WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The following questions listed on pages 37 – 40 of the agenda have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answer detailed below. The Councillor asking the question may then ask one relevant supplementary question which shall be put and answered without discussion. A second supplementary question may be asked by any other Member of the Council which shall also be put and answered without discussion:

(a) Councillor Fryer

"What measures did the council take to ensure that school closures were kept to a minimum during the cold weather and to address the impact this has on children and young people's education and their families?"

Reply from Councillor Brown, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People.

"Our first priority during any period of severe weather conditions is the safety and well being of the children in the City. The CYPT updates and issues emergency closure advice, including guidance on how to deal with severe weather conditions, to all schools annually in the autumn term.

The CYPT worked closely with Environment to enable the schools to open as soon as possible during the spell of extreme weather conditions but ultimately the final decision rests with individual head teachers. The Schools Futures Director was identified as the contact point for schools and he prioritised schools to ensure the most effective use of limited resources in difficult circumstances. The Head of Highways Operations liaised with the CYPT so that roads and pavements serving schools were cleared as soon as possible and the CYPT through its contractors cleared school paths and car parks.

Secondary schools were identified as the top priority and supported to enable all AS and GCSE students to take their exams at their school and at the nationally allocated time. This was closely followed by Special Schools then Primary schools.

Head teachers stayed in contact with students and their families throughout the difficult weather period informing them of arrangements made for examinations and helping families overcome any logistical problems.

Schools in general kept parents informed of their arrangements through school websites, text messaging and local media. Many schools put work for pupils on their websites to ensure that the disruption to learning was minimised.

This support was highlighted in a letter to the Argus when Hove Park was commended for staying in direct contact with 6th form students and ensuring that students received the support they needed during the exam period."

(b) Councillor Kitcat

"Will Cllr G Theobald make clear to this meeting and colleagues in East Sussex County Council that this city has no wish to ship its waste to landraise sites in the East Sussex countryside?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"As a waste planning authority we are obliged to make provision in our plans for viable and deliverable facilities for dealing with all waste streams. To this end we will aim to make provision within the city for facilities to handle and treat waste generated in the city but it is unlikely that these would be sufficient to handle and treat all the waste the city generates. However, I would like to make it clear that our priorities are to promote recycling and other sustainable methods of waste management – landraise would be very much a last resort."

(c) Councillor Kitcat

"Does Councillor Theobald agree that recycling municipal waste is the cheapest way of handling waste for this council and that greater rates of recycling can play an important part in improving this council's financial situation in the face of the extremely low central government grant?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"Yes."

(d) Councillor Kitcat

"Can Councillor Smith explain why he responded to a public question on the Brighton 'O' at our last council meeting by saying that this Council was 'dealing directly' with Brighton Sailing Club yet the club report no such talks are happening?"

Reply from Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation & Tourism.

"Thank you Councillor Kitcat for your question on the Brighton 'O'. The Sailing Club have been advised in writing that the planning application for the Brighton 'O' has been deferred for further consideration. The concerns of the Sailing Club will be taken into account in the determination of the planning application insofar as they are relevant to planning matters. Additionally, the council will also take these concerns into account when considering its position as landowner in discussions with the promoters of the Brighton 'O'."

(e) Councillor Hamilton

"On 18th January 2010 the Leader of the Council's current Forward Plan listed a key decision relating to Hangleton Bottom as being Key Decision CAB 5498:

> "to seek agreement to the marketing approach and the future use of the site."

This decision was marked "deferred" and had been marked as such on successive Forward Plans since it first appeared on the Forward Plan in October 2008. In the interest of openness and transparency will the Leader of the Council explain why a report went to the Central Services CMM on January 18th seeking agreement to the marketing approach and future use of the site without having been listed in advance on her publicly available Forward Plan?"

Reply from Councillor Mears, Leader of the City Council.

"The decision in the Hangleton Bottom report taken to Central Services Cabinet Member Meeting (CS CMM) on the 18th January is not a key decision and not required to be on the forward plan. This is an exploratory report giving an early warning and seeking permission to test the property market to explore what interest is out in the open market for the redevelopment of this strategic council owned site. It does not have a significant impact on 2 or more wards or involve a significant expenditure or saving of £500k. The decision could have proceeded under officers' delegated powers.

Once we have the results of this marketing exercise we will review and analyse the options, consult with the necessary parties as set out under our property protocol and prepare a detailed report for Cabinet to consider the options on the strategic potential future uses on the site. This will be a key decision affecting more than 2 wards with financial implications over £500k.

In the interests of being open and transparent we took an early report to CS CMM giving notice of our intention to explore and test the market regarding on this site and prepare a further substantial report for Cabinet consideration. The key decision regarding the future use of the site is to be taken by Cabinet and as such the Forward Plan wording will be adhered to."

(f) Councillor McCaffery

"At a training event for school governors on Safeguarding Children in November, I asked who the Brighton and Hove Local Children's Safeguarding Board reports to. The officer did not know and has since informed me that despite asking she has not yet received an answer. We as Councillors are legally responsible for the children in our care, Would the Cabinet member for Children Families and Schools please inform this Council who the LCSB reports to?"

Reply from Councillor Brown, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People.

"**Local Safeguarding Children Board:**

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is the most important among a number of checks and balances across public services to assure the quality and effectiveness of local safeguarding and child protection arrangements. External inspection by Ofsted has consistently found that the LSCB in Brighton and Hove is effective and works to a high standard.

Although the local authority is responsible for ensuring an effective LSCB is in place the Board is a distinct and separate body with duties set out in statutory guidance.

In Brighton and Hove the LSCB has provided reports to the Children and Young People's Board, but is not accountable to it. Our LSCB now has an Independent Chair who has attended the Trust Board and will provide regular reports on the quality and effectiveness of local safeguarding and child protection services.

The Director of Children's Services is responsible for ensuring the Independent Chair fulfils the terms of their job description and contract.

The relationship between a Local Safeguarding Children Board and a Children's Trust Board is complex:

Chapter 3 of the 2006 Statutory Guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children states:
3.52 The LSCB should not be subordinate to, or subsumed within, the children's trust arrangements in a way that might compromise its separate identity and independent voice. The LSCB should expect to be consulted by the partnership on issues that affect how children are safeguarded and how their welfare is promoted. The LSCB is a formal consultee during the development of the Children and Young People's Plan.

Lord Laming's Report 'The Protection of Children in England (2009)' recommended the revision of this guidance and draft proposals are currently out for consultation for implementation in April 2010.

The future relationship between LSCBs and Children's Trust Boards has also been addressed in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. Statutory Guidance to inform the implementation of the Act is also out for consultation. In summary:

- The Children's Trust Board must link to the LSCB and ensure ongoing direct and regular communication with it. The LSCB is a distinct and separate body with a separate identity and independent voice that has a role to challenge the CTB. It is not subsumed by or subordinate to the CTB.

- The Children's Trust Board will receive an annual report from the LSCB on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements locally."

(g) Councillor Mitchell

"In his departmental budget report for 2010/11, the Cabinet Member for Environment is proposing a £200,000 cut to the council's Supported Transport budget with effect from April 2010. Given that this would have entailed the formal three month prior notification of contract termination, could the Cabinet Member inform the council as to whether this notification has been served and which bus service contracts and routes will be affected?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"The city council is mindful of the statutory obligation on the bus operator to give the Traffic Commissioner 56 days notice of any service cancellations.

Budget figures are constantly being updated as fresh information becomes available.

If indeed the administration proposes any changes to subsidised bus routes then the appropriate documentation will be issued in due course."

(h) Councillor Caulfield

"In the light of 1) her Scrutiny Committee's examination of the Administration's housing budget proposals last week and 2) comments in Gscene from the Leader of the Labour Group and her housing spokesperson that the LDV is not worth pursuing, could Cllr. Meadows, in her capacity as Chair of the Adult Social Care & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee, reassure council members that she, and the rest of the Labour Group, are fully committed to supporting tenants in ensuring that the LDV is successfully set up this spring?"

Reply from Councillor Meadows, Chair of the Adult Social Care & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

"Neither quotation contained within the Gscene article stated that the LDV is not worth pursuing. I can readily give assurances that the Labour Group remains committed to the principals of a Local Delivery Vehicle and recognise its potential, not only in terms of benefits to tenant's homes but other uses in the long term.

However, in common with other interested parties, including the other political parties on the council, we reserve the right to question and scrutinise the process as the LDV is set up, in terms of its cost and the achievement of its original objectives."

(i) Councillor Davey

"Brighton & Hove Buses are justifiably an award winning service provider and the partnership with the city council is often cited as an example of best practice yet, concerns remain over aspects of the bus service in the city. These concerns include: high prices as recently highlighted by the Office of Fair Trading, a limited service to the outer areas of the city, congestion in the city centre and poor air quality. Could the Cabinet Member for Environment please tell us what he is doing to address these issues?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"The Council has no direct control over fare levels as it is a commercial decision for the bus company. Officers and I meet regularly with the bus company to discuss matters of mutual concern."

(j) Councillor Simson

"As the Council's representative on the Sussex Police Authority, could Cllr. Duncan please tell me how much it has cost to police the last two 'Smash EDO' demonstrations (in May 2009 and January 2010)?"

Reply from Councillor Duncan, Council Representative on the Sussex Police Authority.

"Thanks for your question. Final figures for the policing costs incurred during the events you describe are yet to be published: I'm happy to report back, via the Community Safety Forum, when they are. That's likely to be in March this year, when the financial report for the force's budgetary year 2009/10 is completed.

In the meantime, I can report that Sussex Police has incurred costs of approximately £5.1 million in relation to policing politically motivated events in Brighton and Hove during the current financial year, including the Labour Party conference, several multi-denominational 'peace' walks, weekly peace vigils in the city, and the protests, to which your question directly refers, against the role of the Brighton-based EDO-ITT factory in manufacturing weapons components that have reportedly been used by the Israeli military during the unlawful bombing raids in Gaza that killed more than 1400 people in January 2009, many of them civilians.

The protest last May directly cost £370,080; no information is available yet for the cost of policing the January 2010 protest.

In any event, I expect – and have strongly argued at SPA meetings – that the Home Office will meet these costs from general exchequer funds so, in the final analysis, there will be no budgetary implications for Sussex Police. It has already been agreed that, should the Home Office decide not to meet the costs of policing any or all of these events, such costs will be met centrally – and not from the budget for policing Brighton and Hove."

(k) Councillor Bennett

"Residents are asking me…Dyke Road is a gateway into Brighton and Hove and sets visitors first impressions of the City. Cars are being parked on the grass verges on the western side causing damage, even though the road is wide enough for cars to be parked correctly; these appear to be overspill cars from nearby parking schemes. How will the council rectify the situation?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"Cars have been parking along these verges for several years now and the Council cannot prevent this where there are no yellow lines. Only the Police can take action for obstruction.

In order to prevent vehicles from blocking bus stops, thus causing danger to bus passengers, 24 hour bus stop clearways will shortly be installed.
The yellow lines could be extended along Dyke Road, which would protect the verges, but this would lead to more cars parking in the side roads."

(l) Councillor Bennett

"The school parking sign outside Lancing Pre Prep has the wrong times for no parking. The school operates at different hours to those displayed; could I please have a date for when the council will amend the sign to the correct hours?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

"The times displayed on School Keep Clear signs across the city are all the same because they are all subject to the same city-wide Traffic Regulation Order. It was considered important that the signs are consistent across the city so that Parking Enforcement can be carried out effectively.

Officers have already been in discussion over the matter with Lancing Pre Prep School, and are carrying out an informal consultation to gauge how many other schools would benefit if the No Stopping times were extended or changed. I will be discussing the results of the informal consultation with my colleague the Cabinet Member for Children's Services."

(m) Councillor Bennett

"Will the council commit to work with City Park to ensure maximum use of the car parks to help reduce the problems on local roads by overspill parking?"

Reply from Councillor G Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

“The council is already working closely with the occupiers of City Park (Legal & General and Lloyds/TSB) to reduce the number of employees travelling to work on their own by car.

Last year, for instance, Legal & General and Lloyds/TSB agreed to work together to promote sustainable travel choices to their employees and produced a joint Travel Plan, a first for Brighton & Hove.”