



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
held on Monday, 23 November 2009 at 7.15 pm

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor James O'Sullivan

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor Harbhajan Singh

COUNCILLORS:

Allie	Anwar
Mrs Bacchus	Baker
Bessong	Beswick
Blackman	D Brown
V Brown	Castle
Chavda	Clues
Colwill	Corcoran
Coughlin	Cummins
Detre	Dunn
Dunwell	Gupta
Hashmi	Hirani
Jackson	Jones
Joseph	Kansagra
Leaman	Lorber
Matthews	Mendoza
Mistry	Motley
CJ Patel	HB Patel
HM Patel	Pervez
Sneddon	Steel
Tancred	Wharton
Van Colle	

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Councillors Ahmed, Arnold, Butt, Crane, Eniola, Farrell, Mrs Fernandes, Fox, Green, John, Long, Malik, J Moher, R Moher, Moloney, Pagnamenta, Powney, Ms Shaw, Thomas and Van Kalwala

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 October 2009 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

2. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

There were none.

3. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor had no announcements to make but drew attention to the current list of petitions showing progress on dealing with them circulated around the chamber in accordance with Standing Orders.

4. Changes to the Constitution

The Mayor obtained the agreement of members to re-order the order of business by taking this and the following items before the item on appointments to committees and outside bodies.

Members considered the report before them which proposed and reported minor changes to the Council's Constitution arising out of the annual review of the operation of the Constitution.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the proposed amendments to the delegated powers set out in the detail of the report at paragraphs 3.5 - 3.7 be agreed;
- (ii) that the recent minor changes made to the Constitution by the Borough Solicitor using her delegated powers as set out in paragraphs 3.8 – 3.10 of the report be noted.

5. Review of representation of political groups on committees

Members considered the report before them updating them on the impact of the change in membership of the political groups on the political balance of committees and sub committees and advising them on the need to consider changes to the allocation of seats on committees.

Councillor Blackman moved the joint motion circulated in his and Councillor Lorber's names which proposed amending the size of committees. This was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the number of seats on the Planning Committee be reduced from 12 to 11;
- (ii) that further to (i) above, the allocation of seats on ordinary committees to each of the political groups be as set out below:

Planning Committee – 5 Liberal Democrats/ 3 Labour/ 3 Conservative
General Purposes Committee – 4 Liberal Democrats/ 3 Labour/ 2 Conservative/ 1 Democratic Conservative
Audit Committee – 1 Liberal Democrat/ 1 Labour/ 1 Conservative

- (iii) that the number of seats on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee be reduced from 8 to 7;
- (iv) that further to (iii) above the allocation of seats be as follows:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 3 Liberal Democrats/ 2 Labour/ 2 Conservative
Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 3 Liberal Democrats/ 2 Labour/ 2 Conservative

- (v) that the changes proposed to Standing Orders in relation to motions to change the size of committee and allocation of seats be not agreed.

6. **Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies and Appointment of Chairs/Vice Chairs (if any)**

RESOLVED:-

that the following appointments be made:

Planning Committee

Councillor Corcoran to replace Councillor Jackson as 1st alternate to Councillor Anwar

Councillor Jackson to replace Councillor Green

Remove Councillor Eniola as 2nd alternate to Councillor Thomas

Remove Councillor J Moher and his alternates

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Remove Councillor R Moher and her alternates

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Remove Councillor Beswick and his alternates

Employees JCC

Councillor Beswick to replace Councillor Eniola as 1st alternate to Councillor Ahmed

Welsh Harp JCC

Councillor Ahmed to replace Councillor Eniola as 1st alternate to Councillor Farrell

7. **Procedural motion**

RESOLVED:-

that in respect of Summons item 10, 1st Reading Debate – 2010 to 2012/13 Budget:

the time allowed for the 1st reading debate be extended to up to 60 minutes, leaving it to the Mayor to exercise his discretion to extend the time further if he considers it necessary, with the three Group Leaders each being given up to ten minutes to speak on the item, and other members speaking for up to three minutes each in accordance with the normal rules of debate.

8. **Question time**

The selected questions submitted under the provisions of standing order 38 had been circulated together with written responses from the respective Lead Members. The Members who had put the questions were invited to ask their supplementary questions.

The following five questions had been selected by the Leader of the Labour Group.

Agency staff

The question from Councillor Butt had asked how much agency/temporary staff/consultants were paid and how many were former Brent employees. Councillor Butt was not present to ask his supplementary question.

Council spend on communications

The question from Councillor Powney had asked how much the Council had spent on communications each year since 2005/06 and the number of communications staff employed. In the absence of Councillor Powney, Councillor Jones stated that the answer admitted that spending on publicity had gone up by 8% since 2005/06. She stated that this increase was in contrast to numerous pledges made by the Liberal Democrat Group and Councillor Lorber, when in opposition, that they would reduce the amount spent on communications. She asked, as a supplementary question on Councillor Powney's behalf how it was planned to reduce communications spending in the future and if the answer could be believed.

Councillor Lorber (Leader) replied that his answer did not show the increase suggested and so he did not understand the nature of the supplementary question. Expenditure had either remained the same or was less.

Bonus payments in schools

The question from Councillor Arnold had asked what action the Council was taking to tackle the illegal payment of bonuses in schools. In the absence of Councillor Arnold, Councillor Jones stated that it was pleasing to hear that schools had reported that no bonuses had been paid in schools other than Copland Community College. On behalf of Councillor Arnold, Councillor Jones asked as a supplementary question what action was the Council taking to recover the illegal bonuses paid at Copland Community College given the deletion of the finance support posts in Children and Families.

Councillor Wharton (Lead Member for Children and Families) replied that legal advice was being taken on what further action the Council could take.

Commemoration of Armed Forces Day

Councillor Beswick had asked why the Council had not commemorated Armed Forces Day 2009 and what plans it had to do so in the future. Councillor Beswick was not present to ask his supplementary question.

16-19 education and training

The question from Councillor Jones had asked how the Council had prepared for taking on the new responsibility for 16-19 education and training. Councillor Jones added that the Council was also going to have to manage the programme of capital investment for 16-19 learning. As a supplementary question, she asked what capital investment was necessary in schools to provide appropriate, engaging and high quality learning environments for the new 16-19 curriculum.

Councillor Wharton (Lead Member for Children and Families) replied that as members were aware, a considerable amount of investment was needed in the Council's secondary schools a lot of which it was hoped would be funded through the Building Schools for the Future programme and through the development of the CREST academies. The College of North West London also needed substantial investment following being let down by the Learning and Skills Council's mismanagement of its capital programme. However, current information showed the capital programme to be severely constrained and so a way out of this situation could not be foreseen.

The following three questions had been selected by the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group.

Kingsbury Road traffic scheme

The question from Councillor Dunn had asked for an update on the success of the Kingsbury Road traffic scheme. Councillor Dunn added that there had been some scepticism about the scheme but this had turned out to be unfounded. The traffic calming measures were working and he congratulated the Lead Member on sticking with the scheme. Councillor Dunn asked was it not a shame that others did not see the sense of the proposals when they were first discussed.

Councillor D Brown (Lead Member for Transport and Highways) replied that it was and that the scheme had made the road conditions safer.

Education achievement of Looked-After children

The question from Councillor Tancred had asked what measures the Council had taken to ensure its Looked-After children achieved their best potential. As a supplementary question, she asked how the Council's performance compared with other councils and what was being done to ensure the improvements made were maintained.

Councillor Wharton (Lead Member for Children and Families) replied that there were no figures available to allow comparisons with other councils but the Council's performance was well ahead of the Government target and was among the best in London. He stated this was an incredible achievement by the Children and

Families' education team and foster carers. He assured Councillor Tancred that it was the intention to maintain and improve upon performance in the future.

Services in Brent

The question from Councillor Leaman had asked what the Leader and his Executive had done to make Brent a cleaner, greener and safer place. As a supplementary question, he asked if the Council had signed up to the 10:10 campaign and whether it was thought the Government was supporting recycling sufficiently.

Councillor Lorber (Leader) replied that the Executive had signed up to the 10:10 campaign, resolving to cut emissions by 2010. He added that the Council was doing all it could at a local level to encourage recycling but the Government was not doing enough. There was inadequate capacity in the country to recycle all the materials the Council would like to see recycled. In addition, the Council was not getting the return it deserved on the savings made by recycling and was losing £2-3M per year.

The following two questions had been selected by the Leader of the Conservative Group.

Request for CCTV in Hazel Road

The question from Councillor Joseph had asked if CCTV could be installed in Hazel Road. She asked if the Lead Member was aware of the suffering of residents in Hazel Road since the Dispersal Order in 2006 and that the hoodlums were now in hibernation but would be back next summer. She stated that the anti social team had not carried out any work in the area since then. As a supplementary question she asked again if it was not clear that permanent CCTV was needed in the area in order to identify perpetrators of crime.

Councillor Matthews (Lead Member for Crime Prevention and Public Safety) referred to her answer to the original question which explained how it was decided where resources were best allocated. She disputed the claim that the anti social team had not been active. It provided out-reach work, had undertaken work around 5 November activities, changed patrol times and was working with social housing providers in the area. Councillor Matthews advised that if residents experienced any further problems they should contact the anti social team.

Parking at the new civic centre

The question from Councillor Mendoza had asked what the anticipated number of staff and visitors to the new civic centre was and what the planned number of car parking spaces was. He referred to the answer he had received indicating that 158 car parking spaces were to be provided. He stated that thousands of people could be visiting the civic centre each day and felt such provision was unrealistic. He felt that an opportunity to raise revenue was being missed by not providing for more parking and that there would be a spill over of parking into surrounding residential streets.

Councillor Lorber (Leader) replied that the Executive had debated the position on parking and had reached a decision. He compared the building of Wembley Stadium which had a capacity of 90,000 and had 2,900 car parking places. The new civic centre would accommodate around 2,000 staff and attract around 1,000 people with provision for 158 parking places. There would be other parking available in the area. On balance he felt there would be adequate provision. The Council had to be seen to follow its own policies on the provision of parking and it did not in any case make economic sense to commit the estimated £2M it would take to provide a few more spaces. Councillor Lorber stated that people's minds and attitudes needed to be changed around this matter.

9. **Items selected by Non-Executive members**

(i) Bogus charity workers

Councillor Bessong introduced his item by emphasising the concern he had over this matter whereby someone would call at a person's house claiming to be fund raising but instead would rob them. He wanted the Lead Member to explain what might be done to prevent this happening.

Councillor Matthews (Lead Member for Crime Prevention and Public Safety) responded by pointing out that the issue raised was a national problem which was recorded as reported crime and was taken very seriously. The Council's Trading Standards Service had established a joint team with the police which operated in areas where it was known this crime took place and an arrest had been made which would act as a deterrent to others. It was also necessary to educate people on the risks of this crime happening to them. Councillor Matthews stated that incidents of this crime taking place should be reported to the police irrespective of whether any money was handed over.

(ii) Stag Lane Medical Centre

Councillor Mistry introduced her item by claiming that NHS Brent was not being open with its plans for the centre. The Chief Executive of the PCT had been invited to a public meeting but had sent a representative who had been unable to answer the questions people had. She asked if any discussions had taken place and whether any decisions had been taken on the reconfiguration of the service.

Councillor Colwill (Lead Member for Adults, Health and Social Care) re-assured members that the situation had been kept under review and stated that he was able to provide the following update supplied by NHS Brent:

"Following an underground survey, we have established that the building has stopped moving for the immediate future. We are proposing to isolate the side of the building where the GP practice is located and which is unaffected by the movement, so that services can continue to be provide there.

We have now relocated all the community services that were in the side of the building affected by the crack.

Community Dentistry Services have moved to Wembley Centre for Health. This move would have had to happen at some time this year as decontamination

standards have risen for dentistry equipment and we can only achieve this cost effectively by centralising this service into one location.

Family Planning Services have moved to Chalkhill.

Dietetics has been relocated to Wembley but we are looking to provide the session in a GP practice in Kingsbury.

Possible locations for blood tests and the baby clinic are still being explored and are likely to be a Kingsbury GP practice and Lindsay Drive Community Centre respectively.

The PCT is considering what steps we can take at the Stag Lane Clinic and other sites to provide as many of the services in the Kingsbury area for the next two years. We will inform all parties as soon as final arrangements have been made.

We are considering the possibility of developing a new centre on the Roberts Court site but the financial position going forward means such a development would require a number of practices coming together into one building so that a new building is revenue neutral. Discussions are being held with the practices concerned. A decision on the new development will not be made until 2010”.

RESOLVED:-

that the response provided by the Lead Member on each item be noted.

10. **Reports from:**

10.1 **the Executive**

(i) Green Champions

Councillor Lorber reported that he had attended the launch of this project aimed at providing a staff support network in the workplace for waste recycling and other related matters. This was an important part of the Council’s commitment to reduce its CO2 emissions.

(ii) Youth Parliament

Councillor Lorber reported on his attendance at a meeting of the Youth Parliament and added that its vice chair was present at the Council meeting. The meeting had dealt with the important issue of breaking the stereotype associated with young people who felt they were misrepresented due to the actions of a few.

(iii) Personal Information Promise

Councillor Lorber reported on the Council signing up to the promise which provided a demonstration of the Council’s commitment to data protection.

(iv) New housing developments

Councillor Lorber reported on the official opening of Granville New Homes development which provided 110 housing units and had been sold to Brent Housing Partnership to manage. He expressed the hope that this would lead to further regeneration of the South Kilburn area. Councillor Lorber also reported on the appointment of the Hyde Group to deliver 195 new affordable homes plus 20 units for people with disabilities under phase one of a programme with phase 2 due to provide a further 185 units.

10.2 Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Jones introduced her report by drawing attention to the attendance by the Leader at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at which, amongst other things, he outlined the current approach to exploring opportunities for shared services and heard from members on a number of issues including the take up of the Council's reduction in business rates being offered to small businesses during the recession.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had also received the first councillor call for action concerning a traffic issue and in considering the matter raised had agreed to make a site visit to the roads concerned.

The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee had focussed on child protection and school places. Councillor Jones also briefly outlined the work of the select committees as detailed in her report.

Finally, Councillor Jones expressed the hope that members took time to read the reports produced by overview and scrutiny task groups and that the Executive took them as seriously as the members who took part in them did.

11. To hold a first reading debate - 2010/11 to 2012/13 budget

Councillor Lorber introduced the reports of the Executive and Director of Finance and Corporate Resources. The report of the Executive (separately circulated) set out the Administration's top priorities for activity, spending and saving. The report from the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the best information available to the Council at the present time on the Budget position. It contained assumptions of external funding for 2010/11 based on figures in the current Comprehensive Spending Review, including a 1.5% increase in Formula Grant. The report pointed out that there was considerable uncertainty about funding in later years with an expectation that this would not become clearer until after a General Election. Councillor Lorber stated that as the current year progressed the consequences of the economic recession became clearer. The Council had launched an Improvement and Efficiency Strategy designed to save at least £50M over the next four years. There was no expectation that the Council would receive an increase in funding over this period despite the local population growth placing additional demands on council services. The priorities of the Council were to deliver improved services to residents whilst reducing costs and creating a 'One Council' approach. In the longer term a key aspect of this strategy would be the building of the new Civic Centre. Councillor Lorber referred to transformation projects in adult social care and children's social care which had already produced better services for less money. He confirmed that the four key priorities set out in the Corporate Plan - crime and community safety, young people, environmental

sustainability and regeneration, would continue to be the priorities for directing resources into. Councillor Lorber referred to uncertainty caused by the Government changing funding decisions such as withdrawing nearly £4M from the Working Neighbourhood Fund and now threatening to withdraw funding from London for the Freedom Pass which would cost the Council over £1M a year. Councillor Lorber referred to many of the achievements of the Council since 2006 and stated that the Administration would continue to work on improving services.

Councillor Blackman referred to the serious problem of massive Government debt which the Government would have to take action to reduce and he felt this would particularly affect capital projects. He referred to past successive Council budgets that had effectively more than doubled the Council Tax compared with the current Administration which had, over its term, increased the Council Tax by less than 10% with a promise of no increase next year. The Council would meet its responsibility to produce a balanced budget on the assumption of no extra money coming in to the Council and at the same time not squeezing the Council Tax payer. Councillor Blackman referred to dramatic improvements in Council services and made reference to improved customer satisfaction.

Councillor Detre supported the Improvement and Efficiency Strategy as the way to provide value for money services. He felt the One Council approach could be extended to looking at ways the Council could further support the many organisations in the borough that provided services to residents.

Councillor Clues referred particularly to the work undertaken on community safety and remarked on how coherent the Council's strategies had been. He emphasised the importance of partnership working and referred to the Council's robust and progressive programme which had delivered services producing greater satisfaction.

Councillor Wharton explained the cost pressures facing the Children and Families service which were almost as great as those facing Adult Social Care. The number of referrals had been rising before the Baby Peter case accelerated this and there were increased demands from children with disabilities. The rise in demand for services had been met by improving efficiency. He used as an example the review of Brent Transport Services that had saved £1M and improved satisfaction rates.

Councillor Matthews referred to earlier discussion and added that consideration had to be given to how improved services could be delivered at less cost. Accessing additional funds was an important part of delivering the services that came within her portfolio of crime prevention and community safety and she outlined some of the initiatives undertaken to attract funds and provide new services.

Councillor Coughlin suggested that it was usual for an administration to have clear policies rather than only reference to an Improvement and Efficiency strategy which he felt simply set out a four year plan to save money. He submitted that any government could be blamed for a lack of resources but asked what improvements the Council intended to make, what spending plans it had, what approach would be adopted towards fees and charges and what areas were a priority for spending money on. Councillor Coughlin added that much was made of past Council Tax increases but no action had been taken to reverse these increases over the last three years.

Councillor Allie spoke of the challenges for the Council post May 2010 but stated that the housing service had already risen to the challenge and achieved a 4 star service. He outlined some of the achievements of the service.

Councillor Van Colle considered that the Council faced a situation that nobody had faced before. He questioned how any plans for growth could be considered when it was clear the Council would not have the money to fund these. He stated that if the Improvement and Efficiency strategy was successful this might free up some resources and on this basis he was hopeful for the future.

Councillor Dunwell questioned the ability of each of the three main parties on the Council to deal with the challenges facing the Council.

Councillor Mendoza stated that despite the knocks taken on the capital programme, withdrawal of grant monies, the Baby Peter case and difficulties with the PCT, the Council had over the last three years remained on course to deliver its programme. He felt the Council's reputation had been improved and was excited by the Improvement and Efficient strategy.

Councillor Sneddon outlined the achievements under his portfolio of Human Resources & Diversity and Local Democracy & Consultation.

Councillor HB Patel stated that over the last 4 years the Council had improved many aspects of its services and dealt with the service priorities in an efficient way.

RESOLVED:-

that the reports from the Executive and the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources on the 1st Reading of the 2010/11 Budget be noted and that the views submitted by Members during the course of the 1st Reading Debate be referred to the Budget Panel for noting.

12. **Urgent Business**

There was none.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

COUNCILLOR JAMES O'SULLIVAN
Mayor