

**MINUTES OF THE FORWARD PLAN SELECT COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2005 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor R Blackman (Chair), Councillor Dromey (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Gladbaum, Moher and Taylor.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Harrod and Hughes.

An apology for absence was also received from the Lead Member for Environment and Planning.

Also present were Councillors D Long and Freeson.

**1. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

There were none.

**2. Deputations**

There were none.

**3. Minutes of Last Meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2004**

Members noted that a copy of the revised minutes had previously been circulated to Members of the Select Committee.

RESOLVED:-

that the revised minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2004 be received and approved as an accurate record.

**4. Matters Arising**

*Item 7 – Civic Centre Project*

Councillor Gladbaum queried whether there had been any further progress regarding cross-party discussions about the Civic Centre development and was advised that a meeting had taken place between the Chair, the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance to discuss progress to date. It had been agreed that an all party working group be established to move the project forward and that a further meeting be held in the near future to discuss the proposals. Councillor Gladbaum again stressed the need to ensure that the issue was a cross-party matter.

*Draft Air Quality Action Plan*

Members would be advised in the near future about a special meeting of the Quality of Life Scrutiny Panel which would be scheduled to enable Members to undertake a scrutiny of the Neasden Waste Depot and air quality issues at the site.

*Children and Young People's Local Preventative Strategy*

At the last meeting there had been a lengthy discussion regarding the lack of diversity implications in the report that went to the Executive on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2004. Councillor Gladbaum explained that she had discussed the matter with the Lead Member for Equalities and Service Improvement who would follow the matter up in consultation with officers to ensure that diversity issues were reflected thoroughly in reports.

5. **Call-in of Executive Decisions from the Meeting of the Executive on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2004**

Members of the Select Committee were advised that the deadline for call-in was Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2004 and that no items had been called in.

6. **The Executive List of Decisions for the Meeting that took place on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2004**

RESOLVED:-

that the List of Decisions for the Executive Meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2004 be noted.

7. **Briefing Notes/Information Updates requested by Select Committee following consideration of Version 6 and Version 7 of the Forward Plan**

(i) ***Corporate Equality Policy and Action Plan***

The Lead Member for Equalities and Service Improvement and Tracy Walters (Head of Diversity) were both present at the meeting for this item to respond to Members' questioning.

Ms Walters introduced the report before Members and explained that this was the Council's first Corporate Equality Policy and Action Plan which represented a statement of intention and commitment by the Council to achieve and promote equality. Members had the opportunity to comment on and amend the document before final publication and wide distribution.

In response to a query from Councillor Gladbaum, Ms Walters explained that Impact Needs/ Requirement Assessments had to be undertaken when producing reports and that over 200 managers throughout the Council had been trained on this process. Members noted that these assessments should be logged with the Diversity Team and also the service area for inspection purposes. Members were advised that completion of the assessments was a formal requirement of organisations such as the Audit Commission and therefore Members should not accept reports when such assessments had not been undertaken. Councillor Gladbaum stressed the need for officers to write reports with an awareness of diversity and equality issues and suggested that this important message be communicated to all senior managers and report authors.

In response to a further query from Councillor Gladbaum regarding the financial implications for the Corporate Diversity Team in terms of implementing the policy and action plan, Members were advised that a meeting would be held in the near future with officers from Finance to discuss budget planning issues. Service areas would need to ensure that equality and diversity issues were taken into consideration in budget and service development plans from the outset so that sufficient budgets could be identified to cover any specific areas of work that would be undertaken throughout the municipal year.

Response to a query from Councillor Gladbaum, Ms Walters explained that whilst some guidance had been circulated to local authorities from the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) regarding the wording on the Impact Needs/ Requirements Assessment forms but that the Council had developed its own generic approach which covered a range of equality themes and not solely race. Ms Walters also explained that the Council's incremental approach meant that not all policies required a full assessment to be undertaken as not all issues went out for full public consultation.

Regarding Service User Consultative Forums (SUCFs), Ms Walters confirmed that she would speak to the relevant lead officers to ensure that all the forums were adequately acknowledged in the policy document. In response to a query from Councillor Gladbaum, Ms Walters confirmed that she would speak to Janet Palmer (Assistant Director, Children's Services) to ensure that an assessment had been produced for the Local Preventative Strategy.

Councillor Gladbaum stressed the need for Executive Members to ensure that the action plan was implemented by ensuring that all reports presented to the Executive were accompanied by

adequate Impact Needs/ Requirements Assessments. After some discussion it was felt that a letter should go to the Executive outlining the Select Committee's comments.

In response to a query from Councillor Dromey, Ms Walters advised Members that Equality Action Groups had been established by the majority of service areas and that these were generally led by Service Directors/Managers. Ms Walters explained that the Corporate Equality Action Plan had been pulled together from all of the differing service areas' action plans and therefore it was necessary to look at the roles and working practices of these groups to make sure that action plans were adequately discussed and updated. Commenting on the Diversity Reference Group, Members were advised that this group had been in existence for approximately a year and a half and comprised of third and second tier managers who met quarterly in meetings chaired by Jenny Goodall (Director of Social Services) and looked at issues coming out of the Senior Management Team meetings. It was noted that through these different tiers of discussion there was a wide range of input from across the Council regarding issues of diversity and equality.

In response to a further query from Councillor Dromey concerning the tangible results of this policy, Ms Walters advised those present that the Council was developing Best Value performance indicators and also a library of equality performance indicators which would be introduced across the Council in the near future to measure performance. However, some of the existing performance indicators showed that a number of improvements had already been made such as an increase in the reporting of racial harassment cases. The Lead Member for Equalities and Service Improvement stressed the need to highlight problem areas within the Council on equality and diversity issues such as the lack of a policy on gypsies and travellers. He also stressed the need to ensure that the policy was driven out into the community to both residents and the Council's external contractors in order to promote diversity and equality issues as far as possible.

In response to a query from Taylor, Ms Walters advised those present that the policy would be widely circulated to the public, managers and partner agencies. Copies of the document would also be circulated at the Holocaust meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2005. In response to a query concerning consultation with the BHP, Sharlene Atkins (Legal Adviser) explained that the management agreement held between the Council and BHP meant that BHP adhered to the Council's policies such as the Equality Action Plan and it was noted that the BHP had agreed a

similar document. However, there were no direct links to the Diversity Team.

Councillor Moher referred to the Action Plan and queried the lack of consultation with the trade unions regarding single status. Ms Walters stressed that she would look into this issue and acknowledged the need to amend the document.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the briefing note and verbal update be noted;
  - (ii) that a letter be sent to all Members of the Executive outlining the Select Committee's comments about effective implementation of the policy and action plan by ensuring that all reports to the Executive include suitable Impact Needs / Requirements Assessments.
  - (iii) that the Select Committee's comments be taken into consideration before final publication of the Corporate Equality Policy and Action Plan.
- (ii) ***Dollis Hill House: Proposals for its restoration and adaptation into a Health Centre and facility for the community***

Marcus Perry (Head of Corporate Property) was present at the meeting for this item to respond to Members' questioning.

A briefing note had been circulated separately to Members of the Select Committee.

Mr Perry advised those present that details about contractual arrangements and negotiations would have to be considered as exempt information at the end of the meeting should this information be required by Members. He then went on to advise those present about the Council's work with the Primary Care Trust (PCT), in co-operation with English Heritage, on proposals to restore the now derelict Dollis Hill House. The proposal also included the building of a health facility for the Dollis Hill area. It was noted that the stables would be progressed as a separate development.

Mr Perry confirmed that consultation had been undertaken with the Dollis Hill House Trust (the Trust) regarding the development proposals but that this consultation would be widened once the PCT had confirmed the proposed designs. At this point a number of plans were circulated to Members of the Select

Committee who were advised that the draft plans needed to be refined further with some additional changes. Mr Perry advised those present that this remained an exciting opportunity to improve Dollis Hill House and restore it to its former beauty as well as making it a functional community facility. It was noted that the cost implications of the development were significant but that the PCT was happy to take the project on with the support of English Heritage. Consequently detailed discussions were underway between the organisations regarding restoration and leeway for alterations to the Grade II listed building site. Members were advised that planning applications were likely to be submitted at the end of February/early March and that planning consultation would take place thereafter.

Members noted that a meeting would take place in the near future of the Dollis Hill House Project Board involving the Project Director, Senior Members of the PCT, the architects and a representative from the Council. At this meeting Mr Perry would be updated about the current business plans. Regarding the Trust's involvement in the PCT Project Board and project groups, Mr Perry confirmed that a representative from the Trust had been invited to attend this meeting.

In response to questions from the Chair concerning the Trust's earlier application for Heritage Lottery Funding to undertake restoration of the site, Mr Perry explained that this proposal was on hold until the matter with the PCT had been resolved. He confirmed that the Trust had attempted to raise money for a substantial length of time but that the business case had never been completed and attempts to progress the project had been unsuccessful. Consequently, the emphasis was now on the PCT moving the restoration project forward. Mr Perry confirmed that the Trust had been kept informed of the PCT's proposal from the outset and on the whole supported the proposals for the site.

At this point Mr Perry stressed the intentional contrast between the restored site and the new health facility which would be located next to Dollis Hill House. He explained that these proposed designs would have to be considered as part of the planning process. Mr Perry explained that the plans remained confidential as they formed part of the negotiating process with the PCT but that once the issue was put out to consultation the plans would also become public documents.

Regarding restoration of the stables, Mr Perry confirmed that this site would remain under management of the Brent Arts Council rather than the PCT but the restored House and health centre would be directly managed by the PCT or through a

contracted company responsible to either the Council or the PCT. Mr Perry then commented on need for 24 hour security at the site but stressed that this would be subject to access provisions for the community. In response to a query, Mr Perry confirmed that the car park would be included in the leasing proposals. Members were advised that the Trust had expressed concerns about the creation of any degree of parking at the site but for the project to be practical some parking was necessary.

In response to a query from the Chair concerning the Trust's role in the proposal Mr Perry advised those present that the Trust had initially been consulted but that discussions had been less frequent in recent months. He stressed the need to move the project forward with the PCT. Members noted that the Leader had recently written to the Trust expressing her thanks for its contribution to the restoration project. Mr Perry then confirmed that community facilities would be located in Dollis Hill House including meeting rooms and a café/restaurant.

(iii) ***Youth and Community Centres: Further update reports on Mahogany Arts and the Pakistan Workers' Association***

Marcus Perry (Head of Corporate Property) was present at the meeting for this item to respond to Members' questioning.

A briefing note had been circulated separately to Members of the Select Committee.

*Mahogany Arts Centre Update*

Mr Perry provided Members of the Select Committee with an update on the Mahogany Arts Centre. He outlined the current situation regarding the leasehold arrangements and also the background to the legal situation regarding this site. Mr Perry then went on to stress the need to be clear about the extent of the community benefits in Harlesden as a result of the Centre. He explained that this would be taken into consideration when trying to review the lease arrangements with the company. Members noted that the discussions were ongoing to find a way forward and that there was significant pressure on the Council to progress the matter, although it was particularly difficult to resolve and find new lease arrangements due to the legal history regarding the centre. The Chair queried the officer advice and legal support from Brent Council that had been provided to Mahogany Arts Centre in relation to the contractual dispute at that time and was advised that the matter would be looked into further and any details fed back to Members. Mr Perry confirmed that a Court Judgment existed to date.

Members were advised that the Centre's primary concern was to secure a sufficiently long lease as this affected their leverage to secure grants and to promote future business ventures. Mr Perry stressed that the Council did not want to lose Mahogany Arts Centre from the Borough but that any future leasing arrangements had to ensure the Council's credibility. Whilst acknowledging the need for compromise and negotiation by both sides, Councillor Moher stressed the need to assess whether the business generated legitimate community benefits.

#### *Pakistani Workers' Association (PWA) Update*

Marcus Perry (Head of Corporate Property) was present at the meeting for this item to respond to Members' questioning.

Mr Perry outlined the history to this site and confirmed that there was ongoing confusion regarding whether the site had been given to the Pakistani Workers' Association (PWA) as a gift or a licence. As a result of this confusion the Council and the PWA had been in a long standing dispute about lease arrangements for the future of the site. Members noted that there was a thriving youth centre at the site and therefore it was vitally important that the matter be resolved.

Those present were advised that there were a number of options available to the Council to try and resolve the matter and that a relatively fair deal, an interest-free proposal to renew the lease with covenants to protect the site, had recently been put to the PWA based on community and economic justifications. However, the PWA had declined the offer on the basis that the site had previously been granted to them as a gift. The Chair expressed some concerns that the PWA may wish at some point in the future to secure the land and thereafter sell it for housing. Mr Perry acknowledged concerns expressed by the Chair and confirmed that any future lease arrangements would include covenants to ensure protection of the site for specific community usage.

Mr Perry explained that the PWA wanted the freehold to the premises and that there had been little compromise in reaching an acceptable deal to both parties. He explained that favourable lease arrangements for the PWA in the future depended on them offering of a token financial gesture. It was acknowledged however that there was relatively little leverage for the Council to resolve the matter.

Members would be updated in the future regarding this matter.



(iv) **Salisbury Road Car Park Site: Proposed Sale**

Marcus Perry (Head of Corporate Property) was present at the meeting for this item to respond to Members' questioning.

The Select Committee had before them (circulated separately) copies of the proposed designs for the site which were not for publication as they contained exempt information as specified in the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, namely:

Any terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the authority in the course of negotiations for a contract for the acquisition or disposal of property of the supply of goods or services.

Mr Perry referred to the proposed improvements to a number of sites including Salisbury Road Car Park. Referring to the Salisbury Road Car Park development, Members were advised that the freehold would be sold to Genesis with a base price and further top ups in future years depending on the final cost implications of development. Members noted that detailed discussions were ongoing with Genesis, the planners and the architects. Since this development was included in the Capital Programme for the 2004/2005 financial year it was therefore necessary to bring in the first part of the capital receipt by March 2005. As a result the report was anticipated at the meeting of the Executive in March 2005.

Members were advised that this proposed development would result in a significant receipt to the Council and represented a major development within the South Kilburn Masterplan area. Members noted that consultation had been undertaken with the New Deal for Communities Board as well as with patrons of the Albert Road Day Centre and also the British Legion all of which were included in the overall development.

In response to a query from Councillor Gladbaum, Mr Perry confirmed that a general masterplan covered the entire area including sites such as Cullen House, The Falcon Hotel and also Queens Park Station. Whilst an agreed planning brief covered the whole site the development of this area would be undertaken in individual phases, subject to individual planning consent by the Planning Committee. However, each individual application would need to reflect the overall approach to planning in the area. Members noted that the early stages of the development would not include Queens Park Station. At this point Councillor Freeson advised those present that supplementary planning guidance covered this area but did not represent part of the main masterplan.

Councillor Freeson queried the Council's approach to the development by progressing it in separate phases and was advised that it was necessary to undertake the developments in separate phases due to the scale. In response to a query regarding the sale of the freehold of the Salusbury Road Car Park site, Mr Perry explained that the sale of the freehold and return of the capital receipt was one option and acknowledged concerns that the Council would not retain any financial involvement from the property/land in the future if this course of action was taken.

RESOLVED:-

that the above briefing notes be noted.

**8. The Forward Plan (Issue 7 and Issue 8))**

Issue 7 of the Forward Plan (06/12/04 to 01/04/05) and Issue 8 of the Forward Plan (10/01/05 to 06/05/05) were before Members of the Select Committee. Following consideration of these documents the Select Committee requested further information to future meetings on the following issues:-

- (i) *Children Act and the Establishment of the Children and Families Department in Brent – follow up report*

Request for a briefing note to the February meeting of the Select Committee. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the meeting and respond to Members' questioning.

- (ii) *Annual Work Programme – Monitoring Report*

Request for a briefing note to the February meeting of the Select Committee on this item. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the meeting and respond to Members' questioning.

- (iii) *Approval of Enforcement Policy*

Request for a briefing note to the February meeting of the Select Committee. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the meeting and respond to Members' questioning.

- (iv) *Joint Municipal Waste Strategy*

Request for a briefing note to the February meeting of the Select Committee. The Lead Member and the Director of StreetCare

were requested to attend this meeting and respond to Members' questioning.

- (v) *Disposal of Access Road leading to the Liberal Jewish Cemetery, Pound Lane*

Request for a briefing note to the February meeting of the Select Committee. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the meeting and respond to Members' questioning.

- (vi) *Chalkhill Combined Facilities Building*

Request for a briefing note/information update on this item to the February meeting of the Select Committee if the item is going to the February meeting of the Executive. However, if this item is deferred to the March Executive meeting then the Select Committee's request should be considered at the March meeting of the FPSC. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the relevant meeting and respond to Members' questioning.

- (vii) *Award of the Parking Contracts*

Request for a briefing note to be presented to the March meeting of the Select Committee. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the March meeting of the Select Committee and respond to Members' questioning.

- (viii) *Recommendations for Items to be considered by other Scrutiny Panels and/or Select Committees*

The Forward Plan Select Committee recommended:-

- (i) that the Social Care Scrutiny Panel consider the Grant to Voluntary Sector Organisations for Social Care report (Executive, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2005) at its next meeting in March 2005; and
- (ii) that the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel consider the proposed admission arrangements 2006 to 2007 (Executive, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2005) and also the Funding Formula Review for Schools (Executive, 14<sup>th</sup> February 2005) report at its next meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

It was acknowledged that since the next meeting of the Management Board was not scheduled until 9<sup>th</sup> March 2005, consideration of these items by the particular Panels would be dependent upon other Work Programme commitments and with

the agreement of the Chair and the relevant service area lead officer.

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

There were none at this meeting.

10. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED:-

that the press and public be now excluded from the meeting as the following item contains exempt information as specified in Schedule 1 of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, namely:-

Any terms proposed, or to be proposed, by or to the Authority in the course of negotiations for a contract or for the acquisition or disposal or property or supply of goods or services.

11. **Dollis Hill House: Proposals for its restoration and adaptation into a Health Centre and facility for the community**

Marcus Perry (Head of Corporate Property) confirmed that a long lease would be undertaken with the PCT to ensure that the community building was protected. He outlined the proposed costs of the development by the PCT and stressed that the Council would work closely with the PCT to ensure that this important project was not solely a commercial development. Regarding the proposed café/ restaurant in the plans, Mr Perry confirmed that the PCT would require a degree of flexibility to set prices but that protections to ensure community usage in the future would be specified by the Council as part of the detailed discussions that would take place before finalising the project.

12. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee was scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> February 2005. Following some discussion it was agreed that the meeting should be re-arranged to take place on Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2005, subject to Member and venue availability. This date would be confirmed in the near future.

RESOLVED:-

that the next meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee take place on Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2005, subject to Member and venue availability.

**13. Any Other Urgent Business**

There was none.

The meeting ended at 10.25 pm

R BLACKMAN  
Chair

Mins0405/scrutiny/ForPlan5jak