

**MINUTES OF THE FORWARD PLAN SELECT COMMITTEE**  
**Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2006 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor R Blackman (Chair), Councillor Dromey (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Harrod, Kansagra, J Moher and Nerva.

Also present were Councillor R S Patel (Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Development), Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture) and Councillor Lyon (Lead Member for Children and Families).

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Hughes.

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

There were none.

**2. Deputations**

There were none.

**3. Minutes of Last Meeting – 30<sup>th</sup> January 2006**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2006 be received and approved as an accurate record.

**4. Matters Arising**

***Parking Policy***

Councillor Nerva queried whether the report on the Parking Policy would be considered at the March meeting of the Executive and was advised that consideration of this item had been deferred until after the local elections.

**5. Call-in of Executive Decisions from the Meeting of the Executive on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2006**

At its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2006 the Select Committee was expected to consider the Executive decision that had been taken at its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2006 regarding the Review of the Cemetery Service. Due to unforeseen circumstances at the last Select Committee meeting, Members asked that implementation of the Executive decision be deferred until such time that the Select Committee could consider the reasons for call-in. This item was now before Members of the Select Committee for consideration following

the circulation of the Executive report that had been considered on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

### *Review of the Cemetery Service*

Commenting on the specified reasons for the call-in of the decision taken by the Executive concerning the Review of the Cemetery Service, Sue Harper (Assistant Director, Leisure and Registration) highlighted the sensitivities surrounding this item particularly with regard to consultation about service provision and delivery. Members were advised that residents' views about the service were ascertained in a sensitive manner on an on-going basis through the use of a questionnaire sent with burial deeds. It was noted that the views of relatives of the deceased had been considered within the review through this mechanism and specific consultation had not taken place. Members were advised that due to the nature of this matter it was important to undertake consultation in a sensitive manner and therefore it was felt that simply talking to individuals such as through focus groups was not considered an appropriate approach.

The Chair expressed some concerns regarding the proposed use of burial vaults and sought clarification as to whether any consultation had been undertaken with bereaved relatives of the deceased. Sue Harper advised Members that there had been significant consultation with local funeral directors about this particular proposal and a number of views put forward, particularly those of Afro-Caribbean communities. Consultation had not taken place with bereaved relatives, as again it was not felt appropriate. It was stressed that the use of burial vaults would not be the only option available at Willesden New Cemetery.

Commenting on the proposal arising from the review to use the adjacent allotment site in Clifford Road as additional burial space at Alperton Cemetery, Sue Harper explained that further consideration and detailed consultation with residents and allotment holders was necessary. It was noted that the Council would have to seek permission from the Secretary of State in order to progress this aspect further since it was a statutory allotment site. Therefore a great deal of further work was necessary as recommended in the review report to the Executive. In response to queries from the Chair concerning the memorialisation of cremated remains and the possible development of a crematorium in the Borough, Sue Harper explained that it would be difficult to identify suitable sites within the Borough on which to build a crematorium, although the review had considered three sites. Consequently the use of memorialisation vaults had been suggested, however it was noted that initial consultation with Hindu funeral directors had indicated that there was unlikely to be a significant demand for this service. Consequently it had been recommended in the report that further consultation be undertaken with the Hindu community to determine what, if any, improvements could be made. It

was stressed that the building of a crematorium within the Borough was not proposed at the current time. At this point Councillor Kansagra queried why there had not been any direct consultation with religious leaders and faith organisations across the Borough. He stressed the need to determine exactly what local residents and Brent's diverse communities wanted from the Cemetery Service and suggested that the development of a crematorium in Brent should be pursued, whilst acknowledging the planning implications of such a proposal. It was noted that a crematorium would be utilised by a number of different religions and communities particularly in light of the pressures on the Borough's cemeteries such as Willesden New Cemetery and Alperton Cemetery.

Whilst acknowledging the sensitivity of the issues, the Chair highlighted the Select Committee's concerns regarding the lack of consultation that had been undertaken with the relatives of the deceased concerning service delivery and proposals for the future. It was suggested that the Select Committee should forward a view to the Executive about the need to ensure that whilst the Council faced the challenge of limited space, residents continued to be given the options they desired. Commenting on the issue of burial vaults, the Chair expressed concern about the possible future development of "multi-storey cemeteries," and stressed that people should be asked whether this was an appropriate option, although it was noted that more than one interment may currently occur in the same grave. It was also noted that potential legislative change in the future may require the Council to re-use existing graves by "digging deeper" with graves over 100 years. The Chair stressed that an enlargement of Alperton Cemetery should be debated further as a potential option as a site for a crematorium.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the Executive be informed about the comments made by the Forward Plan Select Committee concerning the call-in of the Executive's decisions concerning the Review of Cemetery Service; and
- (ii) that the Executive be recommended to undertake further consultation with residents on these issues to ensure that the Cemetery Service is adequately meeting the needs and desires of all communities in terms of service delivery and burial provision.

**6. Call-in of Executive Decisions from the Meeting of the Executive on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2006**

There were none.

7. **The Executive List of Decisions for the Meeting that took place on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2006**

RESOLVED:-

that the Executive List of Decisions for the meeting that took place on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2006 be noted.

8. **Briefing Notes/Information Updates requested by Select Committee following consideration of Version 9 (2005/06) of the Forward Plan**

(i) ***Award of Leisure Management Contract for Vale Farm and Charteris Sports Centres***

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture) advised the Select Committee that work was underway to design the specification and assess the tenders that had been received to date. Gerry Kiefer (Head of Sports Service) explained that the 2004 Best Value Review of the Sports Service had recommended that the leisure management of Value Farm and Charteris Sports Centres be re-tendered when the contract expired on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2006. Members were advised that the original timetable had required the contract to be awarded at the January Executive meeting in order for the new contract to commence from May 2006. However, in order for officers to undertake further work on the tendering process the timetable needed to be extended and an extension to the existing contract negotiated with the current contractor for a further six months. Members were advised that a report was planned for the April Executive meeting recommending the award of contract which would then commence from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2006. However, it was noted that negotiations might result in further delays to consideration of the report by the Executive.

Sue Harper confirmed that varying options had been submitted in the different bids and consequently evaluation and identification of the preferred bid was a complex process. In response to a query from Councillor Harrod regarding management of the existing contract, Sue Harper explained that the existing contractor remained committed to working closely with the Council. The Chair confirmed that the Select Committee would monitor this item on the Forward Plan.

(ii) ***Casino Advisory Panel – Update***

Members of the Forward Plan Select Committee extended their best wishes to Councillor R S Patel (Lead Member for

Regeneration and Economic Development) in advance of his birthday on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2006.

Councillor R S Patel (Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Development) introduced the briefing paper before the Select Committee which set out progress made since the discussion that had taken place at the meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2006 with regard to Brent's response to the independent Casino Advisory Panel. He also clarified the process between now and the due date for submissions of responses to the Panel on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006 and explained that the outcome of the impact assessments would be presented to the Executive on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2006.

Andy Donald (Assistant Director, Regeneration) responded to a question from the Chair and explained that the consultants had been appointed and work was progressing on two key impact assessments of a resort style casino at Wembley. Members were advised that NERA were undertaking an economic impact assessment and EDAW were undertaking a social impact assessment and it was anticipated that work would be completed in advance of the Executive meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2006. Members were advised that EDAW was currently assessing documentation about the social impact of casinos worldwide in order to assess the potential local impact. It was stressed that any submissions by the consultants would be considered in due course by the Forward Plan Select Committee.

The Chair suggested that a recently published report concerning an assessment of the outcomes of casinos worldwide should be circulated to Members of the Select Committee for consideration. Andy Donald responded that a range of documentation would be considered by the consultants in order that a balanced view about the possible implications of a casino be put forward to Members. Responding to a further question concerning the timescales for the Casino Advisory Panel and consideration of submissions by local authorities, Andy Donald explained that the Casino Advisory Panel would have to consider each of the statements of interest that had been submitted by local authorities before drawing up a short-list of submissions. Thereafter public examinations of all of the proposals would be undertaken during the summer and a report, putting forward recommendations, would then be presented to the Government at the end of the year. Responding to questions and comments, Andy Donald stressed that the Select Committee would have sufficient time in which to consider the proposed Executive report and confirmed that the consultants

could be invited to attend the meetings of both the Executive and the Forward Plan Select Committee in March.

Referring to the Council's submission Councillor Dromey queried how the Council would prove that local people supported the development of a casino in the Wembley area. Members were advised that the Casino Advisory Panel had published clear guidance regarding the format for the full statement of case that needed to be made by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006. A number of sections had to be included in the submission which would enable the authority to prove that the report had been the focus of sufficient political debate and to highlight the evidence that there was a market for the development of a casino in the area. Consequently the submission was evidence based and would reflect both the need and desires for the development of a casino in the Wembley area.

Councillor J Moher commented that it was necessary to ensure that a balanced report on the social and economic impact assessments was presented and stressed the need to provide the public with accurate information about the proposal from the outset. Phil Newby (Director of Policy and Regeneration) stressed that any information presented to the Executive would be evidence based so that a balanced view about any future proposal was put forward. Referring to the Executive report scheduled for April 2006, Andy Donald explained that following consideration of the social and economic impact assessment outcomes by the Forward Plan Select Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2006, comments would thereafter be fed back to the Executive meeting in April 2006. Members were advised that the Casino Advisory Panel would be advised about comments from the Forward Plan Select Committee and the Executive concerning the submission.

In response to a query from the Chair, Andy Donald confirmed that a prevalent study had to take place three years after the development of a resort casino to assess its impact before another resort casino could be developed. Consequently it was anticipated that no further developments of this kind would take place within a three to five-year period. The Chair welcomed the opportunity to debate the issue further in the future.

(iii) ***Re-tendering of the Waste Management Contracts***

Keith Balmer (Director of StreetCare) outlined the briefing note before Members of the Select Committee concerning the retendering of the Waste Management Contracts. Members were advised that a page of the report had been omitted in error and consequently this information was tabled at the meeting.

Keith Balmer provided Members of the Select Committee with an overview of the issues being considered through the retendering of the waste management contracts including how the contract would reflect customer service needs and options for a recycling provision. It was noted that the existing waste contracts would expire on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007 and that the forthcoming report to the Executive would seek approval to go out to tender for the new waste management contracts.

Councillor Nerva commented on the need for improvements to the reporting of problems by a range of different staff and contractors including the wardens and stressed the need to incorporate this aspect in the future waste management contracts. In response Members were advised that Home Office funding was linked to Wardens undertaking certain duties and responsibilities including the reporting of environmental problems. It was stressed that all Town Centre Wardens were active in reporting problems and supporting the work of StreetCare Ward officers. However, it was acknowledged that new initiatives to promote the reporting of issues needed to be developed and that the emphasis on reporting could possibly be written into the future contracts. Councillor Nerva highlighted the linkage between the Ward Working initiative and implementation of the new contract and queried what opportunities local people would have to comment on and influence the new contract. In response Members were advised that officers were looking at enhancing the basic level of street cleansing in order to bring it up to a higher standard and to retain an intensive cleaning approach across the Borough. However, whilst it was difficult to move resources around there would be opportunities to amend the intensive cleaning approach in order to target particular Wards.

In response to a suggestion that there should be active consultation between future contractors and residents at a local level regarding waste management, Keith Balmer explained that attendance by the contractors at public meetings was already a requirement in the existing contract and that such a requirement would remain within the future contract. He acknowledged that the existing contractors were generally reactive about attending such meetings but it was hoped that in the future there would be a more proactive approach to public engagement. It was noted that the development of good working relationships with the new contractor should also lead to a more proactive approach. Commenting on commercial waste, Members were advised that there was no commercial service at present within the Borough and that there was unlikely to be a market for this service in the future since Onyx already operated a well developed commercial waste element. Consequently officers were of the

opinion that this was not a viable option that should be pursued in the future in terms of retendering waste management contracts.

The Chair commented on plastics collection at the kerbside and suggested that this option be extended as far as possible. Following comments about the current organic waste collection service Keith Balmer confirmed that cardboard could be collected in this manner although organic waste collection was currently limited. Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture) stressed the need to look at the options for extending the organic waste collection with available resources in the future. Following further comments from the Chair, members were advised about proposals to extend doorstep collection of plastics and cardboard in the future and possibly the collection of small electrical products as being practiced in Harrow.

Councillor J Moher queried what consultation had been undertaken with Ward Working meetings and indicated that no such consultation had been undertaken with Fryent Ward Councillors to date. Keith Balmer explained that he would ensure that appropriate consultation was undertaken with Ward Councillors. Councillor J Moher queried why a consultation survey had not been included in recent editions of the Brent Magazine and was advised that the department had missed the recent publication date. However, the consultation had been promoted in the local press and on the Council's website. Councillor Nerva suggested that a presentation be made at the forthcoming area consultative forum in Kilburn and Kensal in March 2006 and proposed that the survey be circulated to all residents on the ACF mailing list. The Chair suggested that this issue be included on the forthcoming Ward based newsletters to seek out the public's views. It was noted that to date the public response had been significant.

In response to questions about bin provision, Keith Balmer explained that the Council stopped issuing big bins over a year ago and was now encouraging people to use green bins and other options such as composting in order to promote different recycling services and a reduction in waste. Keith Balmer confirmed that there were major problems regarding the size of bins and where these were placed and it was acknowledged that consideration should be given to varying bin sizes in order to meet residents' needs. It was stressed that the Council needed to take a more educational approach regarding bin provision and Members noted that at the current time there was not a standardised approach to bin replacement.



(iv) ***Preston Park Primary School –Tender Results***

Councillor Lyon (Lead Member for Children and Families) outlined the briefing note before Members of the Select Committee. In response to a query from the Chair Nitin Parshotam (Asset Management, Children and Families) advised Members of the Select Committee that following failed procurement exercises in January 2005 and July 2005 the re-tender was now underway with the scheme having been re-packaged in phases so as to ensure that the defective accommodation was prioritised for replacement prior to introducing any new build, space innovation or other remodelling.

In response to a query from the Chair concerning the position on parking facilities at the site, Nitin Parshotam explained that the streets surrounding the school were particularly narrow but that there had been significant discussion with the Planning Service and Transportation from the outset and it was hoped that the school's Parking Management Plan would alleviate existing parking problems in and around the site in formulating Green Travel plans which would discourage car usage and also help as alternative methods of transport. The Chair stressed that there were already acute parking problems in the area and therefore this was likely to be a major consideration in the future as an increase in the use of school facilities would lead to more people travelling into and around the area. The Lead Member for Children and Families explained that similar parking problems were regularly experienced around schools across the Borough and highlighted the need to promote and develop green travel initiatives in local schools. It was acknowledged that a large number of children travelled some distance to attend the school and therefore such options would not be viable. Following a query from Councillor Nerva it was noted that an increase in the number of events held at the school would not result in an increase in the capacity of the school car park. Members were advised that the primary aim of the scheme was to improve the public reception and community facilities on site but that no major remodelling and extension of existing facilities was proposed. The Chair acknowledged the significance of improving community facilities at the site but expressed concerns regarding the likely implications of the proposals. The Lead Member for Children and Families stressed that the consultants for the development would consider all the issues and try to alleviate problems including the parking issue where possible.

RESOLVED:-

that the above briefing notes and updates be noted.

9. **The Forward Plan (*Issue 10 2005/2006*)**

Issue 10 of the Forward Plan (04/03/06 to 07/07/06) was now before Members of the Select Committee. Following consideration of Issue 10 of the Forward Plan, the Select Committee made the following requests:-

***Casino Advisory Panel Report***

The Forward Plan Select Committee reiterated its earlier request for further information concerning this item. The relevant Lead Member and lead officers were requested to attend the future meetings of the Select Committee for consideration of any information regarding this item. It was noted that the Executive report would be considered by the Select Committee at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2006.

***Development of a Youth Parliament for Brent***

The Select Committee requested a briefing note to its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2006 concerning the detail in the proposed report. The relevant Lead Member and lead officer were not requested to attend this meeting and respond to Members' questions, subject to the level of detail contained in the briefing note.

***Dollis Hill House Update***

The Select Committee reiterated its earlier request for further information concerning this item, subject to the submission of a revised business plan by the Dollis Hill House Trust. Officers would be asked to clarify the current situation in advance of the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2006 meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee.

***John Billam - Update on Progress***

The Select Committee requested a briefing note on this item providing an update on the current situation. This briefing note was requested to the meeting of the Select Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2006. Members requested that the relevant Lead Member and lead officers attend this meeting to respond to Members' questions.

RESOLVED:-

that the above requests be noted.

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

There were none.

11. **Date of Next Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the next meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee take place on Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2006.

12. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There was none.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm

R BLACKMAN  
Chair

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