

COUNCIL QUESTIONS – 14 NOVEMBER 2005:

ORAL QUESTIONS

Oral Question 1 – To the Executive Member for Enterprise and Regeneration from Cllr Hoban

Please confirm the current status of the Bernie Grant Arts Centre project, with specific reference to (a) the project development timetable and anticipated date of completion (b) the current capital funding status including any variation to the business plan originally approved by the council.

Oral Question 2 - To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Bevan

Will the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation report on the *Better Haringey* event held on 2 November?

Oral Question 3 - To the Leader of the Council from Cllr Williams

If he will update members on what he believes to be the likely rate of Council Tax in the next financial year.

Oral Question 4 - To the Leader of the Council from Cllr Bull

Does the Leader, as Executive Member for Equalities, agree with me that the Civil Partnership Act which comes into force this December, is something that should be unreservedly welcomed as another example of recognising diversity as the key to creating community cohesion?

Oral Question 5 - To the Executive Member for Enterprise and Regeneration from Cllr Winskill

What are the procedures for auditing the accounts of The Bridge NDC?

Oral Question 6 - To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Gmmh Rahman Khan:

Will the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation report on the preparations underway to ensure the borough's roads are safe this winter?

Oral Question 7 - To the Chair of the Alexandra Palace and Park Board from Cllr Hare

If she will make a statement about the trading accounts for the Palace?

Oral Question 8 - To the Executive Member for Health and Social Services from Cllr Harris

Will the Executive Member for Social Services outline the work which is being done to increase benefit take-up in Haringey?

Oral Question 9 - To the Executive Member for Crime and Community Safety from Cllr Aitken

To state police numbers in Haringey for the current year.

Oral Question 10 - To the Executive Member for Housing from Cllr Santry

Will the Executive Member for Housing outline the work which is being done to improve housing estates across the borough?

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 1 - To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Bloch

What advice he has received from their structural engineers about placing the skatepark on the hard surface in Priory Park (b) whether planning permission for this skate park is required (c) whether Thames Water have been consulted (d) what were the results of the consultation.

Answer

- a. The structural engineer appointed to the project has advised on potential locations on the tarmac area where the skatepark might be located and on the need for supplementary works to provide additional loading capacity depending on the final location identified
- b. It is not possible at this stage to clarify whether or not planning permission will be required for the skatepark. This is because no detailed designs have as yet been produced. When designs are produced, advice will be sought from Development Control on the requirement for planning permission.
- c. Farrer Huxley Associates (Landscape Architects) undertook preliminary consultation with Thames Water between February and March 2005, however no conclusive feedback was received from Thames Water.
- d. As a result of the lack of feedback from Thames Water, the Structural Engineer was subsequently appointed to ensure the structural integrity of the design. The engineer continues to seek a dialogue with Thames. Clearly we need to obtain a response. This is an issue that we will resolve with Thames Water in taking the project forward.

Written Question 2 - To the Executive Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Hoban

Could the Lead member for the Children's Service please provide a breakdown of the following numbers for each special school in Haringey for the period 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05:

- a) the number of children on the school roll for each school
- b) the number of children referred by the school to social services
- c) the number of children referred subject to an initial assessment
- d) the number of children referred subject to strategy meetings
- e) the number of children referred subject to S17 Child in Need Assessment
- f) the number of children referred leading to S47 inquiry
- g) the number of children referred placed on register

Answer

Please note that throughout this document, reference is made to Social Services. This is the terminology of the statutory guidance. In practice,

this refers to the social care responsibilities that are now delivered by the Children and Families branch within the Children's Service.

1. These questions relate to the number of children placed in special schools and the relationship with Section 17 Child in Need Assessment Procedures and Section 47 procedures.
2. It is not possible to answer these questions in the format that they have been asked, as this data is not held according to the child's school. Furthermore, if it were possible to provide the answers to these questions, without proper contextual explanation, it is likely that this could provide a misleading picture of the number of children with disabilities who are known to Social Services. This would be of great concern as all available research indicates that children with disabilities are more at risk of suffering harm than children who do not have disabilities and are less likely to receive interventions that prevent this from occurring.
3. If the number of children on the roll of special schools were analysed, it would show that the Children and Families department (Social Services) know a high proportion of these families. We need to bear in mind that a number of these children are placed by other local authorities who would come under the jurisdiction of that authority, rather than Haringey's social care responsibility. The data would also show that a high proportion has been provided with a Child in Need (Section 17) assessment. It is important to clarify why this is the case. The Framework of Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health [DoH] 2002) sets out the definition and circumstances for such an assessment.

- **Children in need (Section 17)**

'Children are defined as 'those whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health and development, or their health and development will be impaired, without the provision of services'

'The criteria for defining children in need include disabled children. Disabled children are entitled to this assessment.'

It is therefore logical that a very high proportion, if not all, children with disabilities will have received a Section 17 assessment, not because they have been referred by the school but because they are statutorily entitled to this, in order to ensure that their needs are met.

Some children placed in special schools may have a special educational need rather than a recognised disability. Legislation does not distinguish between disability and special educational needs. Local Education Authorities (now Children's Service Authorities) have a duty to identify and make a statutory assessment of those children who have special educational needs and who probably require a statement of their Special Educational Need. If a statutory assessment is undertaken, the Local Authority must seek parental, medical,

educational and social services' advice. At the same time, a decision may be made that the child or family would benefit from an assessment or the provision of services.

4. The questions also refer to the numbers of children from special schools who have been the subject of strategy discussions. It is not possible to provide a numerical response to these questions as the data is not held according to school referrals. It should also be noted that where schools do refer, there are many reasons for this, including allegations against professional or others working with the child. The local authority has done extensive work with all schools to ensure that they understand their responsibilities in relation to sharing concerns that relate to the safeguarding of all children. It may be helpful to set out the process that must then be used to respond to these concerns. The Framework of Assessment (DOH) and Working Together To Safeguard Children (DOH 1999) provide the statutory guidance:

- **Strategy Discussions**

5. Social Services departments (now Children's Service) have responsibilities towards all children whose health or development may be impaired without the provision of support or services, or who are disabled (described by the 1989 Children Act as 'in need').

Any concerns that a child may be suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm, they should always refer their concerns to the local authority social services department. It is the responsibility of the social services department (Children's Service) to clarify the nature of these concerns with the referrer.

The Children's Service must decide, within 24 hours, what the next course of action should be. This initial assessment must decide whether these concerns justify further enquiries, assessment and/or intervention.

'At any stage, should there be suspicions or allegations about child maltreatment and concern that a child may be or is likely to suffer significant harm, there must be strategy discussions and inter-agency action in accordance with the guidance.

A key part of the assessment will be to establish whether there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.' (FAS) There is no legal definition of reasonable and this relies upon professional judgement and experience.

Whenever there may be reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, there should be a strategy discussion. The strategy discussion should be used to:

- Share information;

- Decide whether section 47 inquiries should be initiated or continued;
- Plan how enquiries should be handled;
- Agree what action if any is needed to safeguard the child and to provide interim services and support;
- Determine what information about the discussion should be shared with the family. (WT)

Where there is any doubt about a child's welfare a strategy discussion will be held in order to draw together the views of a wider group of professionals. The decision as to whether to proceed with a statutory assessment is always taken with extreme care and in some cases the judgement about whether a statutory assessment is required is very difficult to make. It calls upon professional judgement where any margin of error can have major consequences for a child.

6. The questions also refer to the number of children from special schools that have been the subject of section 47 investigations. Again, the data is not held by school. There are a number of reasons why these children have been the subjected to these inquiries, including allegations against professionals or others working with the child.

Working Together (DOH) is clear about how the broader procedures should be applied to disabled children:

- **Section 47 investigations and disabled children**

7. The Working Together guidance is very clear on how decisions should be reached in relations to concerns about disabled children:

‘Safeguards for disabled children are the same as for non-disabled children. Where there are concerns about the welfare of a disabled child, they should be acted upon, in the same way as for any other child. The same thresholds for action apply’.

8. The current number of disabled children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) is 5. This is much lower than the total number of children with disabilities who are known to Children and Families (Social Services). It is important to consider what the purpose of the CPR is:

‘The principle purpose of the register is to make agencies and professionals aware of those children who are judged to be at continuing risk of significant harm and in need of active safeguarding’. (DOH).

Most children who receive an assessment or services will not be placed on the CPR.

Written Question 3 - To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Hare

When is the reuse and recycle centre due to be built in Hornsey?

Answer

The construction of the Reuse & Recycling Centre on Hornsey High Street N8 is complete and it is now open for use at weekends via the rear access from Campsbourne Road. Work on the main access road from Hornsey High Street has been delayed as initial site work revealed the need for Electricite de France (EDF) to move a transformer. These works are due to be completed in early December and the site will then be open fully.

Written Question 4 - To the Executive Member for Housing from Cllr Featherstone

How much has LBH spend on temporary accommodation in each of the last three years?

Answer

Expenditure on the provision of Temporary Accommodation in the last 3 years by LBH has been as follows:-

	Self Contained Annexes £'000	PSLs £'000	Income £'000	Total(Net) £'000
2002/03	12,443	9,422	(25,756)	(3,891)
2003/04	12,107	14,365	(33,908)	(7,436)
2004/05	10,896	19,916	(42,373)	(11,561)

The costs above include only payments to suppliers and the rental income receivable from these units.

Written Question 5 - To the Executive Member for Housing from Cllr Davies:

What is the definition of a roof terrace?

Answer

A roof terrace is an external usable space, which, unlike an overhanging balcony, is formed on the flat roof structure of the dwelling below. Examples in our own stock include Tangemere on Broadwater Farm, Gaven House N17 and Cavendish Road Flats N4.

Written Question 6 - To the Leader of the Council from Cllr Williams

Given public statements made on his behalf in response to media criticisms of the Council's decision-making in relation to the HBDA grant issue saying that he "has taken no part in considering the issue, let alone any decision on it," will the Leader of the Council confirm that he did not, at any time, in writing or

verbally, and outside of the Council's formal decision-making procedures, attempt to influence Council decision-making in favour of the HBDA funding request while he was a board member of HBDA.

Answer

I refer Councillor Williams to my statements released on this issue in the past.

Written Question 7 - To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Aitken

How much does it cost to front load the improvements to Park Road Pool and keep the pool open during its renovation?

Answer

The improvements at Park Road Swimming Pool will cost around £1.8M. Whilst there is some disruption to service, the facility remains open during the renovation programme. There may be a short term reduction in income, of approximately £75K, but this will be largely recovered in the last quarter of 2005/6 when the new Health and Fitness facilities are opened.

Written Question 8 - To the Executive Member for Children and Young People from Cllr Engert

Please would he detail a, the cost involved in implementing the Government's new healthy school meals programme by September 2006 including new kitchen equipment, training, extra staff and better quality ingredients b, How much of this cost will be met by government funding?

Answer

a. It is not anticipated that the new programme will result in a substantial increase in operating costs.

The Catering Department within the Children's Service has already undertaken much of the work required by the programme. School meals currently meet the nutritional standards set and the menus are developed in conjunction with the Primary Care Trust dietician who supervises the nutritional content of the meals provided.

The staff team within the service is well qualified and a continuing training programme is in place.

Over the last few years less and less pre-processed food has been used within the menu offered. The increased cooking time has required additional staff hours but no additional staff. The costs of this additional work have been maintained within the current budget limit and have not been passed on to parents.

There is an existing programme of ongoing improvement to the kitchen facilities within our schools. The additional funds allocated both directly to schools and to the Children's Service will allow an acceleration of this improvement programme.

The additional funding from the DfES allocated to schools on a per head basis will allow the schools to develop their own programmes to encourage a greater take up of school meals and promote healthier eating for all pupils and in some cases their families.

b. The grant for Haringey's Children's Service from the DfES to the LEA to fund these developments is £137,994. The LEA can chose how to allocate this money and will consult the Schools' Forum on how to do so. Additionally a further grant of £107,400 has been distributed directly to schools from the DFES, via the LEA, and has been allocated as follows:

£77,898 for Primary Schools
£20,728 for Secondary Schools
£4,436 for Special Schools
£3,256 for Nurseries
£1,124 for the Pupil Support Service.

Written Question 9 - To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Floyd

What powers does the Council have to enforce penalties on contractors responsible for a, street sweeping, b, waste collection c, recyclable collections and please give details of penalties imposed on contactors for each of the last 3 years.

Answer

Fines are not usually necessary, as Accord have only failed to respond to two Rectification Notices in the last two years.

Street sweeping and refuse collection services are provided under the Integrated Waste Management and Transport Contract, by Haringey Accord Ltd. The contract has a performance monitoring clause linked to performance targets and other contractual requirements. If contract standards are not met the Council, depending on the severity of the failure, will issue a Rectification Notice or a Warning Notice. In both cases the contractor must produce and implement a plan to remedy the unsatisfactory performance. For a Rectification Notice the Council may make a discretionary strategic (financial) deduction, however for a Warning Notice the Council will make a discretionary strategic (financial) deduction. In addition the Council can try to invoke a clause to take on additional monitoring staff to monitor the contract and charge the cost of doing so to the contractor. This can only happen in relation to, and within 6 months of, the issue of a Rectification Notice. The contractor can challenge this.

Two Rectification Notices have been issued during the term of the current contract. One was issued on street sweeping resulting in a strategic deduction in June 2003. This related to performance on zone 2/3 housing and non-housing land. The other, issued on refuse collection in June 2005, related to unsatisfactory performance in returning wheelie bins to residents' properties.

Both Haringey Accord Ltd and Recycling Works Services provide recycling collection services. Any performance issues are once again raised at liaison meetings with the respective contractor. If any issues cannot be resolved at this level they are escalated to the next Partnership Board meeting. If matters are still not resolved satisfactorily then the contract has a Dispute Resolution clause. However, we have not had to invoke the dispute resolution clause at any time in the last three years.

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

Please could the Lead Member for Environment please confirm, with respect to the humps in the Dukes Avenue area, Alexandra ward, please confirm:

- a) Are officers checking each road is properly completed, with ramps evenly set at 1:10?

Answer

Officers are involved in setting out positions of ramps and checking on completion with a 1:10 ramp requirement. There is minor tolerance for material composition, compaction and site topography.

- b) Does the Council have a standard detail for 1:10 flat top humps and will this be adopted for all future work where this type of hump is to be used?

Answer

There is a standard detail for 1:10 ramps. This may not be adopted in all cases as we need to ensure road humps address local circumstances for example bus routes, site configuration, and emergency services routes, camber of the road etc. As with all traffic schemes, the Council will monitor its effectiveness of the measures implemented prior to deciding if amendments are required. In this instance it was acknowledged that the gradient of 1:8 resulted in concerns amongst cyclists and therefore it was agreed to amend the gradient.

- c) Will the Council consult residents in the whole area affected before proceeding with any future road hump schemes?

Answer

Yes, all proposals are the subject of consultation and any future proposals will also be the subject of consultation in affected areas. Area boundaries are agreed prior to consultation with Ward Members.

- d) Can officers give their assurance that they will obtain the written comments of their Cycling Officer and the London Cycling Campaign, before proceeding with any future road hump schemes? (generally speaking full width road humps are best avoided on cycle routes)

Answer

All potential traffic management schemes are discussed at an early stage at the Council's Traffic Liaison meeting that includes the Council's cycling liaison officer. During statutory consultation a letter is sent to the London Cycling Campaign for comments and a copy of the draft Traffic Management Order is also included.

- e) What was or will be the total additional financial cost to the council in being required to remodel the humps to a more acceptable 1:10 gradient?

Answer

There was no additional financial cost for the Council. The scheme is a TfL funded project and they will meet the costs.

Written Question 11 - To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Gilbert

Could he please confirm, with respect to the Council's contract with Marketing Force:

- a) how many sites they have been contracted to market in each of the last 3 financial years?

Answer

2003/04 9 2004/05 9 2005/06 Potentially 14

- b) how many sites have been successfully marketed in each of the last 3 financial years?

Answer

2003/04 9 2004/05 9 2005/06 5 sold remaining 4
awaiting sponsors, 5 other sites identified to be progressed when the remaining four have been sold.

- c) how much net income has been raised through this contract?

Answer

2005 to date £
9350

2004	7,347
2003	6,612
2002	2610
Total	25,920

- d) explain whether the garden plot sited at the junction of Crescent Road and Palace Gates Road in Alexandra Ward was included in the contract and if so, why the plot has not been planted in each of the last 3 financial years?

Answer

The Crescent Road raised bed was first suggested as a potential site by Council officers at the very beginning of the site sponsorship scheme (end of 2002). From the outset Marketing Force indicated that they didn't believe there would be any commercial interest in the site due to various factors including the location of the bed. Although they did pursue sponsorship opportunities for many months, they eventually decided to concentrate their efforts on other sites.

There are two sites at the junction of Crescent Rd and Palace Gates Rd, one, a small open space, the other, a raised planter. Both of these sites have been successful in the Making the Difference bids.

Although the exact detail is still to be discussed the general timescales would be - specification / tender - Nov/Dec 2005; appointment and on site Jan / Feb 2006; completed by mid March 2006. The raised planter will be in the first phase.

Written Question 12 - To the Executive Member for Finance from Cllr Newton

What control checks are made on residents claiming Council Tax exemptions and how regularly are the checks carried out?

Answer

Residents are reminded on an annual basis that there is a legal requirement to inform the Council if circumstances change and the exemption is no longer valid. Depending on the type of exemption an Officer will visit the property to validate the entitlement to an exemption every 6 months or if not appropriate seek clarification by letter from the owner or agent.

Written Question 13 - To the Executive Member for Environment and Conservation from Cllr Simpson

What fuel do the new CCTV smart cars purchased to tackle moving traffic offences use?

Answer

The Smart Cars are run on unleaded petrol.

Written Question 14 - To the Executive Member for Finance from Cllr Beacham

Answer

How much money has been written off by Haringey Council in the area of Council Tax and Housing Benefits because of 'official error' each year for the previous 5 years.

The following provide details of official errors that appear for Housing and Council Tax benefit. Please note that these figures are not just written-off but most are deemed uncollectable. Also note that from 2005/06 we can collect 100% subsidy from the DWP and therefore is no cost to the Council.

2000/01 £425,179

2001/02 £484,364

2002/03 £697,247

2003/04 £818,125

2004/05 £530,126

Written Question 15 - To the Executive Member for Crime and Community Safety from Cllr Edge:

How many noise officers are currently employed by Haringey Council?

Answer

The Council employs a dedicated team of 6 Officers, plus a Team Leader to investigate noise. Of these posts one is currently vacant.

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

a, What is the size of the flat screen television in his office b, how much did it cost c, how does this purchase benefit the tax payer?

Answer

The 42" L.C.D. in my office facilitates the play back of data and audio presentations using laptops and DVDs. The use of current technology enables Members and Officers attending meetings to receive high quality presentations. An average of 40 meetings are held each month in my office and I consider the 'one-off' costs of £2,270 to be perfectly reasonable as this enables myself and others to be fully-informed on issues that we are considering on behalf of residents in the borough.