

Meeting of the Executive
Wednesday 13th September 2006 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Lorber (Chair), Councillor Blackman (Vice Chair) and Councillors Allie, D Brown, V Brown, Castle, Colwill, O'Sullivan, Van Colle and Wharton.

Councillors Dunwell, Hashmi, Moher and HB Patel also attended the meeting.

1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interest

None.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23rd August 2006 be approved as an accurate record subject to:

Clause 7, Wembley Regeneration and the Casino Advisory Panel, para 5, line 1 delete 'Castle' insert 'Corcoran'.

3. Matters Arising

John Billam Sports Pavilion – Disposal of Long Lease to Gujarati Arya Association (London)

The Director of Finance and Corporate Resources advised that negotiations were still ongoing with the organisation and that documentation had been produced relating to their funding. The Executive re-iterated that officers should ensure that all outstanding monies due to the Council including interest are received.

4. Service Plan for Food Safety Enforcement

The Director of Environment and Culture referred members to the Food Safety Enforcement Service Plan, circulated as an appendix to his report. Each local authority was required to publish annually a service delivery plan specifying the arrangements put in place for the enforcement of food safety, food standards and feeding stuffs standards for approval.

RESOLVED:

that approval be given to the annexed Service Plan as the Authority's plan for the enforcement of food safety, food standards and feeding stuffs legislation during the period 1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007.

5. Brent Refugee Strategy

This report sought members' endorsement of the draft Refugee Strategy for Brent and provided an overview of the background to and objectives of the strategy. The Director of Housing and Community Care referred to the

significant number of refugees in the borough who because of their diverse nature required co-ordinated service provision and support. The Executive noted that the number of refugees living in the borough was an estimate based on a number of sources however it was subject to variation. The Director confirmed that it was the intention that any funding required to provide training would come from existing resources and that should this not be the case, he would report back. It was noted that officers were continuing in their efforts to put the Council's case for a re-assessment of the borough's population figures provided by the Office of National Statistics which if raised would improve Brent's position for the Local Government Financial Settlement in future years.

The Executive noted that it was recommended that a councillor be identified as Refugee Champion and agreed to the nomination of Councillor Allie.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the draft recommendations of the Refugee Strategy as set out in paragraph 4.3 and Appendix 1 of the report;
- (ii) that delegated authority be given to the Director of Housing and Community Care to launch the new strategy in consultation with the Refugee Champion;
- (iii) that Councillor Allie be the Refugee Champion in line with recommendation 8 in Appendix 1 of the report from the Director of Housing and Community Care;
- (iv) that officers explore all means of securing additional external funding to support the implementation of the strategy.

6. **Promoting Day Opportunities for Adults with Disabilities**

This report from the Director of Housing and Community Care set out the issues concerning the need to promote day opportunities and modernise day services for people with mental health difficulties, physical and sensory disabilities and learning disabilities and change current ways of providing services within Community Care. It detailed the policy background and recent objectives contained in the Director of Health white paper (2006) 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say' and described the work already undertaken in different service areas, current services and resources and provided options for further consultation.

The Director circulated an addendum to the report which revised the recommendations and the Lead Member (Adults and Social Care) recommended these to the meeting.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the progress made in reviewing the current day service for disabilities be noted;

- (ii) that where in specific recommendations for each client group further consultation is required that this takes into account user and carers needs and views, impact of direct payments and individual budgets and strategies with adult education providers;
- (iii) that it be noted that the Director of Housing and Community Care will report back to members with the results of consultation, the options appraisals and results of any necessary equality impact assessments in due course;

Mental Health:

- (iv) that community network proposals continue to be implemented as detailed in paragraph 2.210.20 (2) of the report from the Director of Community Care ie to relocate staff and services from John Wilson House, 9 Willesden Lane and John Wilson and ACRC Manor Park Road and 543 High Road to Brondesbury Road;
- (v) that consultation take place on Kingsbury Manor users needs for transport;
- (vi) that consideration be given to options for Kingsbury Day Service to incorporate Joint Community Mental Health Team by January 2007, as detailed in the report;

Learning Disabilities:

- (vii) that a detailed costed options analysis be undertaken on all options set out in paragraph 3.11.16, from doing nothing, to refocusing day services to smaller accessible community bases, and refocus projects and employment opportunities and to consult with stakeholders on these options;
- (viii) to continue to develop Albert Road Day Centre options as part of the South Kilburn Regeneration Strategy;

Physical Disabilities:

- (ix) that a detailed costed options analysis be undertaken on all options as detailed in paragraphs 3,12.9 to consider need for current in-house services, ranging from doing nothing, to developing an Independent Living Centre, or using direct payments on individual budgets and to consult with stakeholders on those options.

7. Edward Harvist Trust Fund Criteria

This report sought members' approval of the new criteria to be used to assess applications for the Edward Harvist Trust, and to increase the maximum funding available to individual organisations. The Executive noted that the number of applications had fallen over the past few years and as a result there was a surplus in the Trust's budget. It was hoped that the proposed changes in the criteria and an increase in maximum award level

would encourage more applications. The new criteria would be effective from October 2006, when the second round for the grant was advertised.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the new criteria for the Edward Harvist Trust as set out in Appendix A of the report from the Director of Housing and Community Care be approved;
- (ii) that approval be given to the proposal to increase the maximum level of funding from £3,000 to £5,000 to individual groups/projects applying for the grant.

8. **Mayor of London's Extended Powers and Implications for Brent**

This report informed the Executive of the proposals announced by the Department of Communities and Local Government on July 13th 2006 to increase the powers of the Greater London Authority and the Mayor of London. The Executive discussed the implications for the borough of the proposed changes and agreed with the view that any decentralisation of decision making from central government should be towards local authorities and local people. Particular areas of concern were proposals to extend the Mayor of London's powers to include the determination of planning applications, decide on the size and scope of housing and other developments and to negotiate Section 106 contributions which, it was felt, should be reserved to meet local needs. The Executive agreed with the view that as it was the Council's intention to meet existing targets, the Council needed to be certain that it would not be penalised under the new arrangements. Concern was also expressed over the proposals for the Learning and Skills Council which it was thought would jeopardise the future of non-accredited leisure courses which do not lead directly to learning or employability and as such will not fit with the LSC funding strategies.

The Executive noted that there was a consensus within the GLA that arrangements should be in place to allow policies to at least be open to scrutiny by the Assembly, the views from which the Mayor should take into account before making a decision.

Members were keen to indicate that there was all party support for the views expressed at the meeting and asked the Director of Policy and Regeneration to submit a response accordingly on behalf of the Council.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the initial proposals be noted and the Executive be informed of subsequent proposals and their implications for Brent;
- (ii) that the Director of Policy and Regeneration respond to the DCLG consultation on behalf of the Council in the terms expressed by Executive members at this meeting.

9. **Vital Signs Performance Digest Quarter 1 – April to June 2006**

The Executive received a report introducing the Vital Signs, which monitor the Council's performance against key indicators, for the period April to June 2006 (quarter one). It was noted that detailed consideration would be given to targets and performance at respective scrutiny committees. On the question of Revenues and Benefits complaints handling the Director of Policy and Regeneration advised that this had been discussed at the Performance and Finance Select Committee the previous evening where it had been clarified while the Council continued to have good record on Stage 3 and Ombudsman complaints, the issue was around the escalation of complaints from Stage 1 to Stage 2. Steps were being taken to address the problem at service level with the assistance of the Corporate Complaints Team. It was also noted that the Select Committee had selected a number of key indicators for detailed consideration. Reference was also made to the indicator for the collection of household waste for which performance was significantly above target, with the suggestion that targets should be reviewed to be more realistic.

RESOLVED:

that the Council's performance against key performance indicators be noted.

10. **Local Area Agreement Review Quarter One and Stretch Targets Report Quarter One – April to June 2006**

This report introduced the first performance reports for the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The LAA Quarterly Performance Review provided an overall summary of performance against the LAA and the Stretch Targets Report outlined progress against the 12 stretch targets, for the 1st quarter, April to June 2006. It was noted that performance on the stretch targets had been included in the Vital Signs report.

The Executive noted that a fuller picture of performance would be revealed later in the year and looked forward to receiving input from scrutiny committees.

RESOLVED:

that the council's performance against key performance indicators be noted.

11. **Refugees Into Jobs Charitable Status**

The Director of Policy and Regeneration in introducing this report referred to what was seen to be the excellent work carried out by this project and outlined the reasons why it was being proposed that it now have charitable status. Recent reports commissioned for Brent in 2004 'Independent Review of RIJ' by SQW, and 2005 'RIJ: a governance review' by Harker & Burkeman, concluded that RIJ would need to position itself differently if it was to be successful in maintaining the current level and quality of service. The Director recommended that in order to maximise the quality of service to the refugee community RIJ be reconstituted as both a charity and

company limited by guarantee and, with the benefit of external funding, be able to work over a wider geographical area.

Councillor Lorber, on behalf of the Executive gave full support to the proposals and to RIJ attaining its vision.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the successes of RIJ since its creation 10 years ago, as set out in the report be noted;
- (ii) that approval in principle be given to the reconstitution of RIJ as both a charity and a company limited by guarantee, subject to ongoing consultation with staff;
- (iii) that the Director of Policy and Regeneration be authorised to consider the feedback to consultation with staff and to then decide whether to proceed with the incorporation of the scheme as a charitable company;
- (iv) that delegated authority be given to the Director of Policy and Regeneration to oversee the reconstitution process and negotiate the terms of any remaining relationship with the Council, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and the Borough Solicitor.

12. 2006/07 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report

This report up-dated the Executive on the 2006/07 budget position, including actions being taken to address forecast budget overspends in the current year. Overall the forecasts in this report, together with actions set out, would reduce general balances held by the council to £6.3m at 31st March 2007 below the Council's target for balances of £7.5m to £8m.

Councillor Blackman (Lead Member, Finance and Resources) commended efforts made to date across the Council to address the deficit however noted that as there was still a £3.379m shortfall, work would have to continue to bring the position into line. He accepted that some services were demand led but efforts needed to be made to see how these could be constrained. Savings achieved so far had been one-off and officers had been asked to come up with 2% savings for next year which may be brought forward.

Councillor Blackman circulated a motion in his name which amended the recommendations in the report as they related to proposals to increase car parking charges which would now be part of a general examination, to also review proposals for the expansion of the youth service, to re-assess the current financial viability of Brent Crossroads and to consider the criteria for grants. He recommended that the Executive agree the proposed budget savings set out in Appendix C to the report from the Director of Corporate Finance and Resources subject to these amendments.

In response to questions, it was clarified that proposals to vacate space at the back of Kingsbury One Stop Shop would be allow a better use of accommodation as it was currently under-utilised, that staff affected by proposals to externalise meals on wheels would transfer under TUPE regulations and that this proposal would be subject to a further report. Additionally, the introduction of day care charges for transport would address an existing anomaly noting that some users were capable of using public transport. The Director of Housing and Community Care also clarified that discussions had been taking place with Brent Mental Health to ensure that the clients with learning disabilities who it was intended to return to in-borough placements, would get suitable accommodation and individual case assessment.

Councillor Lorber (Leader of the Council) added that it was accepted that budget variances would occur but that efficiency savings would be made wherever possible, protecting frontline services. He also stated that officers had also been instructed to make every effort to campaign for additional resources including those outstanding due to official population assessment figures.

The Executive noted that the budgets set out in Appendix A to the report included a virement of part year savings of £79k achieved from the suspension of ward newsletters to be put towards improvements in graffiti removal. Consideration was given to whether the additional funding should be put towards an additional anti graffiti team or fund further work with the police service to increase enforcement. It was agreed that the Director of Environment carry out a review to determine the most effective use of the funding in consultation with the Lead Member, circulating the outcome to members of the Executive. It was noted that additional expenditure outside of the Environment and Culture service area would be reported back.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the current budget forecasts in Appendix A in the report from the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources be noted;
- (ii) that the actions that being taken to reduce spending to bring it into line with budget set out in this report. be noted;
- (iii) that it be noted that further actions will be required to achieve a balanced budget in 2006/07 and agree that an up-date on actions will be included in the next budget monitoring report to the Executive;
- (iv) that the budget transfers and virements in paragraphs 3.28 to 3.33 of the report be approved;
- (v) that specific savings relating to the items below be agreed subject to:
 - (a) any increases in parking charges and second and third permit charges to be held until decisions are made on whether to charge for the first residents permit;

- (b) a review being undertaken of the net growth in the budget for the Youth Service setting out priorities and demonstrating value for money;
- (c) a review of the current financial viability of Brent Crossroads;
- (d) consideration of the criteria of allocation of grants to Voluntary Sector organisations.

13. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Monday 9th October 2006.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.

P LORBER
Chair