

MINUTES OF THE FORWARD PLAN SELECT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 26th July 2005 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor R Blackman (Chair), Dromey (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Moher (part)

Also present were the Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture (Councillor Jones) and the Lead Member for Local Democracy and Consultation (Councillor Kagan).

1. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None

2. Deputations

Members agreed to receive a deputation from Mr Delwyn Chambers in respect of the Dollis Hill House briefing note.

Mr Chambers began by circulating observations he had made concerning the debate over the future of Dollis Hill House. He highlighted the views of some of the major organisations involved in the future of Dollis Hill House, including the Greater London Authority (GLA), the London Development Agency (LDA), the Local Development Agency Dollis Hill House Trust (DHHT), the Brent Primary Care Trust (BPCT), the Charity Commission, English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Gladstone Park Consultative Committee and various Brent Council departments. He stated that an initial proposed takeover of Dollis Hill House by BPCT had been unpopular with residents and had subsequently been withdrawn. He emphasised the importance of considering heritage factors in deciding the future of Dollis Hill House.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting – 29th June 2005

RESOLVED: -

that the minutes of the meeting held on 29th June 2005 be received and approved as an accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

None

5. Call-in of Executive Decisions from the Meeting of the Executive on 11th July 2005

Members of the Forward Plan Select Committee were advised that there had been no call-in of Executive decisions from the meeting of the Executive on Monday, 11th July 2005.

6. **The Executive List of Decisions for the Meeting that took place on 11th July 2005**

RESOLVED: -

that the Executive List of Decisions for the meeting that took place on Monday, 11th July 2005 be noted.

7. **Briefing Notes/Information Updates requested by Select Committee following consideration of Version 2 (2005/06) of the Forward Plan**

(i) ***Dollis Hill House***

Shaun Faulkner (Head of Parks Service) confirmed that interest had initially been expressed by both the GLA and BPCT to restore Dollis Hill House to be used in a health capacity. However, Mr Faulkner explained that the BPCT Board had decided not to proceed with proposals following consideration of the business case. He added that there had been attempts to arrange a meeting with the GLA, who had expressed reservation in providing funds for the re-development of Dollis Hill House as it was not part of a London-wide strategy. Mr Faulkner advised Members that he would be preparing a more detailed report once the meeting with the GLA had gone ahead.

Marcus Perry (Head of Corporate Property) informed Members that a Briefing Paper on options for the House was to be presented to the Council's Policy Coordination Group and he acknowledged that the Dollis Hill House Trust would be consulted over their second Business Plan.

The Chair sought information concerning a second proposal from the Dollis Hill House Trust. In reply, Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture) stated that there had been no discussion on the second proposals, but she confirmed that the first proposals had been rejected after consideration of its business plan.

At this point, the Chair invited a representative of the Dollis Hill House Trust to comment on the second proposal. The representative confirmed that after the original proposals had been rejected, revised proposals had been submitted in February 2004 which was yet to receive a response. The

representative understood that 1 copy of the application had been sent to the Local Authority and 2 to the GLA. He added that the original proposals had been met with considerable interest from the Heritage Lottery Fund and for this reason he was optimistic that the revised proposals would be successful in obtaining lottery funds. In reply to these comments, Mr Perry confirmed that a report from the Policy Coordination Group would acknowledge the revised proposals and that they would be given due consideration.

The Chair expressed concern that the revised proposals had yet to be considered and he requested that these proposals be re-circulated. He also offered to help in obtaining a response from the GLA. Councillor Jones agreed to seek information concerning any response to the revised proposals. She also commented that the revised proposals may not be able to raise sufficient revenue if English Heritage wished for the original format of Dollis Hill House to be retained as a condition for providing lottery funding.

The Chair requested that this item be re-considered by the Committee before a report is submitted to the Executive.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the briefing note be noted; and
- (ii) that this item be brought before the Committee prior to the consideration of a report by the Executive.

At this point, Councillor Moher left the room, meaning that the remainder of this meeting was inquorate.

(ii) ***Youth and Community Centres***

Mr Perry updated Members on the situation concerning Mahogany Arts and the Pakistan Community Centre. Since publication of the Briefing Note, Mr Perry advised the Committee that the Treasury Solicitor's Office had agreed to return the lease on the property to returned ownership of Mahogany Arts Limited (MAL). However, the company were still liable for the original debts and they were seeking assistance from the Council towards payment of them. MAL promised to write to the Borough Solicitor setting out their claim for assistance and the Borough Solicitor was awaiting their proposals.

The Chair enquired who had advised MAL that the debts were the responsibility of the Local Authority. In reply, Mr Perry stated that an organisation called AFM had been advising MAL

and that the outcome of the case would depend on whether AFL had proved to be negligent, with MAL arguing that the Council were responsible because they were consultants prior to the initial lease. Mr Perry stated that progress was being made with regard to an agreement between MAL and the Council, but there was still some disagreement over the payment of costs. Members also noted that MAL required funds to improve the building and that it was a community business that had the potential to raise its own revenue.

Mr Perry advised Members that a report would be going to the September meeting of the Executive concerning the Pakistan Community Centre. He stated that an agreement had been made with the Pakistan Workers Association who would be granted a 99 year lease of the Community Centre in return for a modest consideration payable as rent over the first 10 years of the lease.

The Chair enquired what sort of protection would be afforded to this agreement. In reply, Mr Perry stated that covenants would be included to strengthen the Council's position in respect of this.

(iii) ***Children and Young Peoples' Participation Strategy***

Dr Krutika Pau (Assistant Director – Strategy and Partnerships, Children & Families Department) began by stating that the need for a Children and Young Peoples' Participation Strategy had been identified following the Children Act. Members heard that a report recommending the strategy would be put before the September meeting of the Executive and would be adopted by the Brent Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board. The Board comprised of a number of agencies and each agency would need an Action Plan to implement the strategy.

Councillor Dromey asked what the aims and desired results of the strategy would be. In reply, Dr Pau stressed the importance of ensuring that children and young people had an opportunity to participate in the way services affecting them were planned and delivered. This was relevant for services provided by all statutory agencies. The strategy would ensure that there was regular feedback to the Partnership Board from children and young people on a range of issues affecting them and the Board would be making strategic decisions on the services to be provided for children and families in Brent. In answer to the Chair's query concerning specific ways in which young people would be involved, Dr Pau stated the other possible ways included supporting work through organising specific events and activities to capture the views of specific groups of children and

young people. Dr Pau commented that this could include, for example, looked after children, children with disabilities and teenage parents. She concluded by stating that the overall intention was to engage with young people more actively through a variety of methods.

(iv) ***Public Convenience Strategy***

Neil St Lewis (StreetScene Manager, StreetCare) advised Members that a report for the Public Convenience Strategy was due to go before the September meeting of the Executive. Mr St Lewis stated that it was intended to improve the current facilities using existing funds, with one of principal proposals being to improve signage directing the public to the nearest facilities. It was also intended to provide instructions in public toilets in at least one other of the Borough's top 10 languages as well as English. Members heard that the longer term plans included consulting on a framework strategy and constructing 2 super loos in town centres that were yet to be identified. It was hoped that the current contractor would provide extra toilets that were needed and that other contractors could be approached if this was not possible.

In reply to a query from the Chair, Mr St Lewis stated that the cost of a superloo was in the region of £15,000 to £20,000, plus a further £20,000 for 15 years' maintenance. He added that it was hoped that public convenience facilities in Harrow Road and Victoria Road would be re-opened. The Chair enquired about what measures had been undertaken to cope with improper use of toilet facilities. In reply, Mr St Lewis stated that improper use was not a large problem in the Borough, but action had been taken in the past, and he cited as an example the closure of facilities in Neasden due to drug use. He added that toilets were cleaned daily and checked by Street Wardens.

(v) ***Local Development Framework – Issues and Options Consultation***

Dave Carroll (Head of Policy and Projects, Planning Service) advised Members that it was intended to adopt the Local Development Framework in 2008. One of the key issues revolved around future housing requirements, and factors such as trends of housing needs over the last 10 years and the Mayor of London's policies would need to be taken into account. Mr Carroll explained that providing the minimal housing would create the least impact but slow regeneration, whilst providing the maximum housing would have the reverse effect of encouraging more regeneration but increase the impact. The Local Development Framework would include core policies such

as a Development Control Policy and a wide variety of options would be put forward. A report was due before the Executive in August 2005 setting out proposals for the first round of consultation that was due to commence this autumn.

In reply to queries from the Chair, Mr Carroll confirmed that the initial consultation would start in autumn 2005 and finish around March/April 2006, with the results reported to the Executive. After the second round of consultation, a report would be bought back to the Executive listing the preferred options and once the final decisions had been made, they would be subject to the usual formal consultation before a Local Development Framework would be adopted. The Chair then asked to what extent the Local Development Framework would be required to relate to the London Plan. In reply, Mr Carroll explained that there was an expectation that there should be some conformity with the London Plan, however the term conformity had not been clearly defined, although Mr Carroll added that the London Mayor's Office was likely to seek an overall increase in housing density in London.

Discussion took place concerning housing capacity, with the Chair commenting that some housing targets had suggested significantly reducing the time period on which to build a certain number of dwellings. He indicated concern that building a larger number of dwellings could result in a number of high rise buildings which could have a detrimental impact. Councillor Dromey sought clarification concerning what was meant by capacity.

In reply to the issues raised, Mr Carroll stated that some housing targets referred to housing capacity which stated the maximum number of dwellings that could be built. He added that capacity often, though not always, equated to a housing target and that factors such as impact would also come under consideration. He suggested that a housing target at the higher end of the scale was more likely considering the Borough's housing needs, although this would be balanced by the ability to manage the impact as well as the likely positive effect it would have on regeneration.

The Chair enquired what consideration would be given to empty properties in meeting housing needs. In reply, Mr Carroll stated that 1,000 empty properties could be bought back into use over a 10 year period. Councillor Dromey commented that calculating the number of empty properties was problematic because it was based on Council Tax payments received which would not necessarily accurately reflect the actual number of properties that were empty, adding that the Empty Properties

Task Group which he chaired was currently looking at 2 particular wards with regard to this issue. The Chair commented on the importance of attempting to bring empty properties back into residential use prior to calculating how much new build would be required, adding that high density housing often raised the cost of land.

(vi) ***Wembley Redevelopment – Crowd Safety and Security***

The Chair announced that it had been agreed prior to this meeting to consider this item at the next meeting as a report had been postponed from the August to the September meeting of the Executive.

(vii) ***BACES – Adult Education 3 Year Development Plan***

As a result of Councillor Jones advising Members that a report would now not be considered until the Executive meeting of December 2005, the Chair stated that this item would be considered at a future meeting.

8. **The Forward Plan (*Issue 3 2005/2006*)**

Members were advised that the Private Sector Strategy had been deferred to be considered at the 12th September 2005 meeting of the Executive.

Issue 3 of the Forward Plan (08/08/05 to 09/12/05) was before Members of the Select Committee. The Chair stated that he would have requested briefing notes for Kingsbury Pool – Update on Progress and Future Options and the Private Sector Strategy for the next meeting, and on Parking Policy for the relevant meeting, had the meeting been quorate.

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

There were none.

10. **Date of Next Meeting**

The Chair, on noting that the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, 30th August 2005, stated that there was a possibility that this meeting may be postponed to a later date.

11. **Any Other Urgent Business**

In response to a query from Councillor Jones, the Chair stated that he felt 2 sides would be sufficient for future briefing notes and that officers

and lead members would be invited to attend where further clarification was sought.

He also enquired whether it was possible for a form to be made available which tracked when reports went on the Forward Plan and highlighted any changes to the date that the report was to be considered.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm

R BLACKMAN
Chair

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