

**WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

The following questions listed on pages 49 – 55 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 Wrighton**

“With increasing moves towards an online planning applications system could the Planning Committee Chairman confirm that the current service, which makes publicly available a hard copy of each planning application in the Town Hall reception, will continue in parallel?”

**Reply from Councillor Hyde, Chairman of the Planning Committee.**

The council is aware that whilst an increasing number of applications are made online and all applications are electronically scanned and available to view on the website, there is still significant demand from customers to view applications in hard copy. In these circumstances, the current service, which makes available a paper copy of each planning application for public inspection at the City Direct office at Hove Town Hall, will continue for the foreseeable future.

**(b) Councillor McCaffery**

“This Authority has an excellent Children's Service and apparently better than many others. However in the wake of the tragic case of Baby P in Haringey, would the Leader of the Council please inform this Council that the safety afforded to our vulnerable children will not be compromised by pressure on the budgets for those services?”

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

“In securing its savings targets for 2009/10 the general approach has been to minimise any significant impact on front-line delivery of services to children and young people. There has also been a focus on the importance of targeting resources on vulnerable children and young people.

The overall approach to 2009/10 represents the first stage of a three year budget strategy. The CYPT is two years old and the budget strategy will align with the development of the Trust at the next stage and be reflected in the new Children and Young People's Plan.

The main elements of the strategy include:

- An overall reduction in management costs
- Review of the area model for delivery
- Review and rationalisation of accommodation
- Reduction in Independent Fostering Agency placements
- Ensuring value for money

In addition consideration has been given to the identification of expenditure which is not linked to meeting the needs of vulnerable children.

The CYPT has implemented a stock take of the effectiveness of its safeguarding practice. Outline findings and proposals for future action have been shared with the CYPT Board and regular updates are planned.

Although there is much to be proud of in relation to Children's Services in Brighton and Hove the CYPT is not complacent and following events in Haringey and elsewhere there is a recognition of the need to ensure effective provision for vulnerable children and families.

Increase in activity and referrals arising from the Baby P case are being monitored and a new recruitment and retention strategy for social workers is in hand."

**(c) Councillor McCaffery**

"The new constitution has established an Inclusion Partnership for the City, primarily composed of the statutory bodies. This I fully support. However in what Forum can representatives of minority groups place their concerns over employment or service delivery before the Council, and how are elected councillors informed as to whether our Council's equalities policies are being carried out efficiently and effectively?"

**Reply from Councillor Simson, Cabinet Member for Community Affairs, Inclusion & Internal Relations.**

The council has a number of ways members of the public and members can express their concerns over matters including employment or service delivery. This can be done via individual members, letters or questions to a committee or Cabinet meeting. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission specifically has within its remit the overview of the Council's Equalities and Inclusion activities.

Additionally, where there are areas of significant community interest the council has forums to ensure consultation across major policy and service considerations – for example Community Safety, Housing Strategy and tenant engagement. Specific arrangements also exist for equalities within the Racial Harassment Forum and the disabilities and gender equalities scheme groups.

**(d) Councillor Hamilton**

"In the constitution, part 3, I refer to Rule 7: Order of Business at Meetings of the Council. This states under item (n): To receive and consider the reports and recommendations of the Cabinet and/or Cabinet Members. Why is this not happening?"

**Reply from Councillor Norman, Chairman of the Governance Committee.**

Councillor Hamilton is right in saying that Council Procedure Rule 7.1.(n) refers to receiving and considering reports and recommendations of the Cabinet and/or Cabinet members. However, this does not require ALL reports or recommendations going to the Cabinet and Cabinet Member Meetings to be referred to Council. This rule anticipates cases where Cabinet reports and recommendations need to come to Council. By way of example, such cases include:

- Decisions that are reserved to Full Council because they involve approving the budget or the policy framework, or the proposed decision is otherwise outside the budget and policy framework. An example of this is the item on today's agenda regarding equal pay.
- Cases where a Notice of Motion is referred to the Cabinet or CMM and the decision needs to be reported to Council for information. An example of this is item 54(a) on today's agenda which reports to Council for information the decision of the Environment CMM on Green Spaces and Inequality.

The practice of the Council so far has therefore been entirely consistent with the requirements of the Constitution.

**(e) Councillor Kitcat**

“Could Cllr Theobald provide details on any consultation held with emergency services over the type and location of communal bins being introduced to Regency Ward? In particular were individual bin locations discussed, particularly with regard to ensuring safe access and preventing fire hazards?”

**Reply from Councillor Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.**

The City Council would not usually consult the emergency services for placing objects, or indeed determining the locations for cars to park, on the public highway, unless they form part of a safety scheme or traffic calming proposal.

The specific locations of the communal bins to which you refer have been determined with Highways and Traffic engineers who fully consider road safety issues as well as access for emergency services and delivery vehicles, on this basis we have not asked the ambulance service, the fire or police authorities also to view the location of each bin.

I am pleased to mention our strong and positive links with the East Sussex Fire Authority. Cllr Ted Kemble as the Vice Chairman of the Authority discussed the communal bin scheme with the Chief Fire Officer sometime ago and they are satisfied that they do not pose an additional fire risk.

**(f) Councillor Harmer-Strange**

“Can the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Employment & Major Projects explain what change was there in the footfall figures in city centre over the Christmas period, and what does he believe is responsible for the change?”

**Reply from Councillor Kemble, Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Employment and Major Projects.**

During the Christmas period footfall measures in the City as produced by Experian and published by the Business Forum showed a significant increase.

In the week of Christmas, city centre footfall was up almost 10% on last year. And across the four week period we had almost 70,000 more visitors in the city centre compared to the same time last year.

Feedback from traders and business associations generally confirmed positive volumes of visitors and shoppers.

There will be a number of reasons why this footfall has increased. I am convinced that the suspension of major road works made a very positive contribution to this increase.

In the same period, we launched a ‘Buy-Local’ campaign promoting the benefits of spending locally.

Much credit should also go to the retailers themselves. The quality of window displays, support for the Business Improvement District and the Christmas Lights and festive events including santa’s grotto were all of a very high quality. These joint efforts among the business community and the Council are, I believe, a major reason why footfall in 2008 grew.

**(g) Councillor Barnett**

“Can the Cabinet Member for Housing tell me what services or advice is available from the council to residents who are struggling with mortgage repayments?”

**Reply from Councillor Caulfield, Cabinet Member for Housing.**

A number of measures are proposed locally to address the housing situation brought on by the economic downturn:

- 1. Mortgage Rescue**
  - 2. Awareness Raising**
  - 3. Repossession prevention through Housing Options work**
- 1. Mortgage Rescue scheme (MRS).** This will involve joint working between the Council, Moat Housing Association and Brighton Housing Trust debt advice services to provide a buy and rent back scheme and a shared equity scheme involving significant amounts of capital.

## **Objectives**

- To prevent homelessness by avoiding mortgage repossessions wherever possible
- To help people remain in home ownership where it is sustainable and affordable for them to do so
- To make mortgage repossession an option of last resort
- To promote community sustainability during a period of economic difficulty

## **We are not seeking to:**

- Support bad lending and borrowing practices
- Reduce people's financial outgoings on accommodation, allowing them to spend elsewhere
- Expose applicants or the local authority to risk
- Assist households who can make their mortgage repayments
- Rescue second homes
- Stop repossessions completely at any cost

## **Estimated Benefits over two years**

- Preventing homelessness, and its attendant disruption and dislocation, for around 30 priority need households
- A saving to the council on the costs of responding to homelessness and the provision of temporary accommodation
- A saving on the wider social costs of repossession: Loss of employment, physical and mental health deterioration, stigma of court (and costs), dependency (for formerly working households), loss of local family/kin networks (exclusion), impacts on education (school attendance and achievement).

- 2. Raising Awareness of homeowners.** It is vitally important to raise homeowners' awareness of all of the options open to them if they think they are at risk of repossession. 50% of those facing repossession do not attend court. Therefore increasing the number of households that attend repossession hearings could make a significant impact on the number of repossessions.

It is proposed to do this via a communications campaign devised and led by the Corporate Communications Team. It is envisaged that this could include:

- Holding local promotional events
- An advertising campaign including information leaflets and posters in key locations
- An information pack for homeowners in mortgage difficulties, containing advice, a copy of FAQs and useful telephone numbers

- 3. Repossession prevention through Housing Options Work.** A MRS will not provide a solution for every homeowner at risk of mortgage repossession. In all cases, Housing Options will need to consider carefully the full range of options available to homeowners faced with repossession; MR is just one option of many. It is therefore important that the council continue to focus on its successful homeless prevention approach seeking all options to prevent repossession rather than solely relying on MRS. Some of the other options to explore with homeowners in mortgage difficulty are listed below:

**Local Authority Options**

- Use of Homeless Prevention fund
- Part VI offer of accommodation
- Part VII homeless application

**Homeowner Own Options**

- Rent a Room
- Downsize

**Government Options**

- Income Support for Mortgage Interest

**Lender Options**

- Reduce monthly payments for a period
- Capitalise payments
- Cut the charges made
- Extend the length of loan
- Spread the payment of the total amount owed
- Offer a better loan rate
- Allow time to sell home (if that is preferred by homeowner)

**Other options**

- Private Sale and Rent Back
- RSL rescue from capital receipts

**(h) Councillor Pidgeon**

“Will the Cabinet Member for Housing give an update on how the council’s new adapted property list has helped the council improve services for people with physical disabilities?”

**Reply from Councillor Caulfield, Cabinet Member for Housing.**

As a direct result of consultation with the Allocations Review Group, an Accessible Housing Officer (AHO) was recruited in January of last year. Her remit is to improve the way in which Accessible and Adapted properties are advertised and let in the city. This is being achieved in three ways; by improving our understanding of the access needs of everybody on the Joint Housing Register; by undertaking an audit of all Council-owned housing stock in

terms of their accessibility and feasibility for adaptation; and by providing a more equal service for Disabled applicants within Homemove through more informative advertising and prioritised allocation for mobility properties.

**Assessment:**

Since January, all new applicants as well as existing applicants in Bands A and B have been assessed for their mobility level and given one of four categories relating to their access requirements.

**Advertising and Allocation:**

The Accessible Housing Officer has spent a great deal of time working with Housing and Lettings Officers within the Council and the partner Housing Associations to ensure that relevant information and appropriate mobility categories are identified in the advert.

**Training:**

Accessible Housing training was undertaken for representatives of our Homemove partners and the feedback was excellent. We have now rolled out this training to all Housing Management staff within the Council

**Adaptations:**

With the success of the work that we're doing in the identification and allocation of properties that are either pre-adapted or would lend themselves to further adaptation, BHCC can look to utilising this knowledge to make better use of its limited adaptations budget.

**(i) Councillor Oxley**

"Would the Leader of the Council make a statement on partnership working in the city?"

**Reply from Councillor Mears, Leader of the Council.**

Effective and focussed joint working with our key strategic partners in the City such as the Police, the PCT and the voluntary sector is vital if we are to deliver on our commitments to residents that are laid out in the Corporate Plan. This will become increasingly important in the coming years as we move towards Comprehensive Area Assessment, greater personalisation of public services and greater financial constraints on councils and other public bodies.

**(j) Councillor Alford**

"Can the Cabinet Member for Finance explain how business rates are set, and where the money collected from local businesses goes?"

**Reply from Councillor Young, Cabinet Member for Finance.**

Business rates are a national tax set by Government. Businesses pay an amount equal to the rateable value of the property they occupy multiplied by the national rate poundage. The rate poundage is set every year by the government, usually in late November / early December. The law prevents the government from increasing it by more than the increase in the rate of inflation in the 12 months to September that year. The rate of inflation used is the Retail Price Index (RPI) and the government has applied the full increase in the September RPI of 5% to the rate poundage for 2009/10. For most businesses the rate poundage will be 48.5p next year and they will pay 5% more in business rates from 1 April 2009.

Local councils collect business rates and pay them to the Government. Councils then receive payments from the Government as part of their annual formula grant settlement. There is no relationship between the amount any council pays into the pool and the amount it receives from the pool.

**(k) Councillor Kitcat**

"Can Cllr Theobald provide any details on any plans for communal collection of recycling in the city centre? If so when does he expect these plans to be implemented?"

**Reply from Councillor Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.**

There are no plans to implement communal recycling in the city centre. We are looking at a range of options to improve recycling rates and these will be set out in the waste strategy. The first draft of this will be brought to Cabinet in April this year with the intention that residents are consulted on its proposals.

**(l) Councillor Carden**

"May the Chair of Planning, Cllr Linda Hyde please confirm whether the council will be hiring external consultants to handle the forthcoming appeal on the Marina Development?"

**Reply from Councillor Hyde, Chairman of the Planning Committee.**

No such appeal has been lodged with the council and therefore no consultants have been hired.

**(m) Councillor Lepper**

"Could the Cabinet Member for Major Projects estimate the loss of potential investment for the council from underdeveloped spaces and empty buildings across Brighton and Hove?"

**Reply from Councillor Kemble, Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Employment & Major Projects.**

It is unclear from the framing of the question as to what precisely is meant by underdeveloped spaces and empty buildings across Brighton & Hove. Is this enquiry restricted to the council's major and capital projects sites and its own commercial property portfolio, or is it completely open-ended?

Falling land values and the downturn of the housing market has significantly changed the climate for property development not just in Brighton & Hove but across the UK making it difficult to establish any meaningful valuations. Property and land values are also dependent on planning and land use. All of this has created an uncertain market coupled with an unwillingness of funders and financial institutions to commit investment at this time.

On the positive side, there remain investors wishing to expand their business interests in the city – for example, Standard Life Investments and American Express. At the same time, the council are moving forward with other major regeneration schemes such as the Community Stadium at Falmer and the Open Market.

**(n) Councillor Turton**

“Could the leader of the council please confirm the outcomes from her three day trip to Switzerland, in terms of how far forward they are on the development of Black Rock?”

**Reply from Councillor Mears, Leader of the Council.**

The main purpose of the two day visit to Geneva was for lead members and senior officers of the council to have joint discussions with the partners within Brighton Arena Limited, key personnel behind the investment fund for the arena, the lead investor in the fund and the preferred franchise operator of the ice hockey team. Geneva was chosen as the location for the meeting because the lead investor had already committed to be in Geneva at this time and the investment fund is based there. It was therefore considered most expedient and convenient for all those attending to have the meeting in Geneva. The outcomes being sought in the main were to meet the lead investor to:

- discuss their assurances on the overall funding package and obtain a clearer idea on likely timescales
- agree next steps required to move towards achievement of financial close.

In the current financial climate it is extremely important to bring investment into the city. I want my administration to be proactive in making the best of the opportunities that arise. These meetings did assist us in achieving a number of very positive outcomes and all the parties are now working towards a financial close in the near future.

I would also like to say that this project will deliver some excellent and much needed benefits for the city. We want to do all we can to ensure that the work that the Brighton International Arena team are doing at this very difficult time to secure funding is seen to be fully supported by us as a council.

**(o) Councillor Hawkes**

“Could the Cabinet Member for Children's Services clarify whether there are any plans to close or re-home the Bright Start Nursery used by Council Staff?”

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

As part of its budget strategy for 2009/10 the CYPT has looked at a range of possibilities for securing savings.

The need to prioritise vulnerable children, particularly in light of events in Haringey, has led to the consideration of a range of options. One of the options that has been considered is the reduction of the subsidy to Bright Start Nursery. However there are no firm proposals at this stage.

**(p) Councillor Kitcat**

"Can Cllr Theobald provide the costs incurred by the council in printing and sending notifications to residents for:

- The changes in bin collection schedules,  
The introduction of communal bins in some wards and  
discontinuation of bag collections,  
And the changes in recycling collection schedules?"

**Reply from Councillor Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.**

The cost for the communication including designing, printing and posting the materials is budgeted at £98,000. This works out at approximately £0.47 per communication. Given that all the changes result in annual savings just short of £1m I think this is money well spent.

**(q) Councillor Kitcat**

“Can Cllr Theobald provide an estimate on the number of people who have taken up the assisted waste collection service since the introduction of communal bins and what number of users has been budgeted for at what cost?”

**Reply from Cllr Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.**

Communal bins are generally easy to use as they avoid the need to carry a weekly supply of refuse in big black bags, and in many cases taking these down

into basement bin stores. Instead small bags of rubbish can be deposited in the bins on a daily basis if need be. However some people are unable to use communal bins and Cityclean will provide assisted collections for these residents. 17 people currently have an assisted collection for the existing communal bin collections that cover 6,600 households. To date we have received 35 requests for the new communal bin roll out covering 24,000 households, which are currently being considered against criteria set with the FDA (Federation of Disabled People) to ensure a fair and consistent approach to agreeing assisted collections.

Given our past experience it is highly likely that these numbers will reduce as residents understand the system and those who have negative views of the bins get use to and accept the scheme. Assisted collections are picked up by the driver of the communal bin truck and thus are provided within the budget for the communal bin service.

**(r) Councillor Marsh**

“Could the Cabinet member for Housing clarify what improvements are being made to tenants' homes under the Decent Homes Standard?”

**Reply from Cllr Caulfield, Cabinet Member for Housing**

Delivering decent homes is the key driver of our programme of investment in Council Housing. We are giving priority to the key components of the decent homes standard, which includes ensuring windows, doors, heating and electrical systems meet the standard.

In addition, we are investing significantly in high quality replacement kitchens and bathrooms, with a budget of around £1.3 million this financial year and over £2 million during 2009-10. These can substantially improve the quality of accommodation and living conditions for residents. We are also including low cost features which help protect the environment and save residents money through water and energy reductions.

In addition to Kitchen and Bathrooms, our decent homes programme also involves the following:

- A two-year external decorations and repairs programme with an estimated value of £5 million. This will improve decency by tackling issues such repairs to brickwork, pointing or render.
- A substantial programme of boiler and central heating repairs is underway, with spending in the region of £2.5 million annually delivering reductions in tenants' fuel needs.
- Entrance doors to properties are subject to a large scale replacement programme worth around £3.5 million between 2008 and 2010.

When we replace a kitchen or bathroom we are also ensuring that we use this opportunity to upgrade the electrics or fit a new boiler at the same time if required. This represents a smarter approach both in cost and minimising disruption for residents.

**(s) Councillor Morgan**

“Can the Cabinet member for Environment state how many complaints have been received by Cityclean regarding missed or delayed refuse collections in the months of October 2008, November 2008, December 2008 and January 2009, which areas these complaints are predominantly from and how they compare with the same period for the two previous years?”

**Reply from Cllr Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.**

I am sure that Councillor Warren Morgan would agree with me that we have to be very careful in using comparisons of figures that are not on a true like for like basis. Even the Government has now established its own independent statistical oversight agency, the UK Statistics Authority.

From the start of October 2008 until 19<sup>th</sup> January 2009 there were 3236 reports of missed bin collections. This covers a period of change which affected approximately 100,000 households. The previous two years saw no such change, and so for the same period i.e. October 2006 to January 2007 and October 2007 to January 2008 the figure for reported missed bins was 1543, this averages at 0.04% of the total collection. Perhaps you would now like to join me in congratulating City Clean for their excellent work in bringing in such a complex change for so many households.

**(t) Councillor Kennedy**

“Since refuse rounds were re-scheduled last October, residents in Osborne Road have only had their rubbish collected on the correct day on two occasions. Can Cllr Geoffrey Theobald tell me if, as Cabinet Member for the Environment and as a council tax-payer, he thinks this level of service is acceptable?”

**Reply from Cllr Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.**

You are right Osborne Road has suffered in particular from the refuse round changes and of course the Christmas period did not help matters in this case. Although we expected it to take some months to settle in the new rounds I do not think it is acceptable that the residents of Osborne Road had to wait so long for the normal, reliable service to Return.

Further changes have been made to this refuse round with the intention of getting a regular service returned to those residents.

I can assure residents that I am working with City Clean to get this right.

**(u) Councillor Davis**

“How many days in all has the Jubilee Library IT system not been working properly since it's installation?”

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

"The public access computer facilities across all our public libraries suffered a major server failure on 23rd December and were returned to full working order on 20th January - a total of 28 calendar days (but only a maximum of 16 library open days) to get all systems fully up and running. However, during that time different libraries were able to do a phased return:

- All community libraries excluding Hangleton Library returned to allowing public use on 6th January, albeit without some desktop icons, and had normal use from 14th January.

- Jubilee Library, Hove Library and Hangleton Library returned to allowing public use on 15th January, but had to process new members with temporary cards until the final fix on 20th January.

All systems are now running normally on the temporary server, and a new server is on order."

**(v) Councillor Allen**

“It is clear that many drivers are confused as to who has right of way at the Highcroft Villas/Dyke Road Drive/Stanford Road/Port Hall Avenue crossroads. Those coming from Port Hall Avenue frequently ignore - or simply do not notice - the fading STOP sign on the road and fail to give way to those turning right from Dyke Road Drive into Highcroft Villas (who in fact have right of way). Would the Cabinet Member for Environment agree to take action as soon as possible?”

**Reply from Cllr Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.**

In response to your question, I am pleased to report that this junction has a very good safety record so I won't be instructing officers to consider alterations to the junction layout. However, I have asked for the faded 'Give Way' junction markings on Porthall Avenue and Stanford Road to be renewed, and this will make the situation clearer.

**(w) Councillor Allen**

“The work carried out in Preston Park under the previous Labour administration's planned programme of refurbishment of the city's parks brought credit to the council as a whole. It is sad to see the current signs of neglect, in particular the deteriorating condition of some of the benches. Two in

the Rose Garden have missing slats, as do three in the main body of the park. What plans does the Cabinet Member for Environment have to remedy this neglect?"

**Reply from Cllr Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.**

I have instructed officers to have the benches repaired as soon as possible. Preston Park is one of our flagship parks that continues to be awarded Green Flag status for many years running. Significant improvements have been made to the park including the complete refurbishment of the multi-use games area. We are also planning to renew signage in Preston Park and other parks across the city. This administration has also set up a new parks ranger service to reduce anti-social behaviour in parks, organise events, forge links with local communities and get more people enjoying our parks. However, I welcome your report and I have instructed officers to repair those benches.

**(x) Councillor Carden**

"Could the Cabinet Member for Children and Young people's services please confirm whether an extra £200,000 has been allocated to youth services for Brighton and Hove?"

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

"The CYPT is planning to increase its core funding for youth support services in the City by £200,000 in 2009/10 but this is dependent on the overall budget setting process.

However the current funding for the transitional youth work of £250, 000 will no longer be available in the Area Based Grant in 2009/10. This money has been funding both the voluntary and community sector as well as CYPT directly managed work.

When the £200,000 is secured it is planned to commission services in line with the Integrated Youth Support Services Commissioning Strategy which has been approved by the CYPT Board. This process will be managed through the Commissioning sub-group and the Youth and Connexions Board. Both committees have elected voluntary and community sector representatives as well as representation from the statutory sector.

The intention will be to commission some youth services from the VCS, most likely at a slightly reduced level from this new funding stream because of the overall reduction in funding. But all the work funded LA or VCS work, will have contracts or Service Level Agreements and agreed outcomes that deliver the CYPT priorities as identified in the commissioning strategy."

**(y) Councillor Duncan**

“Can Councillor Ayas Fallon-Khan confirm how many press briefings have been held by the Council taken place in the current municipal year?”

**Reply from Cllr Fallon-Khan, Cabinet Member for Central Services.**

Almost all interface between the council and the media could be described as a form of briefing as the purpose is, invariably, to impart information about council business to one or more journalists, or to *brief* them about a given topic. This can be for the purpose of providing quotes either in print or for broadcast – or the briefing could be for information to inform a news item or feature.

Work conducted by the press office include proactive press releases and reactive verbal or written responses to media enquiries; the organisation of face-to-face interviews; telephone conversations; letters (either for publication or not for publication) and press conferences.

However, the communications team has in the last six months improved its systems to capture as much of this activity as is possible and appropriate. The following figures can be given for that period as a measure of the volume of dialogue between the media and the council.

On the basis of previous activity it is estimated that there are slightly over 100 instances of contact with the media a month. It can therefore be assumed that in the 10 months of the municipal year the council has had dialogue with the media upwards of 1,000 times. However for the reasons stated above, this can only be an estimation.”

**(z) Councillor Duncan**

“In light of a report in The Times that “Tens of thousands of public sector jobs will be lost across Britain this year as councils struggle to cope with the impact of the recession... and unions fear that few of the 442 local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales will escape the cutbacks” and the fact that neighbourhood management staff serving the deprived Turner and Eastern Road areas have been served redundancy notices, can Councillor Mary Mears confirm how many jobs look set to go at Brighton and Hove Council in the coming year?”

**Reply from Councillor Mears, Leader of the Council.**

Currently no staff have been made redundant and we hope that there will be no need for any redundancies. There are 26 employees who have been identified as at risk of redundancy out of a workforce of over 7,000. The Council is working extremely hard to ensure there are no redundancies. These officers are also being supported by Human Resources to identify alternative roles for redeployment should this be necessary. The Council believes, based on its current information, that it will successfully retain a significant number of these staff in its employment.

**(aa) Councillor West**

"Is Cllr Theobald aware of recent reports of an unholy stench escaping from the Hollingdean Dump and invading the local area.

Local residents, parents, school staff and children have been repeatedly subjected to the stench of rotting waste. On a recent occasion the smell in the playground at Downs Infants School was so awful it was described to be "as bad as at the back of a refuse lorry". So terrible in fact people have taken to covering their faces.

Parents, teachers and residents are understandably very concerned not only about the unpleasantness of the smell but the possible health hazard it presents to them and their children."

**Reply from Cllr Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.**

I am aware that on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January complaints were logged about odour from the Hollingdean Waste Transfer Station by one resident, the head teacher at the school and two parents walking to school. Environmental Health Officers investigated immediately and did not identify a statutory odour nuisance. The reported smell experienced that day resulted from a build up of waste over Christmas and New Year being moved.

A waste management licence, which is regulated by the Environment Agency, ensures that waste cannot be stored on site for more than 72 hours. To comply with this licence condition, large amounts of waste were being moved on the day in question. This resulted in increased lorry journeys and the doors to the facility opening more frequently.

Following the investigation, Environmental Health have written to Veolia and handling practices have been reviewed and improved to address exceptional circumstances should they recur. Environmental Health, Planning, Cityclean and Veolia will continue to work together closely to monitor the situation. If residents experience problems, they should contact council officers first in preference to the media so that officers can respond promptly.