

MINUTES OF THE FORWARD PLAN SELECT COMMITTEE
Monday, 10th May 2004 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Harrod (Chair) and Councillors Taylor and Councillor Freeson (alternate for Dromey).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Blackman, Davies, Dromey, Hughes and Moher.

1. Order of Business

RESOLVED:-

that the order of business be changed to that below.

2. Nomination of Chair

RESOLVED:

that in the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, Councillor Harrod chair the meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee on 10th May 2004.

3. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

There were none.

4. Deputations

There were none.

5. Minutes of the Last Meeting on 14th April 2004

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the last meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee on 14 April 2004 be agreed as an accurate record subject to an amendment on page 2/3, paragraph 1 which should read as follows:-

“Responding to concerns raised by members about the need to avoid the summer holiday period during consultation, the Lead Member gave assurances that consultation would be deferred until after the summer recess period in August 2004.”

6. **Matters Arising**

Councillor Freeson referred to the discussion at the meeting of the Select Committee on 14th April 2004 and in particular commented on the decision taken by the Planning Committee regarding developments at Gladstone Park. Commenting on the detailed information that had been presented to the Select Committee at the last meeting, Councillor Freeson expressed concerns about the lack of information that had been presented to an earlier meeting of the Planning Committee and stressed the need for a broader corporate approach to planning matters.

Commenting on the briefing note on Supply, Demand and Temporary Accommodation, Councillor Freeson suggested the need for an enlarged strategy that responded to temporary accommodation problems whilst also reflecting the high number of empty homes throughout the Borough. Councillor Harrod advised members that this issue had been considered as part of the Quality of Life Scrutiny Panel's work programme earlier in the year and that a future task group might investigate the issue of empty properties across the Borough in 2004/05. Councillor Taylor confirmed that this matter would be debated further at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board following consideration of the sub-committee work programmes in 2004/05.

7. **Call-In of Executive Decisions from Meeting of the Executive on 26th April 2004**

No items were called in.

8. **The Executive List of Decisions for the Meeting that took place on 26th April 2004**

RESOLVED:

that the Executive List of Decisions for the meeting of the Executive that took place on 26th April 2004 be noted.

9. **Briefing Notes requested by the Select Committee arising from consideration of earlier versions of the Forward Plan (2003/04)**

Willesden Sport Centre – Closure/Relocation Strategy

Gerry Kiefer (Head of Sports Services) outlined the briefing note contained in the agenda regarding the relocation strategy for schools and particular user groups during the planned closure and rebuild of Willesden Sports Centre. Members noted that the cost implications of the relocation strategy had been considered at length in terms of providing transportation for users/ user groups, storage of equipment

and arranging alternative leisure facilities during the rebuild of Willesden Sports Centre. Ms Kiefer confirmed that arrangements had been made for members of the public and user groups to be transported to alternative leisure facilities such as Vale Farm and that the cost of providing the transport had been met by the Council.

Councillor Harrod enquired specifically about the Dolphins Swimming Club and the arrangements that had been agreed. Ms Kiefer advised the Select Committee that the Council had been in negotiations since November 2003 with a range of user groups including the Dolphins Swimming Club in order to find alternative venues. Consequently arrangements had been made and money has been set aside within the relocation costs so that there would be no extra costs to the user groups, including the Dolphins Swimming Club. Ms Kiefer confirmed that there had been consultation and negotiation with all user groups in order to ensure that they were happy with the alternative arrangements. Ms Kiefer advised the Select Committee that some user groups had requested preferred times for attendance at the alternative venues but that not all of these had been viable. However, the majority of user groups were happy with the arrangements. Regarding publicity about the relocation strategy and the alternative leisure facilities that were available during the rebuild period, Members noted that the second edition of a newsletter had been circulated around the Borough informing the public about the facilities that were available both within and beyond Brent during the rebuild period.

Councillor Freeson enquired as to how many schools had been affected and the alternative arrangements that had been made. Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment and Planning) advised the Select Committee that the majority of schools were satisfied with the arrangements. However there remained some ongoing concerns by a number of schools in the south of the Borough regarding their ability to attend early swimming sessions at Vale Farm. Councillor Taylor urged the Council to look carefully into these concerns and resolve the issue as quickly as possible. Ms Kiefer explained that attempts were being made to resolve the problems including the possible use of alternative pools. In response to a question from Councillor Taylor, Ms Kiefer confirmed that Cannons Health Club would be used by pensioner swimmers during the rebuild period and that the list of attendees who currently attend these sessions had increased significantly. A waiting list was now in operation due to the limitation of only 60 places for local pensioners.

In response to a question from Councillor Freeson, Ms Kiefer confirmed that whilst a number of alternative venues had been considered, including local authority pools both in and around the Borough, she was not aware if an approach had been made to local hotels.

Councillor Jones commented on delays to the rebuild and advised Members of the Select Committee that new banks were now involved in the PFI and it was anticipated that there would be no further delays to the closure. Members noted that the pool would close in summer 2004 for approximately 18 months.

RESOLVED:

that the Briefing Note on Willesden Sport Centre – Closure Relocation Strategy be noted.

Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes: Design Statements and Affordable Housing

Ken Hullock (Team Manager, Policy) introduced a briefing note and advised Members of the Select Committee that both the Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes on Design Statements and Affordable Housing had been to the Planning Committee and /or the Executive for consideration.¹ The public consultation period had ended on 15 April 2004. Members of the Select Committee were advised that some comments had been received on the Planning Guidance Note on Affordable Housing yet none had to date been received on the Guidance Note on Design Statements. Mr Hullock confirmed that the report would return to the Executive later in the year for final consideration. Members of the Select Committee were advised that potential developers had stressed the need for a decrease in the requirement for 50% affordable housing as a requirement of all future developments. Mr Hullock advised the Select Committee that there were prescriptive formulas outlined in the guidance concerning in lieu payments and that a number of objections had been received regarding this requirement. Regarding issues raised by housing associations, Mr Hullock confirmed that the majority of housing associations felt that the mix in housing schemes did not take into account the general move to smaller households. The majority of housing associations also felt that a stronger requirement was necessary for more implicit design statements. Mr Hullock advised the Select Committee that Neasden Residents' Association had also presented some comments on the Guidance Notes and had commented on the possible misuse of affordable housing for development purposes. Members noted that an anonymous response had also been received regarding the mix of units and a query regarding how this would be reviewed in light of demographic needs.

Councillor Harrod queried the 50% affordable housing mix and enquired as to how this corresponded with the LDA's requirements as

¹ Amended at meeting of FPSC on 1.06.04, to read as:- “ had been to the Planning Committee for consideration.”

other guidance suggested that the affordable housing mix was only 33%.² At this point Councillor Harrod suggested that whilst the 50% affordable housing mix would be the maximum aim across the Borough, the Council needed to ensure that it could enforce this target. Councillor Freeson then went on to comment on the local UDP and GLA London Planning Guidance and suggested that the social housing implications of broader planning policy imposed on the Borough by the GLA, such as the affordable housing mix was a policy issue that needed to be considered in broader terms and with greater awareness of housing needs across the Borough. Mr Hullock confirmed that the issues raised by the Select Committee would be taken into account during the drafting of the final report which would be presented to the Executive later in the year. Members of the Select Committee noted that the Guidance Notes were still in draft but that all objections would have to be reported back to the Executive with revised Guidance Notes issued and agreed at a future date. Following a request from Members of the Select Committee, Mr Hullock confirmed that a further update on the issues would be provided at the next meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee on 1st June 2004.

Education Capital Budget 2004/05

Councillor Lyon (Lead Member for Education, Arts and Libraries) confirmed that the Education Capital Budget Report 2004/05 would be presented at the next meeting of the Executive following a deferral from the April meeting. Members of the Select Committee were advised that with an allocation of £8.3m, there was a substantial budget increase in 2004/05 with a multi-year approach having been adopted due to prudential borrowing. Consequently a sequence of capital budgets had been planned with a list of prioritised projects which could be added to as and when further funding was identified. The Lead Member outlined the basis of the report that would go to the Executive and explained that all planned priority one repairs to schools over the next two years would be listed. Members noted that priority one repairs included those repairs which would make a tangible difference to schools, such as rewiring. Members were advised that since the Council was unable to rebuild a number of schools across the Borough such repairs were vital. Consequently the intended plan of works would benefit a large number of schools.

The Lead Member also explained that the programme would address the replacement of temporary huts across the Borough including Preston Road and Wembley Manor schools. Members noted that the Council was keen to ensure that the top priority works identified in the

² Amended at the meeting of the FPSC on 1.06.04, to read as:- "Councillor Harrod queried the 50% affordable housing mix and enquired about the LDA's planning application which was recently determined by the Planning Committee and which only included 33% affordable housing."

programme were completed within the 1-2 year period. The Lead Member commented on the need to rebuild Chalkhill Primary School and explained that such a rebuild would be undertaken through ring-fenced funding over a longer term period. At this point Councillor Taylor advised the Select Committee about his role as Chair of Governors at John Kelly Girls School.

Nitin Parshotam advised Members of the Select Committee that priority projects had been identified for the first year of the Capital Budget Programme and that Members would consider the balance of remaining capital spend over the next 3-4 years. At this point the Chair requested clarification as to how the £8.3m 2004/05 budget would be allocated to particular projects. Mr Parshotam confirmed that an asset management scheme and a replacement programme for huts and temporary buildings would provide the majority of planned works for the 2004/05 period. He stressed that a clear operational plan was being used to develop a list of recommended projects to the Executive. Members noted that a final report for presentation to the Executive had not yet been drafted so there were no precise figures concerning those schools that would be prioritised for works. Members noted that £6m would be spent on asset management schemes during the first year, whilst a further £1.7m would be allocated for the hut replacement programme. The remaining funds were still to be allocated to priority repair schemes. Mr Parshotam advised the Select Committee that there was a backlog in repairs and maintenance issues for a number of schools across the Borough but that the AMP Statutory Plan categorised the nature and level of repairs and building conditions in schools across the Borough and provided the Council with an objective criteria. A ranking system enabled the Council to prioritise the repairs that were necessary in schools across the Borough and draft a list of priority repairs.

Councillor Harrod enquired about the number of schools that still had outside toilets and was advised by Mr Parshotam that as the removal of such facilities had been optional, a number of schools did potentially continue to have outside toilets. The Chair then enquired as to whether any schools did not have toilets inside the school buildings and Mr Parshotam confirmed that he would notify Members of the Select Committee of this answer in due course.

The Lead Member advised Members of the Select Committee that a number of issues had to be taken into consideration whilst allocating the budget and determining the repairs programme. Consequently the key aim was to address all priority one AMP issues in years 1 and 2, to commence hut replacement at key locations across the Borough and to undertake a rebuild of Chalkhill Primary School at a cost of just under £6m. At this point Councillor Harrod confirmed that he was Governor at Chalkhill Primary School. The Lead Member confirmed that the rebuild was likely to take place on the same site as the current school

although the logistics of this has not been finalised. Nitin Partshotam advised Members that he had discussed the rebuild issue with the Head Teacher at Chalkhill Primary School and that a proposal for a rebuild of the school had been sent to the DFES in 2003. Commenting on the rebuild of Chalkhill Primary School and the development of a sports centre, Councillor Freeson queried whether the developments would complement one another. The Lead Member advised the Select Committee that the school would be rebuilt but that the sports hall would be rebuilt first and that funding was available for this work to commence immediately. Thereafter the school would be rebuilt in order to complement the hall and other regeneration work around the site. Nitin Parshotam confirmed that a full governors meeting was likely to take place in the future once the details regarding the rebuild were clearer, although he stressed the need to prevent raised expectations regarding the rebuilding of the school at the current time. Councillor Freeson enquired further about the design of the sports centre and school and enquired as to whether the designs would be linked together or undertaken separately? In response to a query concerning the design process of the school and sports hall, Mr Parshotam confirmed that the current focus was on the design of the sports hall. However the design brief had stressed the importance of taking into account a possible rebuild of the school at a future time. At this point Members were advised that Chalkhill Primary School was not part of the Capital Programme of Works.

Councillor Lyon advised the Select Committee that the proposals was for a Capital Budget that underspends in year 1 and overspends in year 2. He confirmed that major projects would be undertaken over a couple of years and that the Council would hold back on some of the budget in order to ensure that second year projects could be undertaken. Councillor Harrod requested that the Forward Plan Select Committee be kept informed of particular projects that would be undertaken as part of the programme in 2004/05. In response to a request by Members, The Lead Member confirmed that the final report would be circulated to all Members of the Forward Plan Select Committee for information.

10. The Forward Plan – Issue 26 2003/2004

Following consideration of Issue 26 of the Forward Plan 2003/2004 the Select Committee requested further information on the following issues:

RESOLVED:-

that the following briefing notes and information updates on the following items be presented to the next meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee on 1st June 2004, subject to date confirmation by full Council on 17th May 2004:-

(a) **Council Tax Local Discounts**

Request that a briefing note be provided to the Select Committee on 1st June 2004 and that the Lead Officer for this report be invited to attend the meeting;

(b) **Chesterfield House – Floors 5 and 6**

Request that a briefing note be provided to the Select Committee on 1st June 2004 updating Members about issues contained in the report. Lead Member and Lead Officer attendance would not be required at the meeting;

(c) **Youth Service (Part of What Young People Want BVR)**

Members of the Select Committee requested that this report be looked at further by the Life Long Learning Scrutiny Panel;

(d) **South Kilburn Master Plan**

Members queried why the South Kilburn Master Plan was being considered by the Executive and not the Planning Committee. The Select Committee queried as to what detail would be in the report and the proposed decision that would be taken by the Executive. The Select Committee requested an immediate response regarding what information would be in the report in order to determine whether a briefing note was necessary for the next meeting of the Select Committee on 1st June 2004;

(e) **Environment Capital Programme Scheme Approval and Parks Capital Spend**

Request for a detailed briefing note on the issues contained in the report and for the Lead Officer and Lead Member to attend the next meeting on 1st June 2004;

(f) **Park Strategy/Sports Pitch Strategy/Sport Strategy**

Request that each of the above reports be outlined in the form of a briefing note to the Forward Plan Select Committee before presentation to the Executive at a future date. Members noted that each of the 3 reports had been deferred for presentation to the Executive beyond June 2004;

(g) **Draft Air Quality Action Plan**

Request for a further information update to the July meeting of the Select Committee;

(h) **South Kilburn Master Plan/Effect of Impact Assessments**

Request for clarification regarding the planning stages of the Masterplan and whether this report was linked to the Planning Committee process. Request from the Select Committee for a detailed briefing note on the key issues to be contained within the report;

(i) **Alric Avenue Day Centre – Proposal to Adapt Centre**

Request for clarification about which additional voluntary group would be accommodated in the premises;

(j) Members commented on the presentation of issue 26 of the Forward Plan and queried why the report on Stonebridge HAT did not detail any external consultation. The Select Committee also requested that references to the Welsh Harp JJC be corrected to state Welsh Harp JCC.

11. **Items considered by the Executive that were not included in the Forward Plan**

There were none.

12. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee will take place on a date to be agreed by Full Council at the Annual Meeting in May 2004.

13. **Any Other Urgent Business**

Draft Air Quality Action Plan

Councillor Harrod advised Members of the Select Committee that Yogini Patel (Service Manager, Environmental Monitoring) and the Lead Member for Environment and Planning were present at the meeting to provide a verbal update on the Air Quality Action Plan following an earlier request by the Select Committee. Members agreed that as this item did not feature on the agenda it would be considered as any other urgent business.

Ms Patel outlined the Council's requirements to submit an Air Quality Action Plan and explained that whilst the Council was in the process of drafting the Air Quality Action Plan for Brent, a number of delays had been incurred as a result of delayed consultation with DEFRA and the GLA. Whilst comments had only been received from DEFRA feedback

to date suggested that the GLA's comments would be positive. Members noted that these comments would be incorporated in the final Air Quality Action Plan but that there were a number of difficulties in trying to respond to some of the 63 action points outlined by DEFRA. Members of the Select Committee were advised that the implications of air quality improvements were significant for the future development of traffic management schemes and road traffic reduction objectives across the Borough. Whilst the Council needed to assess air quality implications against the reduction of accidents across the Borough this was a particularly complex exercise. Members noted that within 12 months of adopting the Air Quality Action Plan the Council would need to undertake a review of transport schemes across the Borough in terms of air quality implications. Ms Patel confirmed that a significant amount of joint working had been undertaken with neighbouring authorities in the West London Alliance and that this would be detailed in the report, as requested by DEFRA.

Ms Patel went on to outline other guidance and regulations which impacted on the detail of the Air Quality Action Plan, including the London Low Emissions Zone and guidance by from the ALG and DEFRA. Members noted that there were proposals for the banning of heavy goods vehicles along the North Circular but that there were considerable cost implications for businesses across the Borough in areas such as Park Royal. Some Members stressed the need to ensure that environmental benefits were not de-prioritised as a result of economic considerations and suggested that detailed feasibility studies would be necessary. Ms Patel acknowledged Members' comments but stressed the need for improvements that complied with EU objectives ensuring that all future improvements were both cost effective and in the longer term satisfied European environmental objectives and air quality requirements.

Some Members of the Select Committee referred to Neasden Goods Yards and enquired as to whether any progress had been made to date concerning the on-going breach of environmental regulations at the Yard. Ms Patel stressed that there had been very few improvements at the site and the company was continuing to operate at weekends without planning consent. Members were advised that monitoring of the dust levels in and around the site had commenced and that dust levels were 40 times higher around Neasden Goods Yard in comparison with other locations around London. Miss Patel advised Members of the Select Committee that a meeting had taken place with the Primary Care Trust to determine if there were any correlations in data against ill health in local residents around Neasden Goods Yard. As a result of the Environmental Agency had been notified. The Lead Member explained that despite the Council's efforts to resolve the matter, it was important that the issue be raised with the GLA and DEFRA to ensure that the issue was investigated further and appropriate action taken. Members acknowledged that the

Environment Agency had failed to intervene despite repeated requests by the Council for greater involvement. Councillor Harrod stressed the importance of ensuring that the Environment Agency was involved in the process and urged the Lead Member to pursue talks with the Environment Agency about this specific matter and feedback to the Forward Plan Select Committee at a future date. In response to comments regarding the possible relocation of the site, Ms Patel confirmed that the Council was in the process of assessing the UDP to investigate relocation and future usage of the site.

Members acknowledged the work being undertaken by Ms Patel and her colleagues and requested that an update report on the issues be presented to the Forward Plan Select Committee at a future date, possibly in July 2004.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the verbal update on the draft Air Quality Action Plan be noted;
- (ii) that an update report on the draft Air Quality Action Plan be presented to a future meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee; and
- (iii) that an update report on the issues regarding Neasden Goods Yard be presented to a future meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm

R HARROD
Chair

Mins0304/scrutiny/ForPlan10myj