCS and the LSC. The remit of this group is to provide a strategic lead for London which integrates both the pan-London nature of young people's travel to learn patterns and the employment opportunities and establishes a protocols framework.

Funding for the whole of London will be managed by the London Regional Planning Group with an amount to be allocated to each LA to deliver their provision for school based sixth forms, Sixth Form Colleges, some General Further Education and Work Based Learning. The plan for the allocation of the remainder is being developed but there is a desire to create some pan London provision for specialist courses as well as to develop regional provision.

The Regional Planning Group submitted a proposal on behalf of all London local authorities, signed by all London Directors of Children's Services. The proposals outlined a system for commissioning 16-19 education. Local authorities will take the lead in determining local educational priorities in partnership with colleges, schools and other education providers, and the Regional Planning Group will ensure overall coherence between borough plans by creating a London-wide plan.

Haringey is part of the North London group centred on Haringey's significant travel to learn patterns; this is primarily Enfield, Barnet, Waltham Forest and, to a lesser extent Camden and Islington, with the intention of collaborating on future regional course provision. The group has to date met twice.

Written Question 18 – To the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Rainer:

How many children in Haringey currently have a children protection plan and how many have a designated social worker?

ANSWER

184 children with a Child Protection Plan all with an allocated social worker.

Written Question 19 – To the Cabinet Member for Housing Services from Cllr Reid:

Following a request about Fire Alarms quite some time ago with regard to HfH properties can you assure us that all properties are now properly fitted with fire or smoke detectors?

ANSWER

Homes for Haringey can not confirm that all properties are fitted with smoke detectors. Smoke alarms are fitted as standard when homes are rewired work in voids or properties receiving decent homes or capital works. Homes for Haringey encourages residents to fit smoke alarms and have included articles around fire safety in the residents' magazine, Homes Zone. Free safety visits have also been carried out by the London Fire Brigade actually fitting free smoke alarms. The Tenants' Charter also encourages the fitting of smoke detectors.

Written Question 20 – To the Cabinet Member for Adults, Culture and Community Services from Cllr Scott:

When is the exterior of Alexandra Park Library going to be renovated / refurbished?

ANSWER

The works to the exterior of Alexandra Park Library are included in the priority project list for the Corporate Property Services maintenance investment programme. The programme will be finalised during March 2009 and if successfully included the external works will be completed during the 2009/10 financial year.

Written Question 21 – To the Cabinet Member for Resources from Cllr Weber:

How many householders or traders have received court summons and bankruptcy orders filled to collect arrears in the last three years on a month-by-month basis?

ANSWER

Since April 2006 Haringey has laid complaint with the Magistrates against 81,394 council tax defaulters and 6,853 business rate defaulters. The following provides a monthly breakdown:

Council Tax

2006	Total	2007	Total	2008	Total
April	0	April	1,978	April	1,511
May	7,564	May	6,938	May	6,637
June	2,594	June	2,022	June	1,920
July	2,320	July	2,171	July	1,665
Aug	2,398	Aug	2,028	Aug	1,385
Sept	2,838	Sept	2,045	Sept	1,768
Oct	2,246	Oct	1,876	Oct	1,691
Nov	2,019	Nov	1,770	Nov	1,799
Dec	2,147	Dec	1,786	Dec	1,418
Jan	1,829	Jan	1,929	Jan	1,912
Feb	2,139	Feb	1,781	Feb	1,985
March	1,878	March	1,407	March	
TOTAL	29,972	TOTAL	27,731	TOTAL	23,691
Overall Total		81,394			

Business Rates

2006	Total	2007	Total	2008	Total
April	0	April	162	April	128
May	355	May	403	May	705
June	215	June	313	June	254
July	242	July	240	July	204
Aug	110	Aug	252	Aug	188
Sept	221	Sept	177	Sept	176
Oct	119	Oct	185	Oct	181

Nov	129	Nov	163	Nov	189
Dec	201	Dec	159	Dec	145
Jan	161	Jan	143	Jan	163
Feb	139	Feb	129	Feb	
March	190	March	112	March	
TOTAL	2,082	TOTAL	2,438	TOTAL	2,333
Overall Total		6,853			

In respect of insolvency there has been 1 council tax case and 1 compulsory liquidation business rate case.

Written Question 22 – To the Cabinet Member for Housing Services from Cllr Whyte:

When do the Council propose to pay Homes for Haringey the balance of the £1 million bill they owe them for repairs Homes for Haringey have carried out on their behalf?

ANSWER

The position is as follows:

Date	Invoiced and outstanding by Homes for Haringey	Paid for by Haringey Council
31 st January 2009	£5.724m	
Paid to date		£4,752m
Awaiting credit notes		£0.300m
Invoices awaiting clearance		£0.250m
Totals	£5.724m	£5.302m
Due to paid within 28 days		£0.422m

Written Question 23 – To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise from Cllr Williams:

What proportion of planning applications where the applicant successfully appeals a refusal for permission by the council result in costs being awarded against the council, and what were the amounts in each of the last five years.

ANSWER

The percentage of successful appeals where costs are awarded against the Council varies between 2 - 4% in any one year. The amounts for each of the last five years are shown in the last column below.

Year	No. of planning appeal decisions in year	Planning appeals allowed	No. where cost awarded	Percentage of appeals that result in costs	Amount
2008	95	41	2	5%	£11,568*
2007	125	47	0		£0
2006	137	51	1	2%	£562.
2005	120	38	0		£0
2004	76	26	1	4%	£12,907

* Estimated £8,000 for 68-70 Coolhurst Road as final figure not yet agreed with appellants.

Written Question 24 – To the Cabinet Member for Resources from Cllr Wilson:

Will he list the services and charges for which Haringey Council and Homes for Haringey have not passed on the recent VAT cuts to local residents, state the reasons why the VAT cut has not been passed on in each case, and forecast the windfall that will be received by Haringey from not passing on the cut.

ANSWER

A decision taken under urgency procedures to revise charges for services in relation to the VAT reduction was taken on 12/01/2009 by the Leader of the Council following a recommendation of the Chief Financial Officer.

The decision was to reduce service fees and charges with immediate effect for the annual membership of Sports and Leisure Centres and for Car Parking Season Tickets. It was noted that a large number of charges are set as net of VAT and so the VAT rate change was automatically passed on in these cases.

London Borough of Haringey

In summary, the forecast considering one whole year of charges is

Amounts returned to customers:	
As a result of decision taken:	£18k
Automatically returned and approved via decision:	£255k
Annual amount returned to customers	£273k

Amount not returned to customers:	
Sports & Leisure (see note a)	£45k
All other areas	£17k

Annual amount not returned to customers

£62k

(a) Note that Sports and Leisure charges from 1st April 2009 are normally approved by Cabinet each February so the actual full year forecast is likely to be different to £45k.

All VAT changes have been passed onto residents and customers of Homes for Haringey.

Fees where VAT change is not being passed on

Description of charge

Reason for not passing on VAT change

Pendarren

Pendarren for the Weekend:
attendance by Out of Borough pupil
Charges for The Firs: attendance by
Out of Borough pupil

For Pendarren - the total gross charge is the same for in or out of borough - for out of borough the VAT is absorbed
For Pendarren - the total charge is the same for in or out of borough - for out of borough the VAT is absorbed

Libraries

Photocopying – Black & White – A4
Photocopying – Black & White – A3
Photocopying - Colour - A4

Impractical to change prices as only by odd pennies. Also charge is made direct into photocopiers so reprogramming required and purchase of new coin boxes

Photocopying - Colour - A3

Printing

Sale of Usb (2gb)

Sports & Leisure fees

Leisure membership

Leisure centre parking

Tottenham Green Goods

Park Road Goods

White Hart Lane Goods

6th form centre goods

Sports & Leisure includes a large variety of charges from one-off swims to period leisure cards. Costs of reprinting price lists and reprogramming of tills required. The reduction has been passed on for all annual memberships. In addition all Sports & Leisure prices are usually reviewed by Cabinet in February for price changes in April.

Memorial prices

Parking in parks

Cost of changing signage on car parking machines and changes to the programming of machines. Also it will prove difficult for the users as exact change is required when paying for parking - consistent with off-street parking recommendation

Life in UK citizenship tests

Gross price is set by 'Life in the UK' across country – LBH is consistent with this price.

Naming Ceremonies

Overall income gained per annum is £20 – this is

outweighed by the cost of re-pricing activities.

Staff car parking

Overall income gained per annum is minimal – this is outweighed by the cost of re-pricing activities.

Off-street car parking

Cost of changing signage on car parking machines and changes to the programming of machines. Also it will prove difficult for the users as exact change is required when paying for parking.

Written Question 25 – To the Cabinet Member for Housing Services from Cllr Winskill:

How many Hostels/Temporary Accommodation units do Haringey manage?

ANSWER

The council has 19 hostel buildings with a varying number of units. There are approximately 198 units available for temporary housing.