

**MINUTES OF THE FORWARD PLAN SELECT COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2005 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor R Blackman (Chair) and Councillors Gladbaum, Kabir, Moher and Taylor.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Harrod, Dromey and Freeson (alternate).

Apologies for absence were also received from the Lead Member for Corporate Resources, Councillor Coughlin.

Also present were the Lead Member for Health and Social Care, Councillor Fox, the Lead Member for Environment and Planning, Councillor Jones and the Lead Member for Education, Arts and Libraries, Councillor Lyon.

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

There were none.

**2. Deputations**

There were none.

**3. Minutes of Last Meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2005**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2005 be received and approved as an accurate record.

**4. Matters Arising**

***Civic Centre Update***

Councillor Gladbaum queried whether there had been any further progress regarding cross-party discussions about the civic centre development. The Chair confirmed that a meeting had been scheduled for Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> February at which all three party leaders had been invited to attend. Members were advised that a series of dates for further meetings would be set up in the future to move the project forward.

**5. Call-in of Executive Decisions from the Meeting of the Executive on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2005**

Members of the Select Committee were advised that no items had been called in from the meeting of the Executive on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2005.

6. **The Executive List of Decisions for the Meeting that took place on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2005**

RESOLVED;-

that the list of Decisions for the Executive Meeting on Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2005 be noted.

7. **Briefing Notes/Information Updates requested by Select Committee following consideration of Version 8 of the Forward Plan**

(i) ***Children Act – Restructuring Children and Families Department in Brent – Follow up Report***

The Lead Member for Health and Social Care, Councillor Fox; the Lead Member for Education, Arts and Libraries, Councillor Lyon and Dr Krutika Pau (Assistant Director, Children's Partnership) were present at the meeting for this item to respond to Members' questioning.

Krutika Pau advised Members of the Select Committee that this report provided an update to the report which had been presented to the Executive in December 2004. Members noted that this follow up report concentrated primarily on the outcome of consultation with staff and partners regarding the establishment of a new Children and Families department in response to the Children Act. Members noted that the wider implications of the proposed Council restructure were detailed in a separate report from the Chief Executive which would also be presented to the Executive on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

Dr Pau explained that five meetings had taken place involving approximately 300 Members of staff from Education and Social Services since December 2004. It was noted that there had been a broadly positive reaction to the establishment of the new department and the majority of staff acknowledged the rationale for the proposed restructure. Members noted that staff were particularly interested in operational issues and the implications for where people would work and the effect on their daily working lives. With regard to keeping staff informed about the proposals, Members were advised that a staff bulletin had been published and circulated widely. This document was also accessible on the intranet and clearly outlined the proposals for the restructure. In addition, there was ongoing dialogue with the unions and a short article appeared in the January edition of the Brent Magazine. Members noted that on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2005 a 'Children's Day' had been held and was attended by over 200 EAL and Social Services staff and representatives

from partner agencies such as the PCT. This event had provided the opportunity to disseminate messages regarding the restructuring out to a large volume of staff and associates.

The Lead Member for Health and Social Care confirmed that implementation of the Children Act had significant implications for the Council but that Brent was now leading the way with regards to the restructuring process. The Lead Member for Education, Arts and Libraries stressed the importance of establishing partnerships with other key bodies and agencies in order to integrate children's services effectively both within and beyond the Borough. At this point Dr Pau confirmed that the Inspectorate had recently commented favourably on Brent's progress regarding implementation of the Children Act.

Regarding the establishment of a Children's Trust, Dr Pau confirmed that legislation had been revised and as such it was no longer necessary for an authority to establish a Children's Trust as long as it was clear that the authority was working in partnership with other agencies. Consequently there was no proposal to establish a Children's Trust from the outset. In response to a question from the Chair, the Lead Member for Education, Arts and Libraries explained that there were no concerns from the Council's partners regarding the decision not to adopt a formal Children's Trust approach to ensuring partnership working. Commenting on a recent Children's Strategic Partnership Board meeting, the Lead Member for Education, Arts and Libraries explained that all partners were committed to providing adequate resources to support the restructure and ensure effective partnership working.

In response to a query from the Chair concerning the guidelines for passporting funds, Dr Pau explained that the Children Act did not require the passporting of funds and therefore this was determined by local decision making.

Councillor Moher welcomed the report but queried what benefits the restructure would actually have on the delivery of services to children. The Lead Member for Education, Arts and Libraries stressed that the restructuring would result in a more integrated approach to the provision of all children's care and services such as by reducing unnecessary assessments. The Lead Member for Health and Social Care advised those present that the restructure would result in the strategic bringing together of all services so no one body or organisation was working in isolation. Councillor Gladbaum stressed that the intention was to provide a better service to all children and their families not just vulnerable children. However, it was noted that the

proposed restructure was intended to prevent children from falling through the net such as Victoria Climbié.

Councillor Kabir commented on the sexual health and teenage pregnancy issues that were highlighted in the objectives of the restructuring and stressed that these were very important. However, she queried how the needs of children with special educational needs would be met under the proposed restructure. Dr Pau explained that one of the divisions within the Department would be Achievement and Inclusion and therefore children with special educational needs would fall under this division.

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note be noted.

(ii) ***Annual Workforce Monitoring Report***

The Lead Member for Equalities and Service Improvement, Councillor D Long, Val Jones (Head of Human Resources and Diversity) and Cristina Bertua (JE Support Office, Human Resources) were present at the meeting for this item to respond to Members' questioning.

Val Jones (Head of Human Resources and Diversity) advised those present that the report was scheduled to go to the Executive on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2005 with the third monitoring report that had been produced by the Council. She explained that this report profiled the work that had been done in Brent since the period March 2004 and outlined employment practices for all staff across the organisation, excluding temporary members of staff. Members were advised that school staff were detailed in a separate section within the report and that profiles within the report were based on classifications provided by staff on a voluntary basis.

Ms Jones outlined some of the main themes contained in the report including performance indicators relating to the number of ethnic posts, employees with a disability and women employed in senior management positions across the organisation. Members were then advised about notable increases and decreases in percentages of positions that were held by staff with disabilities, those from an ethnic background and women in senior management posts and their spread across the services within the organisation. It was noted that the Council had a statutory duty to monitor such data and publish results on an annual basis.

Members were advised that a 20-point action plan had been developed in response to those issues raised in the monitoring report regarding missing data, assessing why there was a high percentage of BME disciplinary cases and reviewing recruitment and retention of BME staff to ensure that there was no bias. Ms Jones explained that the number of women in senior management posts was being assessed and that work would be undertaken by the Human Resources Department in the near future to assess disability issues with a view to increasing applications from disabled people. The number of BME staff moving into senior management posts would also be assessed with a view to improving staff development and the progression of BME staff into management positions within the Council.

The Lead Member explained that there had been a great deal of internal discussion regarding the issue of the number of disabled people in the workforce. He expressed concerns about the low number of disabled people working within the Council and stressed the need to review the application and recruitment processes. Ms Jones explained that there was now a better understanding amongst staff regarding disability issues but that it was necessary to check with employees that disabilities were accurately recorded by staff. The Chair commented on the issue of under-reporting and queried why some staff were so reluctant to report disabilities. Ms Jones explained that there were a number of reasons for under reporting such as being fearful of a possible stigma or simply not wishing to disclose personal information. Commenting on the Disabilities and Mental Health Service User Consultative Forum, Ms Jones explained that this was a good place to discuss the issues and encourage staff to report disabilities so that the Council could respond proactively. At this point Ms Jones confirmed that an external company would work with the Council to assess and improve the Council's applications forms. The Chair explained that applicants were judged on their ability to successfully complete an application form against the job specification, consequently it was felt that staff training was very important to prevent applicants from being disadvantaged. Ms Jones confirmed that the Department would be re-visiting the guidance on how to complete application forms to ensure that this was clear.

In response to a query from the Chair regarding appendix 1, Cristina Bertua (JE Support Office, Human Resources) advised those present that the appendix highlighted information that had not been completed on a sample of application forms by employees, although the reasons for not providing the information was not clear.

Referring to the Department's intentions to assess retention of women across the Council, Councillor Kabir queried whether there were any proposals to develop a voucher scheme for child care or to establish a crèche facility. Ms Jones explained that there had been considerable discussion about the provision of a crèche by the Council and that this matter had been raised recently in light of the new civic centre development. It was stressed however that at the current time the Council operated across a wide range of sites and therefore it would be difficult to provide adequate child care facilities for all staff. Referring to the proposal for a voucher system, Ms Jones explained that this issue was likely to be pursued in the future as it would provide a flexible solution to organising child care for a large number of staff.

Councillor Taylor welcomed the report and acknowledged the importance of the Council's ethnic majority workforce.

In response to a query from Councillor Gladbaum, Ms Jones confirmed that the report was based on data as at March 2004 but stressed that this information changed constantly and that performance indicators were usually provided on a quarterly basis. Members noted that the next Annual Workforce Monitoring Report would be due in March 2005 after the financial year end. She explained that there had been a delay to the current report being presented to the Executive.

Councillor Gladbaum referred to school based employees and references in the report about the higher number of BME staff in Brent compared to all other LEA's across the country, except Salford. Ms Jones confirmed that Brent was definitely out-performing all other London boroughs in this area.

In response to a query from Councillor Gladbaum, Ms Jones explained that the mentoring scheme was one of a number of initiatives intended to encourage the promotion and development of women within the Council. Members noted that the next mentoring scheme would be launched in May 2005 and that there remained an important emphasis on the encouragement and promotion of BME staff. Other initiatives included the Leadership for Excellence course for senior managers. In response to a query from Councillor Gladbaum, Ms Jones confirmed that she would provide separate information about the number of people involved in the mentoring scheme.

Councillor Moher welcomed the report and stressed the importance of publicising the Council's achievements and Brent's comparable status to other London Boroughs in terms of

the percentage of BME staff across schools within the Borough. He then commented on the issue of age and queried what work would be undertaken to assess how age impacted on recruitment and retention within the Council. Ms Jones explained that legislation would be introduced at the end of 2006 regarding age discrimination and the implications for employers. Members noted that whilst the Department had already looked at these issues, more in depth work would be undertaken in the future once guidance began to emerge. Ms Jones confirmed that an assessment of staff age profiles would be particularly interesting. At this point the Chair stressed that age was an important consideration for recruitment and retention within the Authority, acknowledging that this applied to both younger and older people.

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note be noted.

(iii) ***Joint Municipal Waste Strategy***

The Lead Member for Environment and Planning, Councillor Jones and Keith Balmer (Head of StreetCare) were both present for this item at the meeting to respond to Members' questioning.

The Lead Member for Environment and Planning advised those present about the background to the report that would be going to the Executive on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2005. Members were advised that the current West London Waste Strategy was now out of date and did not meet the Mayor's requirements. Consequently a new strategy had been developed that coincided with Brent's own waste strategy, which would be due in July 2005. A re-tendering of the Waste Collection Service was anticipated in the near future and consequently this would affect the Council's own strategy. Referring to the recycling of waste, Members noted that 20% of waste was currently recycled across the Borough but that EU Directives required the authority to reduce 80% of waste tipped year on year. Members noted that there obvious financial implications for the Authority. With regard to disposal of waste, Brent was part of the West London Waste Authority and was therefore required to contribute to the development of a disposal strategy for West London. Members noted that the Council's own collection strategy was greatly influenced and complemented by the disposal strategy shared with participating boroughs of the West London Waste Authority. With regard to recycling, composting and collection, Members noted that there were a number of agreed targets and that action was underway to improve on these targets.

The Lead Member for Environment and Planning advised those present that a great deal of public consultation had been undertaken regarding alternative methods for waste disposal. It remained important however that the West London Waste Authority keep exploring these issues and identify new technologies for disposal. In response to a query from the Chair, the Lead Member confirmed that the West London Waste Authority Strategy would be agreed by the participating boroughs.

In response to a query concerning the collection process and the separation of bio-degradable goods from non bio-degradable goods, the Lead Member explained that weekly green collections for card and garden waste would be undertaken in the near future, following a report to the Executive. At this point the Chair commented on the collection of plastic waste and the problems this posed for the Council. He stressed that collection was costly and disposal of such bulk waste difficult. Keith Balmer (StreetCare) advised those present that all collected waste was currently sold for profit by the collection company. He stressed however that he was unsure what happened to this waste once it had been collected and removed from the Borough. Mr Balmer explained that plastic and card were two of the most common items that people enquired about and that following the introduction of the green bin service in the near future, card would be collected as part of the composting collection service.

The Chair queried whether there were any restrictions on kitchen waste and was advised by Mr Balmer that in April 2005 the green bin system would be in place for up to 60,000 houses and that this would provide the collection of green/home/kitchen waste including meat and peelings. He confirmed that the tender contract would be put before the Executive for consideration to agree who would collect and dispose of such waste as part of the weekly collections.

Referring to the issue of weekly collections, the Chair queried the timings for collection and whether three different bin collections per week was an unrealistic challenge. Mr Balmer confirmed that collection would be a challenge and timings had not yet been determined. He explained that in Ealing three bin collections (green bin/wheelie bin/green box) were undertaken on the same day at the same time as street cleaning.

Councillor Moher explained that a tiny minority of local residents used green bins and therefore same day collection would maximise the use of these services.



Councillor Gladbaum stressed that Britain was far behind other European Union countries with regards to waste disposal and therefore it was very important that improvements be undertaken. She queried good practice by other West London boroughs and was advised that a number of authorities operated different practices and that these provided a valuable way to monitor and enhance Brent's performance. Mr Balmer confirmed that obvious improvements could be made with regards to the collection of bulky waste but stressed that with regard to disposal, each of the participating West London authorities were working towards the same aim.

Councillor Gladbaum queried the disposal of radiators and was advised that these were sent to landfill. With regard to the collection and disposal of fridges, he explained that these were collected separately for the purposes of de-gassing. Members noted since West London Waste did not have the capacity to recycle fridge parts, the component parts were recycled in Germany. In response to a query regarding the collection of microwaves, Mr Balmer confirmed that regulations were imminent regarding the disposal of such items and that it was anticipated that such items would have to be disposed of in the same manner as fridges.

The Chair referred to the compulsory recycling scheme in Barnet and queried the success of financial penalties for residents who failed to recycle waste. Mr Balmer explained that the Council was currently assessing the effectiveness of this scheme as it had since been expanded across Barnet, although the emphasis would remain on educating people about waste disposal.

Members were advised that further reports would be presented to the Executive in the future on both the joint strategy and also Brent's collection strategy.

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note be noted;

(iv) ***Deferred Briefing Notes***

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing notes on the following items be considered at future meetings of the Forward Plan Select Committee following the deferral of these items to future meetings of the Executive:-

- (a) ***Chalkhill Combined Facilities Building***
- (b) ***Disposal of Access Road Leading to the Liberal Jewish Cemetery, Pound Lane***
- (c) ***Approval of Enforcement Policy***

8. **The Forward Plan (Issue 9 2004/2005)**

Issue 9 of the Forward Plan (07/02/05 to 03/06/05) was before Members of the Select Committee. Following consideration of this document the Select Committee requested further information to future meetings on the following issues:-

- (i) *Youth and Community Centres – further update report from Mahogany Arts and the Pakistan Workers' Association*

Request for a briefing note to the meeting of the Select Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2005. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the meeting and respond to Members' questioning, subject to the detail contained in the briefing note.

- (ii) *Dollis Hill House – Proposals for its restoration and adaptation into a health centre and facility for the community*

Request for a briefing note to the meeting of the Select Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the meeting and respond to Members' questioning, subject to the detail contained in the briefing note.

- (iii) *Grants Programme*

Request for a briefing note to the meeting of the Select Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the meeting and respond to Members' questioning, subject to the detail contained in the briefing note.

- (iv) *Environment fees and charges*

Request for a briefing note to the meeting of the Select Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the meeting and respond to Members' questioning, subject to the detail contained in the briefing note.

- (v) *Review of fees and charges – sports services*

Request for a briefing note to the meeting of the Select Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the meeting and respond to Members' questioning, subject to the detail contained in the briefing note.

(vi) *Environment Capital Spend 2005 to 2006*

Request for a briefing note to the meeting of the Select Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2005. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the meeting and respond to Members' questioning, subject to the detail contained in the briefing note.

(vii) *TfL Capital Approved Programme 2005 to 2006*

Request for a briefing note to the meeting of the Select Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the meeting and respond to Members' questioning, subject to the detail contained in the briefing note.

(viii) *Annual Review of fees and charges for Adult Services*

Request for a briefing note to the meeting of the Select Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the meeting and respond to Members' questioning, subject to the detail contained in the report/briefing note.

(ix) *Grants to Voluntary Sector Organisations for Social Care*

Request for a briefing note to the meeting of the Select Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005. The Lead Member and lead officer were requested to attend the meeting and respond to Members' questioning, subject to the detail contained in the briefing note.

Members of the Select Committee asked that the following items be added to the relevant Scrutiny Panel work programmes, if these were not yet included:-

- (i) Public Toilet Strategy Report
- (ii) Supporting People Five Year Strategy

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

RESOLVED:-

that it be noted that the following items had been considered by the Executive which were not included in the Forward Plan:-

- (i) *Lease and Sub-Lease of Land off Hannah Close, Wembley;*
- (ii) *Authority to Invite Tenders for the Installation of Closed Circuit TV Cameras for Brent Council and Wembley Stadium Contract;*
- (iii) *Willesden Sports Centre –Updates and Award of Contract in relation to Private Finance Initiative; and*
- (iv) *Asset Protection Agreement (APA) Wembley Link Bridge.*

**10. Date of Next Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the next meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee take place on Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005.

**11. Any Other Urgent Business**

There was none.

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm

R BLACKMAN  
Chair

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