



Report on Full Council Meeting Tuesday 10 July

At the meeting the following [Motion](#) entitled “**Let local people decide if they want the £1bn ‘One Barnet’ gamble**” was debated

As this motion concerns all of the council workforce and in the interest of transparency and fairness I asked all of the Leaders of all three political party’s to send me a copy of their speeches which I said I would share with our members.

1. Speech by Leader of the Barnet Labour Group, Cllr Alison Moore

“Let the people decide if they want the £1bn ‘One Barnet’ gamble”
Mister Mayor

In the past few months voters in Barnet have elected three Labour candidates with resounding majorities. There were of course many factors in play in these elections, but talking to residents on the doorsteps there is real anger about the direction this council is taking across a whole range of issues.

The debacle over parking charges, and pay-by-phone is just one issue that has ignited people across the political spectrum.

But the most significant issue from the point of view of impact on all our communities is the ‘One Barnet’ plan to gamble one billion pounds of council tax payers’ money by hiving off 70 per cent of council services to the private sector.

This is such a fundamental change to local services, and a change of such magnitude, that it will touch every single person’s life in the borough, and, so far Barnet residents have not even been formally asked whether they agree with it. It certainly was not clear in the Conservative manifesto.

In answer to my question on One Barnet earlier tonight, the Leader of the Council said he had no Plan B except mass redundancies, closure of facilities, cessation of services and massive increases in council tax.

I have to say to him, what does he think is already happening under One Barnet? We have already had hundreds of redundancies, and more are promised if the mass sell-off goes ahead this autumn.

We have already had the closure of children's centres, Libraries, museums, and now, we learn, day centres.

We have already seen the cessation of services – the Welfare Rights Service, Youth Services, and a fully funded sheltered warden service.

And, if this One Barnet madness steams ahead without any proper assessment of the financial and service risks and founders, it is very likely that we will end up having those very massive increases in council tax that Cllr Cornelius warns against. The truth is that no-one knows whether One Barnet will deliver better or cheaper services because it is completely untried and untested on the scale that is being proposed. The case has not been made. There was no comparison with in-house services – transformed or not. It is quite literally a gamble with one billion pounds of council tax payers' money, and with crucial local services that affect people's everyday lives.

What really concerns me is that no-one in the Conservative Group seems to be taking any notice of the warnings about these risks. Very few have attended any briefings by the independent and well regarded APSE, and most tellingly, that includes the very people responsible for the stewardship of One Barnet - the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader and Cllr Rams. They are so set on Plan A that they just are not listening.

At the last Cabinet Meeting I believe Cllr Cornelius finally admitted that there was a problem. He said, in response to a question on the APSE report, something along the lines of "I'm sure it would be a very stupid councillor who not take notice of advice." Well, advice is being offered. The question is – what is he doing about it? The reason I ask is this: we are now entering the point of no return of this One Barnet privatisation plan. To a commissioning council, where not just the service delivery, but the commissioning and monitoring of those services will be handed over to a private, profit-making company.

In the autumn the council are proposing to make final decisions on this that will tie the council in to 10 year contracts leaving elected councillors with no direct control of those council services, and very limited ability to bring services back in-house if it all goes wrong.

Cllr Cornelius, it is not too late to pull back and have a re-think. It is not too late to ask local people what they think.

This is all we are asking tonight. Stop. Think. Listen.

Mister Mayor, fellow councillors – I move my motion and ask councillors across the chamber to support it in the name of Barnet residents and common sense.

3. Speech by Leader of the Barnet Lib-Dem Group, Cllr Jack Cohen

“Let the people decide if they want the £1bn ‘One Barnet’ gamble”

Mister Mayor

The Tories relentless dogma is that market forces are the way to deliver the best services and this is what underpins the “One Barnet” programme. So, we see traditional council services such as planning, building control, environmental protection parking and public health and contracted out to private companies.

The Harvard philosopher Michael Sandel in his book “What Money Can’t Buy” warns that markets are corrupting society. He points out that “the most fateful change that unfolded in the past three decades was not an increase in greed, it was the expansion of markets, into spheres of life where they don’t belong”

The leader of the Council has a column in the Barnet Press. Last week he explained why he had been converted to the One Barnet programme. He wrote this and I quote “I have never been a fan of East Germany!” What could he mean is he saying the Council is being run like a former communist state He also writes in the same article he did not like the former state telephone monopoly. Well doesn’t he realise that he is selling off Barnet to private monopolies

The One Barnet programme is ill thought out, lacks credibility and is flawed.

Don’t take my word for it

I suggest Members look at the Barnet website. Check out the section “One Barnet transformation programme” This is the key message and I quote

“At the heart of the programme is one clear aim –to become a truly citizen –centric council. “ And this will be tested against three key principles

1 A new relationship with citizens. In Barnet this means do everything possible not to engage with our residents. For example Residents Forums are being allowed to wither on the vine. Another example, too many residents turning up too speak at planning meetings ? well in the Spirit of One Barnet and in the principle of the new relationship with citizens put even more obstacles in the way to prevent people from having their say

Principle number 2 A relentless drive for efficiency. Well the joke is we are informed on the same web page that not one cabinet member but two Cllr Rams and Cllr Thomas politically lead the programme. Do we really need two well paid Members doing the same job? Come to think of it do we need Ten Cabinet members to run the Council. No relentless drive for efficiency there then.

And Principle number 3 “We will do what we want anyway”. Sorry I made that one up
Principle number 3 well it seems they ran out of ideas. So the 3rd principle is”a one barnet approach “

Mr Mayor the One Barnet programme is gambling with our future. The One Barnet Programme is a dagger in the heart of local democracy, the One Barnet Programme is selling off the very soul of our public services

Madam Mayor this Administration is wasting millions of pounds of council tax payers money chasing an illusion driven by dogma. There is not one shred of evidence that any of it is going to work. The collateral damage to staff, services and reputation of the Council will be irreparable. The sooner we put a stop to it the better