

MINUTES OF THE FORWARD PLAN SELECT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 28th March 2006 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor R Blackman (Chair), Councillor Dromey (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Freeson (alternate), Kabir (alternate) and Nerva.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Harrod and J Moher.

1. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

There were none.

2. Deputations

There were none.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting – 28th February 2006

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting held on 28th February 2006 be received and approved as an accurate record subject to an amendment to the date of Councillor R S Patel's birthday on page 5, which should read as Tuesday, 28th February 2006.

4. Matters Arising

There were none.

5. Call-in of Executive Decisions from the Meeting of the Executive on 13th March 2006

There were none.

6. The Executive List of Decisions for the Meeting that took place on 13th March 2006

RESOLVED:-

that the Executive List of Decisions for the meeting that took place on 13th March 2006 be noted.

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

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

Councillor R S Patel (Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Development) introduced the report before the Select Committee which had been considered by the Executive on 13th March 2006. The report set out the findings of independent economic and social impact assessments of a potential regional style casino at Wembley and recommended, in light of the findings of the assessments, that a Statement of Case be submitted to the Casino Advisory Panel. The Lead Member commented on some of the key findings set out in the report including an anticipated increase in visitors to the Wembley area, an increase in employment opportunities, no anticipated increase in crime or traffic congestion and a development that remained consistent with the Council's "Vision" for Wembley.

Andy Donald (Assistant Director, Regeneration) explained that the submission had been drafted and would be forwarded to the Casino Advisory Panel by the deadline of Friday, 31st March 2006. In response to questions from the Chair, Mr Donald explained that of the 47 applications previously submitted to the Panel, it was assumed that the majority of these were still involved in the bidding process. With regard to the issue of public support for the proposal, Mr Donald explained that the Panel would assess public support for the proposal as the bidding process progressed, particularly at the examination in public stage. However, the Statement of Case had to reflect how the issue had been debated publicly to date and; provide detail on how public support, in different areas, would be gauged in the future. Members noted that whilst no formal survey work had been undertaken, the issue had been considered by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and the Wembley Business Forum.

Councillor Kabir queried how local people would be guaranteed employment opportunities as a result of the proposed development and was advised that a significant number of jobs had already been generated for residents across Brent as a result of on-going regeneration work in the Wembley area. Consequently, it was anticipated that residents would benefit from the employment opportunities prompted by the development of a casino. Whilst it was acknowledged that the potential earning capacity for some positions was comparatively low, Members were advised that in Brent's priority neighbourhoods, over 30% of households earned less than

£15,000 per annum. Some Members stressed the need to ensure that residents in the South of the Borough benefited from any proposed casino development by improving rail and tube links into Wembley from the South of the Borough, by considering the sharing of any potential Section 106 payments and encouraging residents across Brent to respond to employment and training opportunities. The Chair commented on a possible increase in migrant workers in the area and the implications for the housing market as a result of low salaries and suggested that there would be limited economic benefits for local residents as a result of the proposed casino development.

It was noted that approximately 6 million people would be attracted to Brent per annum; with 20k visitors anticipated at the complex per day, which would provide conferencing, hotel, gambling, restaurant and leisure facilities. Consequently, there was little to suggest that the casino development would deter people from travelling into Wembley. It was noted that the complex was likely to operate on a 24hour basis and whilst the Statement of Case would demonstrate a willingness to licence, the Council was not committed to doing this and therefore Members would be expected to consider this issue and also the parking considerations as part of the normal planning/ licensing processes. It was noted however that the bid would not be shortlisted if the Panel suspected that the Licensing Authority was unlikely to grant suitable licences. Consequently, it was important that the Council be clear from the outset about what it wanted to gain from the proposed development. Such a clear approach was also important to ensure clarity for other potential developers in the Wembley area regarding the Council's approach.

Commenting on access to and from the proposed development, Mr Donald explained that the majority of casino users would use the facilities between 10pm and 2am and were therefore likely to travel to and from the venue by car/ taxi. It was proposed that a more direct access route to the North Circular Road would be necessary to ensure that disruption to local residents was minimised. It was noted that the Council had a good transport network in place for all other journeys and that this was a big strength for Wembley in terms of promoting itself as a destination. With regards to the suggestion that Section 106 funds might be retained by the Government in the future, Members were advised that the Council was not obliged to continue with the project in the future if it was not happy with the Section 106/ planning arrangements.

Following a query by the Chair, Mr Donald confirmed that the Civic Centre project was not linked to the proposed casino

development in the Wembley area. In response to a query concerning the Council's requirement for provision of a range of cultural and community facilities as part of the development, Mr Donald confirmed that this issue was intentionally vague so that the Council retained flexibility should the market circumstances change to ensure that it delivered the necessary facilities in the future, such as a gallery or museum.

Mr Donald stressed that if the casino proposal was not progressed, the Council needed to ensure that its "vision" was delivered, taking into account changes in market circumstances and the impact that this might have on future developments and regeneration projects. Following a query concerning potential pressures on the infrastructure in Brent and how these will be addressed, Members were advised that the social and economic impact assessments had addressed the headline issues but that other issues including pressure on transport links, congestion, and accessibility of the complex, would be examined in more detail in the future.

In terms of the next stage in the process, Mr Donald confirmed that there was no set timetable beyond 31/03/06 but that following the shortlisting process, all successful bids would be subject to public examination during the summer following a period of public consultation. It was noted that there would be on-going political debate regarding the casino proposal. In response to a question concerning whether any comparative work had been undertaken to assess each of the London bids, Mr Donald explained that the market could support the development of two London casinos. However, the Panel was expected to determine which London venue was the most suitable to support to the development of a regional casino. Mr Donald outlined some of Brent's strengths compared to other London boroughs including its ability to develop conferencing facilities and meet demand for conferencing across London.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the Forward Plan note the "Wembley Regeneration and the Casino Advisory Panel" report and the decisions taken by the Executive on 13th March 2006;
- (ii) that the minutes of the Select Committee meeting on 28/03/06 be circulated to the next meeting of the Executive for information/ comment;
- (iii) that the Economic and Social Impact Assessment reports be published on the website for public inspection in order to ensure transparency; and

(iv) that the Executive be asked to note the Select Committee's comments concerning the need to investigate the development of sustainable transport links to support the development of a casino, the need to inform Members of the Council and the public in the future regarding the proposals as they progress and the need to ensure that all Members are able to feed into the democratic process at all stages, should the Council's bid be shortlisted.

(ii) ***Development of a Youth Parliament for Brent***

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note be noted.

(iii) ***John Billam - Update on Progress***

Due to illness Shaun Faulkner was unable to attend the meeting. The Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture (Councillor Jones) provided a brief update for the Select Committee regarding the completion of works at John Billam. Richard Barrett (Head of Property and Asset Management) confirmed that the building control issues affected the whole building and not solely the changing rooms. It was noted that notice had been served on the Gujarati Arya Association (GAA) to resolve the three outstanding technical issues within 28 days and to make payment on outstanding monies. If action was not taken within the 28 day period, a number of options were available to the Council to ensure that the outstanding work was completed. The Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Development confirmed that the GAA had encountered a number of problems with earlier contractors which had led to delays but that the money was now ready for payment to Brent and the matter would shortly be resolved.

With regard to the development of the sports fields, Members of the Select Committee noted that receipt of funds from the GAA would enable the pitches to be reinstated so that the facilities at John Billam could be used to their full potential. Councillor Dromey commented on demand for the community facilities and stressed the need to ensure that residents were kept informed about progress and the site and the anticipated timescales for completion of work.

RESOLVED:-

(i) that the briefing note and update be noted;

- (ii) that the Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture provide written clarification to the Select Committee about the timescales for reinstatement of the sports fields; and
- (iii) that local residents be kept informed about progress at the site and the anticipated timescales for completion of work.

8. The Forward Plan (Issue 11 2005/2006)

Issue 11 of the Forward Plan (03/04/06 to 04/08/06) was now before Members of the Select Committee. Members requested further detail to be included on the Forward Plan concerning the report entitled “Joint Area Review – report back and action plan” and clarification regarding consultees and users. Following some discussion concerning the date of the next meeting Members were advised that a number of items remained on the work programme and would be brought back to the Select Committee for consideration following the local elections in May 2006.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that there be no further requests for information from the Select Committee following consideration of Version 11 of the Forward Plan; and
- (ii) that the following outstanding items on the Forward Plan Select Committee work programme be brought back to the Select Committee for consideration following the local elections in May 2006:-
 - (i) Dollis Hill House
 - (ii) Parking Policy
 - (iii) Casino Advisory Panel (updates).

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

There were none.

10. Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the next meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 28th March 2006, be cancelled due to a lack of business; and

- (ii) that the date of the next meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee be confirmed following the local elections on 4th May 2006.

11. Any Other Urgent Business

The Chair thanked officers and Members for their hard work throughout the year in supporting the work of the Select Committee. Councillors Dromey and Nerva then thanked Councillor Blackman for chairing meetings of the Select Committee during the 2005/06 municipal year.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm

R BLACKMAN
Chair

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