

Urban Question Time



**William Bellamy Junior School
January 27th 2009**

Introduction

'Urban Question Time' was held in Barking and Dagenham on Tuesday 27th January 2009 at William Bellamy Junior School for primary and junior schools in East Dagenham. Urban Question Time is an opportunity for young people to ask questions about issues which impact on their lives.

A panel consisting of

- Superintendent of the Metropolitan Police, Adam Barton;
- Head of Adult Care Services, Bruce Morris;
- Head of Children's Policy and Trust Commissioning, Meena Kishinani;
- Assistant Director of Commissioning, NHS Barking and Dagenham, Graham Blowes;

were invited to answer questions devised by children and young people who attended, representing John Perry Primary School, Richard Alibon Primary School and William Bellamy Junior School.

QUESTION FOR:	QUESTION:	ASKED BY:	ANSWER:
Supt Barton	<p>On what occasions do the police carry their guns?</p> <p>Would a police officer go to prison if they shot a burglar if he was running away?</p>	Katie- William Bellamy Juniors	<p>No police officers ordinarily carry guns, only specialist police officers. However it must be remembered that guns are very rarely used by these specialist police officers.</p> <p>If there is an incident with a serious threat to life, specialist police officers will respond to an alarm raised over the radio and will attend the scene immediately.</p> <p>There are two types of specialist police officers who do carry guns:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) armed response vehicles 2) specialist firearm officers <p>Both of these types of police officer have a much higher level of training.</p> <p>The law says that the police can only use reasonable force that is necessary. If a police officer shot an armed robber and they were found to be using more force than necessary, then the police officer could be prosecuted just like everyone else.</p>
Bruce Morris	How does the council know what local people want?	Lisianne-William Bellamy Juniors	<p>This is a very important topic for us because we all represent services that people use in Barking and Dagenham. Here are just three examples of how the council finds out what local people want:</p>

			<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Every four years there is a local election and people can vote for their local councillor. There are 17 wards and 51 councillors. By voting, ordinary people can have a chance to say who they want in their local council. If a councillor is elected, then it is important that they are open and accessible to the people in their wards. Each councillor has a surgery where people can talk to them about their problems and concerns.2) Neighbourhood Management also supports and talks to local people. Each of the wards in the borough will have its own Neighbourhood Manager or Coordinator and they will regularly meet local people and talk to them about their issues. For example in Heath ward recently, the Neighbourhood Manager held a partnership meeting with local people who came to voice their opinions on what is important to them. I.e. graffiti, leisure centres, garages, and parking.3) The council also use statistics and information which they analyse to see what is needed in the borough.
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			<p>For example regarding young people, the council will know how many pupils there are in a school and what age they are, in order to know how many teachers are needed in that school or how many secondary school places there should be.</p>
Bruce Morris	How many of our parks would you consider are safe and clean?	Nila- John Perry Primary	<p>There are 28 parks and open spaces in the borough. The government lays down standards for parks which have to be followed by local authorities. Therefore, there are teams of staff who work for Barking and Dagenham and make sure that our parks are clean and safe. 9 of our parks and spaces have a dedicated person in charge of looking after just that park. The remaining parks and open spaces are covered by a team of people who visit them and make sure they are inspected and safe and clean.</p> <p>We will soon be recruiting 3 new staff to improve the service we provide in parks and open spaces.</p>
Meena Kishinani	Can you give swimming pools better equipment?	Kany & Dylan-William Bellamy Juniors	<p>(The majority of pupils at Urban Question Time had a free swimming card and knew about the free swimming in Barking and Dagenham.)</p> <p>Barking and Dagenham has just received money from the government to improve the swimming pools.</p> <p>Dagenham swimming pool is eventually</p>

	<p>Will the free cards work in the new pool?</p> <p>How long will it take for the swimming pool to open?</p> <p>In the new swimming pool, will there be pools for 2 and 3 year olds?</p>	<p>going to be knocked down and will be replaced with a brand new leisure centre, named Becontree Leisure Centre. This will have a brand new pool, equipment and facilities.</p> <p>In the meantime, all the swimming pools in the borough will be refurbished by the money from the government over the next 2 years.</p> <p>Yes, the borough will not be stopping the free access to the swimming pools.</p> <p>Bruce Morris: The swimming pool should be open before the 2012 Olympics, and hopefully in 2 years, but this is dependent on lots of things.</p> <p>Bruce Morris: In the current pool there is a baby pool and we assume that the new pool will have these facilities. There are already pictures of what the swimming pool should look like. At the Town Show there are normally pictures of future projects so I should think that this year there will be more pictures and demonstrations about what it might look like, so remember to have a look there. Council officers have also spoken to local residents about what they might see in the new leisure centre.</p>
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Meena Kishinani	When you receive funding; how do you know you're spending the money on the right things?	Mickaella- John Perry Primary	<p>In regards to children and young people, Chris O'Connor's team in Engagement ask children and young people what they want and listen to their views. These views and opinions are then gathered and fed into the decision making process.</p> <p>For example, we are going to have a youth club on each of the secondary school sites because this is what young people wanted. Barking Abbey currently have a youth club and they have invited pupils from the nearby Manor Junior School to come and get a youth card when they turn 11. We are also aware that 8-11 year olds are not happy with the youth provision that is available to them so we will also make sure that we cater for this age group.</p>
Supt Barton	How do you make sure that we're safe in our neighbourhoods?	George-William Bellamy Juniors	<p>Teams of officers in uniform, called response teams, drive marked police vehicles who respond to emergency calls on a 24 hour basis. Then there is the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and this department are responsible for investigating crimes when they actually happen. For example, they will visit the scene of the crime and fingerprint etc. We also have Safer Neighbourhood Teams – one team in each ward. A sergeant is then in charge of each team on a daily</p>

			<p>basis from 8am until 10pm. On a monthly basis they hold a panel meeting and listen to concerns of local people and try to sort out these problems.</p> <p>Support resources also exist to help the police in Barking and Dagenham such as sniffer dogs or the police helicopters which are used in the whole of London and can read a registration number from 2000ft in the air.</p>
Graham Blowes	How do you monitor ambulance response times?	Great- Richard Alibon Primary	<p>The government have set a target for response times. 75% of all calls should be answered within 8 minutes and 95% within 19 minutes. This used to be measured from the time the decision was made by the operator on a 999 call to ring an ambulance. However now it is timed from the point the call was initially made, to the time the ambulance arrives.</p> <p>Ambulances do have problems in London with roads and traffic. However when ambulances arrive at Accident and Emergency, people are dropped off in the hospital as soon as possible so the paramedics can get to the next call.</p> <p>We are also aware that older people need more emergency care in the Winter, so therefore we are doing more to make sure that elderly people are wrapped up and warm, so that they do not end up in hospital.</p>

Graham Blowes	How do mobile phones affect the medical equipment in hospitals?	Riley- William Bellamy Juniors	There has been a ban on mobile phones in hospitals until recently because we were unsure of what effect it was having on patients and equipment. However now the government has said that patients and visitors can bring mobiles into hospitals. We now have worries however because of confidentiality – we do not want people taking pictures of patients on the cameras on their mobile phones.
Supt Barton	What do the police have in place to protect witnesses, once someone who has been convicted finally gets released from jail?	Isaac- William Bellamy Juniors	It is rare that witnesses have problems when someone is released from prison. However, there are a number of systems that are in place. We work closely with the local authority and the probation service and in serious cases we can re-house people or place CCTV or panic alarms in their homes.
Bruce Morris	Why aren't there many facilities for disabled people in wheelchairs?	Shaun- William Bellamy Juniors	The general approach by the local authority is to make all facilities accessible for everybody, because disabled people have asked for inclusivity and to use the same buses, tubes, trains, swimming pools etc. All services are to be made accessible for everyone regardless of disability. Making all facilities accessible is a big programme which has not yet finished, however in the last few years some old

			<p>fashioned buildings have been made more accessible for wheelchairs i.e. lifts and buttons in shops for assistance which will try to make all services accessible. There are also some clubs and activities that are by and large run by voluntary groups that are specifically for people with disabilities. AbPhab for example brings together able bodied people and people with disabilities to take part in joint activities.</p>
Supt Barton	<p>Has the rate of knife crime in Barking and Dagenham increased or decreased over the last few months?</p> <p>Who should we talk about if we are worried about knife crime in our communities and home?</p>	Shannon-Richard Alibon Primary	<p>Knife crime has decreased by 2% in the last 9 months in Barking and Dagenham. In London overall it has decreased by 10%. Operation Blunt is being carried out London wide to try and combat knife crime. It has been a tremendous success but people are still carrying knives. Carrying knives is a silly thing to do as you risk harm to others and yourself. People are prosecuted when they get caught with a knife. As part of Operation Blunt, we have caught people at Barking and Heathway stations who have been asked to walk through knife arches. However recently no one has been carrying a knife which is positive.</p> <p>You should tell police officers, parents, teachers and people who will make sure you are safe.</p>

	<p>Is it ever legal to carry a knife?</p> <p>How long would you stay in prison if you carried a knife?</p>		<p>Those who need to use knives for their work are allowed to carry one, but they have to justify this in a court of law. However for the majority of people it is completely illegal.</p> <p>The sentence would depend on the circumstances, but it can be for life if you kill or seriously hurt someone. Courts have a guideline for each offence and each offence has different maximum sentences. For example, you can go to prison for up to 5 years if you are caught shoplifting.</p>
Supt Barton	Why is it easy for local teenagers to get hold of guns?	Jack- William Bellamy Juniors	Although young people think that teenagers carrying guns is a real problem in the borough, I only know of one incident in the last year where a teenager has carried a gun. Our Intelligence Unit also rarely reports that a teenager is carrying a gun. Nine out of ten teenagers who do get caught with a gun will go to prison.
Meena Kishinani	What happens if you overspend your budget?	Jake- William Bellamy Juniors	We are not allowed to overspend our budget without permission! However, we have overspent for some years in children's services and have had to borrow money from other departments such as Adult Services because services and activities for young people and schools are such a key priority for the council. It is also important that we work with all our

			partners such as the police and the NHS to work out how to spend the money and so that it seems that there is only one integrated service that you are using.
Graham Blowes	How can you help to make local GPs better?	Lauren- William Bellamy Juniors	<p>Different people have different views on what makes a local GP poor, for example some could see a GP having little eye contact with their patients as a problem, or the fact that you cannot see a GP when you want to. However, we do try to address these views. For example, Barking and Dagenham was actually one of the first PCT's in London to do evening surgeries.</p> <p>We also try to get GPs to work in teams, because although some GPs work well single-handedly, GPs usually work better when they are together and learn from each other, like in a school environment. Also, there is now a new set of standards and GPs get rewarded with money if they work in a certain way. Performance tables in the local area show us where some GPs are not working as well as they should - we then take supportive action to make these GPs better at their job.</p>
Meena Kishinani	Why don't young people under 13 have anywhere to go?	Alfie- William Bellamy Juniors	We do realise that there is a gap for children aged 8-11, and this is not helped by the fact that the government funding we have is for young people aged 13-19.

			<p>However, we have tried to address this by lowering the age boundary for the funding to 11.</p> <p>We are also working hard in our 'extended schools' programme – by 2010 all of our schools should have their buildings and facilities open for pupils until 6pm. After school clubs and youth provision is expanding. For example, youth workers are entering Ripple Junior School in order to help run a youth provision there.</p>
Graham Blowes	Why do people still smoke even though the packet says smoking kills? What are you doing to help people to stop smoking?	Tyraine-William Bellamy Juniors	<p>People smoke because they are addicted, and they can get treatment. If you take one lesson away from today, please do not start to smoke as it is awful for your body. Smoking would be banned today if it was newly introduced.</p> <p>There are discouragements, on the packets, on advertising or more recently the move to place cigarettes under the counter in shops. The biggest discouragement was banning smoking in public places, although this hasn't been as successful as we would have hoped.</p> <p>If patients want to give up smoking they can come to GPs, go to clinics to discuss reasons why they should stop, wear patches, and talk about what it is they want to do to stop. Smokers could attend the Health Shop near Barking station.</p> <p>There is a high level of smoking in Barking</p>

	<p>Should smoking not be banned altogether?</p> <p>Could you rise the price of cigarettes to stop people smoking?</p>		<p>and Dagenham but there is a multi-targeted approach in the borough to do whatever possible to reduce levels. Health services work with their partners, like the council and the police, to achieve this goal.</p> <p>It should be banned, but the government would never get away with banning smoking altogether, and there would be a big black market selling them illegally if this happened.</p> <p>We cannot raise the price of cigarettes ourselves in Barking and Dagenham, but the government can. The government can increase the taxes on cigarettes, called the cigarette duty. Over the last few years the price of cigarettes has gone up a great deal and now it is a very expensive habit to keep.</p>
Meena Kishinani	How does the money you spend on Youth Services, change young people's lives?	Alex/Jack-John Perry Primary	This is a real life example of how Youth Services have changed young people's lives. Two young lads, both aged 16, were involved in a lot of bad things before they took part in a project with us. One of them kept bad company and was part of a gang outside the borough and was constantly in trouble with police. The other had been arrested and put away for burglary. Both knew they had to do something to change their lives and went on a programme, 3

			<p>times a week for 14 weeks, working with a company called Music Tek and the borough's Youth Offending Team and Detached Youth Workers. They produced a music video, a song, learned to play instruments, and performed at the Town Show. As a result, they have turned their lives around. One is now training to be a youth worker, and the other is an apprentice and is training to be a producer of music videos. They were recently finalists for the Rising Star Awards. Both young men are glad that they took part in the scheme, and one of the young lads feels that he may be dead now if he hadn't have got involved in the scheme.</p>
Bruce Morris	What do the council do to make sure that play equipment in parks is safe?	Ekzon- William Bellamy Juniors	<p>All play equipment installed has to reach a certain standard laid down by the government, for example how safe it is, how strong it is, how big the drops are on a slide etc. The surfaces of play areas also have to reach certain standards particularly that they are soft enough and will minimise any damage to yourselves if you fall off of any of the equipment.</p> <p>All play equipment in Barking and Dagenham is inspected 4 times a week. If you come across something that is not safe then report it to the council. If we find any problems or have problems reported to us, we will then repair or replace the</p>

			equipment.
Bruce Morris	What advice do you have for pupils who face racist abuse?	Regina-Richard Alibon Primary	<p>Racist abuse, or any type of bullying is not acceptable, and it is the responsibility of all adults to keep children safe.</p> <p>All schools have policies, procedures and statements in place to stop bullying.</p> <p>Bullying is serious because of the impact it can have and how it makes you feel; this can also move onto more serious things.</p> <p>If you are facing racist abuse or any type of bullying, then go to an adult that you know and you can talk to.</p> <p>All of us have seen or experienced bullying and it is not easy to stop, but it can be if adults are committed to eradicating it.</p> <p>Bullying is taken very seriously, in one recent example on the news, young people aged 15 were taken to court and banned from future matches for yelling racist abuse at a football player.</p>
Graham Blowes	In general how much do operations cost and when do people have to pay for them themselves?	Cydney & Katherine-William Bellamy Juniors	<p>The cost of operations depends on the operation itself. Minor operations, such as a tube inserted in your throat to see what is going on inside you, is quick and will cost about £200. But complex procedures involving your heart can cost £20,000-£30,000 to perform. This is expensive, but people have to rarely pay for these themselves. Patients can pay for private healthcare but a number of operations or</p>

			<p>treatment can now be performed at a private hospital and paid for by the NHS. The only time that patients will really have to pay for an operation is when the operation doesn't really help in improving your health, such as cosmetic surgery. However this can also be paid for if you can prove that it is having a bad effect on your health or mental wellbeing.</p>
Meena Kishinani	What made you do the job that you are doing?	Question from the floor	<p>I have been working for local government for a long time and I have done so because every day I feel that I am making a difference for the community that I work for. I always feel that I am out of my comfort zone and into the stretch zone, always challenging myself and always learning.</p>
Supt Barton	Why did you want to become an officer?	Question from the floor	<p>I wanted to help people and I wanted to live and work in London. I asked to come back to Barking and Dagenham when I was promoted because there are lots of challenges and I think it is an exciting place to work. I now have more influence in policing the streets and I have a good relationship with the people of Barking and Dagenham, and a good relationship with the partners that the Metropolitan police work with, such as the council.</p>
Supt Barton	Why doesn't 'life' in prison actually mean life?	Question from the floor	<p>I am not in a position to answer that as it is a long running and big debate. This is a</p>

			question for the government and the courts.
Meena Kishinani	Every year, how many children go into care in Barking and Dagenham?	Question from the floor	There are 360 young people in care at the moment, and between last April and now there have been 80 new children put into care. When young people come into care we want to get them back into their home as quickly as possible. However, there are a few children that have to stay in care, and for these children we will protect them until they are 18.
Bruce Morris	Why aren't there walls to stop people committing suicide on trains?	Question from the floor	On the Jubilee line in London there are already glass doors fitted to prevent suicide. It is hard and expensive to do this afterwards, but there is a big programme to upgrade the stations over the next few years. For more information, you would have to ask TFL. Graham Blowes: I must state that there is a very low rate of suicide in Barking and Dagenham compared to other areas.
Supt Barton	What is the worst worry you have about your job?	Question from the floor	If I could stop any crime, then it would be murder. I worry every hour and every day about murder in the borough. However it is not all negative, we have some good times in this borough, and it is a fantastic job to do.

Graham Blowes	How clean do you think our hospitals are?	Question from the floor	<p>There are standards that every hospital has to maintain. For example every hospital was given money for a deep clean. However, we do have concerns locally, especially with two infections – C. Difficile and MRSA which are resistant to antibiotics. They have developed because over the years we have given too many antibiotics to people when they are not really needed. These two infections have been seen in Queen’s Hospital, Romford and St George’s Hospital near Ilford.</p> <p>We also have concerns over diarrhoea and vomiting in all sites and we are concerned with cold weather and cleanliness. We will never be able to eradicate these fully but we can get the message across to make it better. Especially using advice such as to keep hands clean with the gel provided when entering and leaving hospitals.</p>
Bruce Morris	What is the council going to do about derelict buildings?	Question from the floor	<p>There is a local development framework/plan that looks at all the space in an area and the idea is that it pools together how space can be best used. This development plan will incorporate these derelict buildings and can then work out the best use for the area. In an area like this, this plan will always look for how it can be upgraded and improved. For example, Barking town centre looks</p>

			<p>completely different to how it used to. Gradually that came out of a very complicated plan which took many years to work up to see what the best use of the space in the town centre could be.</p> <p>Kevin Donovan: As a school council you can invite the Neighbourhood Manager for your ward and then you can ask them questions about the buildings. Local councillors can also visit schools when they have the time to answer questions.</p>
Supt Barton	Why do some police officers carry tasers?	Question from the floor	Guns can cause serious injury, but tasers can be used to detain people and cause less injury than a gun could make. We are currently not sure if all police officers will be carrying tasers in the UK in the future.
Supt Barton	Is it true that a policeman has to wear their hat to make an arrest?	Question from the floor	This used to be the case for some offences, but it is not the case now.
Supt Barton	How do you know if someone is telling the truth without any evidence?	Question from the floor	This will always be a problem unfortunately and we cannot be sure if we have not got evidence. We also haven't got lie detector tests so this isn't a method that we can use.