



# LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

## MINUTES OF THE FORWARD PLAN SELECT COMMITTEE Wednesday, 11 August 2010 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Allie (Chair), Councillor Hirani (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Mrs Bacchus, Lorber, Naheerathan, Ogunro, BM Patel and Van Kalwala

Also Present: Councillors Brown, Cheese, Chohan, S Choudhary, Kataria, Butt, John, R Moher, Powney and Thomas

### 1. **Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial interests**

Councillor Powney declared an interest as a Member of the West London Waste Authority in relation to item 7 (c) on the agenda, Waste and Street Cleansing Review. However, he did not consider the interest as prejudicial and took part in discussion on this item.

### 2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 8 July 2010**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 July 2010 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

### 3. **Matters Arising (if any)**

None.

### 4. **Call-in of Executive Decisions from the Meeting of the Executive on Monday, 26 July 2010**

#### 4.1 **Modernisation of Direct Services**

The reasons for the call-in were:-

- to review the plans of the consultation
- to receive a fuller explanation and review of the Policy direction in relation to improving access to mainstream services.

Councillor R Moher (Lead Member for Adults, Health and Social Care) introduced the report and stated that there was a clear plan consultation plan to be undertaken which would include consulting the service users, their carers and staff.

During Members' discussion, Councillor Lorber commented that there was concern that the consultation period was commencing in August when many people may be on their summer holidays and he asked if each consultation meeting would be all inclusive or targeted at particular groups. He also enquired whether the proposals intended to provide more than one Day Centre. Councillor Van Kalwala commented that he hoped there would be no undue delay in implementing any changes to services as the transition period could be particularly stressful to users. With regard to the general move to providing personalisation for users, he enquired what support would be given to those undergoing this, and what assurances could be given to users who were highly dependent and where personalisation was not appropriate. He also enquired what support would be given to carers. Councillor Hirani asked why the process of personalisation for users was taking so long and he suggested that the Council was lagging behind Harrow Council in this respect.

The Chair sought details with regard to timescales for the consultation and how was it intended to improve access for those with disabilities to mainstream services and in what ways would uptake be monitored. He enquired about the general policy direction of Direct Services and how this had been decided.

In reply to the issues raised, Alison Elliott (Assistant Director – Community Care, Housing and Community Care) confirmed that the consultation period for the Day Opportunities Strategy commenced on 2 August 2010 and would continue for a 12 week period. The consultation would involve meetings with Day Services users, their carers and staff throughout August, September and October. The users would meet on different days to help facilitate them participating fully in the consultation. It was anticipated that a report with proposals following the outcome of the consultation would be considered at the 15 November 2010 meeting of the Executive. The consultation would focus on the Disability Service and the relocation of the Albert Road Day Centre to John Billam Playing Fields. The consultation would also allow views to be expressed with regards to the number of Day Centres that would operate in the Borough in the future. With regard to the policy, Alison Elliot advised that its direction of travel reflected that of the national policy towards personalisation and providing more choice and independence for users by providing them with individual budgets. Steps would also be taken to make it easier for users to have access to services that the rest of the community take for granted, for example WC facilities, and other universal community facilities. The Council was looking at various ways it could support those with disabilities to access these services and uptake of this would be monitored and support plans drawn up to assist access to mainstream services. The policy stemmed from the Government's decision in 2007 to set a personalisation agenda and a number of policy guidance papers had subsequently been issued which provided the basis by which the Adult Social Care Transformation was taking place. Members noted that the personalisation agenda for people with disabilities was supported by the present Government.

Alison Elliot advised that carers would also be supported. Members noted that the Council was one of the leading London boroughs in introducing personalisation, however it also recognised that providing more traditional services was not sustainable, although some users would need considerable support to move to personalisation.

Councillor R Moher added that a fundamental objective of personalisation was to provide users with choices and to then support them once they had selected their preferences. The Select Committee heard that consultation on personalisation had initially been carried out two years previously and there were a number of some users who were benefitting from their own personalisation programmes. It was also noted that use of Day Centres was comparatively low.

RESOLVED:-

that upon considering the report from the Director of Housing and Community Care, the decisions made by the Executive be noted.

#### 4.2 **Criteria for Transport Services**

The reasons for the call-in were:-

- to review the impact on service users
- to review the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment

Councillor R Moher introduced the report and advised Members that the recommendation was that consultation be undertaken with adult social care users with regard to future transport provision and the criteria that would be used to determine eligibility for transport use. An environmental impact assessment on changes to transport provision was also to take place.

During discussion by Members, the Chair sought a summary of what the criteria for transport use was likely to include. He enquired why a review of freedom pass users was required, how many freedom pass users were there and would they be required to use the passes rather than using other transport services provided directly or indirectly by the Council. Councillor Lorber commented that the proposals to review the assessment and provision of transport annually covered a long period and queried whether any suitable measures were in place to take account of change in circumstances for users. He suggested that the eligibility criteria should be carefully considered and that there be processes in place to take account of situations such as change in circumstances.

In reply, Councillor R Moher advised that there was a whole range of ways that freedom passes could or were being used and that in some cases, users who had already been trained to use their freedom passes needed further encouragement to use their skills they had acquired in using the passes rather than continuing to rely on other Council-provided transport services. Members noted that freedom pass holders would not be compelled to use their freedom passes under the proposals. Councillor R Moher stated that there would be provision to re-assess users where there had been change in circumstances, particularly if it posed significant problems for the user.

Alison Elliott added that an annual review was a statutory requirement and she stated that there were processes in place to take account of users changes in circumstances. She explained that the eligibility criteria for transport services would include factors such as users' access to other benefits and ability to use public transport or access to other modes of transport. Alison Elliott agreed to provide information to the Chair regarding the number of Freedom pass holders.

RESOLVED:-

that upon considering the report from the Director of Housing and Community Care, the decisions made by the Executive be noted.

#### 4.3 **Budget Strategy 2011/12 to 2014/15**

The reasons for the call-in were:-

- to explore the extent to which the strategy is wise in relation to the potential for Invest to Save – such as recycling initiatives that could reduce Landfill Tax, etc.
- to explore further the impact of the decisions in relation to the Council's stated Corporate Priorities, and public commitments made by Executive members.

Councillor Butt (Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Resources) introduced the report and confirmed that the Budget Strategy had been revised in light of the Government's Emergency Budget announced on 22 June 2010. The Strategy would be reviewed again following the outcome of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review to be announced on 20 October 2010, although the Council's financial position would not be clarified until the Local Government Finance Settlement which was anticipated to be made in early December 2010. Councillor Butt stated that the challenge in delivering the savings required whilst maintaining service levels could not be underestimated, however it was hoped that it could be achieved largely through the One Council Programme.

During discussion, Councillor Van Kalwala raised the issue of Brent's population and concerns that the Office for National Statistics was underestimating the population in its projections. He asked if the Council was lobbying the Government with regard to how the Brent's population was measured and in view of Brent's transient population, whether a realistic base line figure could be provided. Councillor Lorber commented that there had long been concerns that Brent's official population was underestimated and stated that information from Brent GPs had revealed that there were over 300,000 patients in Brent. Although it was unlikely that all patients necessarily lived in Brent, it suggested that Brent's population was higher than the official figures, however it was difficult to provide the necessary evidence to the Government that the population was greater.

In response, Councillor John acknowledged that underestimation of Brent's population had been a long standing issue, with the method of population counting undertaken by the Office for National Statistics of particular concern. She advised that a number of other London Councils had similar concerns and that London in general was particularly affected and it was hoped that through lobbying that future censuses would be more accurate.

Duncan McLeod (Director, Finance and Corporate Resources) advised that the Council was lobbying the Government by all means possible with regard to changing the way Brent's population was measured and it had also commissioned independent research on the matter. The Select Committee heard that the Census was meant to take transient population factors into account. However the

methodology involved for updating Census figures would not include any person who had lived in Brent for less than 12 months. Duncan McLeod stated that independent surveys had suggested Brent's population was around 289,000 which he felt was more accurate than the Office for National Statistics' figures. He advised that a total change in methodology of population counting would be required to more accurately reflect Brent's true population and he suggested that a census every ten years may not be frequent enough in view of the speed by which population can change.

RESOLVED:-

that upon considering the report from the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources, the decisions made by the Executive be noted.

#### **4.4 Relocation of Albert Road**

The reason for the call-in was:-

- to review the cost implications, and the loss of open space.

Members had before them the report with regard to the Relocation of Albert Road. Councillor Lorber commented that the decision to relocate the Adult Day Care Centre from Albert Road to John Billam Playing Fields had been made by the previous administration and it was clear that the move was to a superior location. However, as the costs of the scheme had increased since the initial agreement, he felt that the matter needed further scrutiny. Members then agreed to Councillor Lorber's request that the issue be considered further by the Budget Panel.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that upon considering the report from the Director of Housing and Community Care, the decisions made by the Executive be noted; and
- (ii) that the Relocation of Albert Road Adult Day Centre be considered at a future meeting of the Budget Panel.

#### **5. The Executive List of Decisions for the Meeting that took place on Monday, 26 July 2010**

RESOLVED:-

that the Executive List of Decisions for the meeting that took place on Monday, 26 July 2010 be noted.

#### **6. Briefing Notes/Information Updates requested by the Select Committee following consideration of Issue 3 (2010/11) of the Forward Plan**

##### **6.1 Modernisation of Direct Services**

RESOLVED:-

that the decisions in respect of Modernisation of Direct Services be noted.

## 6.2 Disposal of Two Former Park Keeper Properties on Barham Park

Richard Barrett (Head of Property and Asset Management, Finance and Corporate Resources) introduced the briefing note and confirmed that the Notting Hill Housing Association had indicated that they were no longer interested in pursuing the development. The Council was now considering whether to use the existing properties on the site for other uses or consider the sale of the units on the open market, subject to planning permission. It was anticipated that the report would be considered by the Executive on 14 September 2010. It was noted that the approval of the Charity Commission to dispose of the site was yet to be obtained.

During discussion, Councillor Lorber commented that the site, on the very edge of Barham Park, was a neglected one, however there were insufficient funds for the Council to develop the site. The Parks Service had suggested submitting a bid for lottery funding and another consideration was that Barham Park had recently acquired green flag status, however it was in danger of losing this if there was no investment coming in. Councillor Lorber stated that residents also wished that there be investment for Barham Park and he enquired on the likelihood was of this happening. He suggested that the existing cottages on the site could be sold to raise funds, especially as the Council presently continued to pay maintenance costs. In noting that the site was held in Trust, Councillor Lorber enquired as to what concerns the Charity Commission would have regarding disposal of the site in view that the Council did not have funds to invest in the site.

Councillor Van Kalwala enquired about the prospects of disposing of the site at a good price in view of the present property market and whether selling below the market price would represent a shortfall for the Council.

In reply, Richard Barrett advised that the site was held in a Trust and not actually owned by the Council which was why the Charity Commission's consent to dispose was required. He confirmed that there was no end date specified under the terms of the Trust. Richard Barrett explained that the Charity Commission would have an interest in maintaining the site for public amenity use, however the Council would assert that the properties needed to be disposed of in order to obtain funds to maintain Barham Park's Green Flag status. Members heard that it was unlikely that the valuation of £630,000 of the site from last year could be achieved if the site was disposed of now, although every effort would be made to ensure that the best possible price was obtained. Richard Barrett continued that it was anticipated that the site would be put on the external market subject to the required approvals, however the situation would be re-assessed if the economy plunged back into recession. The Select Committee was also advised that a disposal of the site would represent a windfall for the Council and therefore there would be no financial loss.

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note on Disposal of Two Former Park Keeper Properties on Barham Park be noted.

### 6.3 Waste and Street Cleansing Review

Councillor Powney (Lead Member for Environment, Culture and Planning) introduced the briefing note, stating that the main objective of the Waste Strategy Review was to increase the recycling rate significantly. The financial implications of the review meant that in the first year, invest to save measures would be introduced, and in the second year savings of approximately £766,000 would be made as the measures were introduced and reduce the level of landfill tax being paid. The introduction of a three bin system for the majority of Brent households would be introduced to help achieve this. Councillor Powney stated that the order of priority for the Strategy was:-

1. Reduce waste
2. Use waste
3. Recycling waste
4. Recovering waste
5. Waste to landfill

Councillor Powney confirmed that the £25 bulky waste charge would be abolished.

The Chair agreed to allow Councillor Choudhary to address the Select Committee. He highlighted incidences of bins being taken away and not being replaced in his ward and overflowing bins. He felt that residents needed to be provided with more bins.

During discussion, Councillor Hirani enquired about the number of requests to collect bulky waste since the charge was introduced and reported incidences of fly tipping during the same period. He felt that withdrawing the charge for bulky waste collection would be popular with residents. Councillor Van Kalwala enquired whether the Waste Strategy Review addressed the issue of providing appropriate recycling facilities on estates. Councillor Lorber, in noting the cost of approximately £393,000 in withdrawing the bulky waste charge, suggested that this would fail to reduce incidences of fly tipping. With regard to the three bin system, he commented that there were a number of type of bins already in circulation, including, for example, two different shades of green bins. He suggested that it could be an appropriate time to introduce standardised bins in order to avoid confusing residents, or replace green boxes and bins with a colour not used before.

In reply, Councillor Powney stated that residents he had spoken to were against the bulky waste charge and the scrapping of the charge was popular with residents in his ward. He stated that bulky waste collection requests went down by approximately 67% soon after the charge was introduced in July 2007 and continued to dwindle thereafter. Although there was no specific evidence, Councillor Powney suggested that more bulky waste was being fly tipped and this raised the issue of whether fly tipping was being tracked properly. With regard to estates, Councillor Powney advised that it had been proposed to introduce a fully co-mingled dry recycling service to all suitable flats during a rolling programme starting in 2010/11. Communal bins for collection of food waste would also be introduced.

Councillor John advised that collection of bulky waste items on some estates was usually the responsibility of the landlord. In the case of St Raphael's Estate, where

there had been reported fly tipping, Brent Housing Partnership had removed the items. Councillor John felt that the costs of removing bulky waste in such situations should be factored in. She suggested that other housing associations should be encouraged to assist in removing bulky waste items and encouraging residents to recycle. Councillor John also drew to Members' attention to customer care issues that needed to be addressed in relation to Veolia, including not returning bins to their point of collection in Chalkhill and leaving bin lids off in Stonebridge. She stressed the importance of increasing recycling as a top priority and in increasing residents' participation to achieve this.

Keith Balmer (Director of StreetCare, Environment and Culture) added that an overriding objective was to provide a recycling service to every resident in Brent, with an emphasis on difficult to reach properties and in educating residents of the need to participate in recycling and a realisation of the consequences if they did not. He acknowledged that there were some issues with regard to Veolia's waste collection and these were being looked at. Keith Balmer advised that every effort would be made to make it clear to residents what type of waste was meant for each bin, stating that replacing bins would bear high costs.

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note on the Waste and Street Cleansing Review be noted.

#### **6.4 Arms Length Management Organisation New Build Programme**

Councillor Thomas (Lead Member for Housing and Customer Services) introduced the briefing note and advised that the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) had indicated that they would consider funding the development of affordable homes on Ander Close, Mead Court and Coppermead Close garage sites providing the Council disposed of the sites to Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) at nil cost. It was anticipated that HCA would make a decision in respect of funding in late August 2010.

During discussion, the Chair enquired on the possibility of providing mixed housing on the sites which he believed would help increase life chances for all in the area, as opposed to restricting it to social housing only. He acknowledged that the site area was small, but commented that some organisations specialised in developing mixed housing in such areas and he asked if such an option had been explored. He also sought comments with regard to a best value option. Councillors Lorber enquired about BHP's capacity to develop such schemes and whether capital receipts could be generated through disposal of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) owned land. Councillor Van Kalwala also enquired about BHP's capacity and he also asked about development options for St Raphael's Estate.

In reply, Councillor Thomas advised that the sites would be under a registered social landlord and that there would be some mixed housing. Priority would be given to those on the housing waiting list. He acknowledged the benefits of mixed housing but felt the sites too small to accommodate such a use, although mixed tenure would certainly be considered for larger sites. He confirmed that BHP had provided proposals for a scheme in respect of the sites and it was felt that the scheme put forward was workable. No other organisations had approached, nor

been approached by, the Council. Councillor Thomas suggested that other organisations may be considered for schemes in other locations.

Manjul Shah (Head of Affordable Housing Development, Housing and Community Care) advised that HCA had indicated that they would consider part funding the sites under a shared ownership basis. He stated that larger sites would be considered for mixed tenure where this was more appropriate. With regard to BHP, Manjul Shah advised that they do have some financial reserves and were putting £400,000 towards the scheme and would consider other developments on a scheme by scheme basis. Development on St Raphael's Estate would be through disposal of sites to either BHP or other suitable housing associations and it was possible that BHP could be given responsibility for contract management. Members noted that investment could not be generated through prudential borrowing at this time. Manjul Shah advised that on HRA owned land more housing, especially social housing, was wanted. He stated that on the sites in question, it was difficult to provide any more housing than that which was proposed because of planning considerations, however BHP would develop HRA land where there was potential to develop in-fills. Manjul Shah advised that Secretary of State consent was required to obtain capital receipts for disposal of HRA land, and the Council would only be entitled to 50% of the capital received. Therefore careful consideration would need to be given as to the benefits of disposing of such land.

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note on Arms Length Management Organisation New Build Programme be noted.

## **6.5 Homes and Communities Agency Investment Plan**

Councillor Thomas advised that discussions were taking place with HCA with a view to agreeing an investment framework under their "Single Conversation" process. He informed Members that the Greater London Authority may also take on some roles in respect of the Investment Plan. Councillor Thomas stated that he understood that the Council had been successful in obtaining funding and it was intended to use the funds soon.

The Chair enquired why the HCA Investment Plan was not being put for approval by Full Council as he felt that as it would have a major impact on the whole borough a wider consultation involving all councillors would be appropriate. He also enquired what other measures were being undertaken to ensure that contributions were made from a wider audience and expressed concerns that changes could be made in piecemeal fashion without residents and councillors being consulted.

In response, Councillor Thomas advised that a HCA Investment Plan would be reported back to the Full Council by the Lead Member. Councillor John added that although there was no obligation to report to Full Council, it was intended to do so. She also commented that the Local Development Framework, which would significantly shape the way housing and community facilities were delivered in the Borough, had been widely consulted upon, including residents and councillors and it had also been to Full Council which had voted to approve it.

Manjul Shah stated that there had been wide consultation on the core strategy with regard to housing and regeneration.

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note on the Homes and Community Investment Plan be noted.

#### **6.6 Dudden Hill Lane, Land Adjacent to No. 19**

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note on Dudden Hill Lane, Land Adjacent to No. 19, be noted.

#### **6.7 Land at Elm Gardens**

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note on Land at Elm Gardens be noted.

#### **6.8 Authority to Renew Advice Service Grants**

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note on Authority to Renew Advice Service Grants be noted.

#### **6.9 Building Schools for the Future Strategy for Change**

RESOLVED:-

that the verbal update provided on Building Schools for the Future Strategy for Change be noted.

### **7. The Forward Plan - Issue 4**

#### ***Annual Complaints Report 2009/10***

The Select Committee provided a briefing note on this item to provide details of the patterns and trends of complaints and the profile of the complainants.

Lead Member and Lead Officer attendance was also requested to respond to Members' questions. The request was made by the Chair and Councillor Van Kalwala.

### **8. Items considered by the Executive that were not included in the Forward Plan (if any)**

None.

9. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 26 August 2010 at 7.30 pm, which would take place if there were any call-ins from the Executive meeting on 11 August 2010.

10. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm

J ALLIE  
Chair