

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

At an **ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL** of the **LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT** held at Brent Town Hall, Forty Lane, Wembley, Middlesex on **Monday, 28th July 2003 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor P Lemmon

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor A Shahzad

COUNCILLORS:

Allie	Kabir
Arnold	Kagan
Beswick	Kansagra
R Blackman	D Long
Mrs N Blackman	J Long
D Brown	McGovern
V Brown	Moher
Chavda	Moloney
N Colwill	Nerva
R Colwill	O'Sullivan
Crane	B M Patel
Cribbin	C J Patel
Coughlin	H B Patel
Davies	H M Patel
Duffin	R S Patel
Farrell	Rands
Mrs Fernandes	Sattar-Butt
Fiegel	Sayers
Fox	Sengupta
Freeson	Shah
Gillani	Ms C Shaw
Gladbaum	Singh
Halder	Steel
Harrod	Taylor
Hughes	Thomas
John	Thompson
Jones	Van Colle
Joseph	Zakriya

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bellia, Dromey, Lorber, Lyon and Wharton.

2. **Procedural Motion**

The Council considered a procedural motion in the name of Councillor Moloney that was circulated.

RESOLVED:-

that the order of business for this meeting of Full Council be altered from that set out on the Summons so that:

- Mayor's announcements are taken following Apologies for Absence
- A comfort break of ten minutes immediately follows Mayor's announcements
- The items of Minutes of Previous Meetings and Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial interests are then taken before moving to the items as listed on the Summons.

3. **Mayor's Announcements**

It was with sadness that the Mayor announced the recent death of Noel "Robbie" Robinson, a former Mayor's chauffeur until 1987. He was a good friend of the Borough and attended many civic events, most recently the Annual Meeting. His funeral would take place on 1st August at St Michael and All Angels Church in Stonebridge. The Mayor gave an update on the health of Eric McDonald, former councillor, who had recently moved to a new care home in the vicinity. He was making progress, settling in and would welcome visitors at any time. The Mayor also welcomed Councillor Thompson to his first meeting of the Council following his illness and Councillors on all sides joined him in that welcome.

The Mayor congratulated Marylin Okroro, a local resident, the AAA 400m Junior champion. Marylin was picked to represent Great Britain at the European Junior Games. He also congratulated Brent residents who were members of the under-16's football team. They all live in Neasden. The Mayor announced that he recently given out awards to 8 young Judo experts from Brent at the London Youth Games. They were coached by Lee Davis and he sought permission to write to Lee on the Council's behalf to congratulate him on the young people's success.

The Mayor welcomed Lesley Daisley, wife of the late Paul Daisley, MP, to the Council meeting and formally announced to the Council the death of Paul Daisley on 18th June 2003 following a period of illness.

The Council observed a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

The Mayor then recalled Paul Daisley's contribution in the House of Commons and invited members to give their personal tributes. Members on all sides paid tribute to Paul Daisley, former Leader of the Council and Member of Parliament for Brent East. Councillor John read out a letter from Paul Daisley's widow, Lesley, thanking all for their support including staff in the House of Commons Office, Brent Council and Labour Group Office staff, also carers and other support staff and everyone who had made his life special. Councillor John paid her own tribute to Paul Daisley stating that he had been loved and respected by all and would be sorely missed. Other members gave their own personal recollections referring to the respect and affection with which he was held across all parties. They referred to his work on the Wembley Stadium Development regretting that he would not be able to see an end to his labours. Members referred to his appetite for life and his dedication to the community and the tragic loss to the Borough.

4. **Adjournment**

At 8.07 pm the meeting adjourned for ten minutes.

5. **Minutes of Previous Meetings**

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the minutes of 12th May 2003 Annual Meeting be confirmed as a true and accurate record noting that the Borough Solicitor had agreed to review the procedure for the appointment of independent members to the Standards Committee and to report back;
- (ii) that the minutes of the special meeting held on 19th May 2003 be approved as a true and accurate record.

6. **Declarations of Interests**

At this meeting there were none.

7. **Appointments to Committees/Appointments of Chairs/Vice Chairs**

At this meeting there were none.

8. Question Time

Questions submitted under the provisions of Standing Order 39 had been circulated together with written responses from respective lead members. Members were invited to ask supplementary questions.

Conservation Area Review

The first two questions were nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group. The question from Councillor Taylor referred to the proposals to de-designate ten conservation areas in Brent. In a supplementary question Councillor Taylor asked how long it would take for the Council to change its mind given the public opposition to the proposals and questioned how the Administration were going to correct those areas that were in decline and where the majority of residents wished the conservation area status to be retained. He also asked what would be done to protect areas from the activities of developers. Councillor Jones (Lead Member) in response said that the comments received had yet to be analysed and the Executive had not yet made a decision on this proposal as the matter was now out to consultation. Of the responses received, some were in favour and others against. The issue would be discussed at the area consultative forums and the Planning Committee and a further re-assessment would take place at Scrutiny. Councillor Jones accepted that there had been a decline in some conservation areas and added that the position was in need of a review. Resources, however, were scarce.

Wembley Event Day Parking Controls

The next question was from Councillor B M Patel on Wembley Event Day parking controls. In a supplementary question referring to the results of consultation about the controlled parking zones and recent discussion at the Highways Committee, Councillor Patel asked when public consultation would take place and whether the Administration would abide by the results. Councillor Jones responded that the parking plans for the Wembley area were not a controlled parking zone in the usual sense. She emphasized the need to welcome the Wembley Stadium development and stated that a decision would not be made in September as there would be insufficient information available at the time. She stressed the need to find a compromise solution.

National Wembley Stadium – Rail Transport – Improved Rail Transport Links to the Stadium

Councillor D Brown requested legal advice on whether a question could be answered by another member of the Executive who was not the lead member. The Borough Solicitor confirmed that under the

Constitution any member of the Executive could respond, however it was usual for the lead member to so do.

Councillor Brown in his supplementary, questioned what the Administration was doing to persuade the Government and Mayor of London of the need to have in place rail improvements prior to the National Stadium opening, to protect residents from parking by stadium users and further consultation on a master plan. Councillor John responded that appropriate transport arrangements would be in place and that there was a package of measures. She stressed that the stadium was a huge opportunity for the area and urged Councillor Brown to get up to speed on developments.

There then followed three questions selected from Labour backbench members.

Housing Shortage

Councillor Harrod in his original question referred to the housing shortage and an action plan to reduce the rents, meet Government standards and reduce the level of temporary accommodation. In a supplementary question Councillor Harrod referred to the development of the West London Alliance which was welcomed and seen as essential to the implementation of the housing strategy. He questioned how the lead member would ensure that priorities of Brent at a political level were brought to bear to those on the regional board and asked how the lead member would be involved in the implementation monitoring and review of the West London Strategy. Councillor Thomas (Lead Member) shared his concerns and stated that the Board had made representations and would lobby Government. There would be a meeting of politicians prior to the Board being up and running. Councillor Thomas advised that the West London Strategy had been launched recently at the House of Commons and the issue would therefore be well documented. Allocation would be made on the basis of need and as a result Brent would get the highest allocation of resources.

E-Government

Councillor Gladbaum asked what actions the Council had taken to ensure that the drive towards e-government did not disenfranchise members of the community who did not have private access to the internet. In her supplementary question, Councillor Gladbaum enquired of the translation services available on the website and on BRAIN. Councillor Coughlin responded that online community and local community/local languages were available and via internet links there was access to many more languages. He emphasized that Brent was among the leaders in this area.

Islamia School

Councillor Joseph raised the issue of the Islamia School and comparative examination results and in her supplementary question asked whether the Council was right to grant voluntary aided status. Councillor John responded that she was very pleased with the examination results which were impressive and helping to ensure that a comprehensive service was provided to all schools in the Borough. She was very glad to have the Islamic school in the family of Brent schools.

There then followed four questions drawn from the general ballot.

Grants to Voluntary Organisations

The first was a question from Councillor Mrs Fernandes asking for an explanation for the cessation of grants funding for a number of organisations which act as transport providers for Brent residents attending day care and voluntary organisations. She also considered the questions posed to the users to be intrusive and asked whether they might infringe data protection legislation. Councillor Fox, in response, congratulated Mrs Fernandes on her recent nomination to be Conservative candidate in the forthcoming Brent East bye-election. In answer to a question, he stated that the report to the Executive had advised of a review of transport grants so the Council could be clear as to who was being transported and by whom. The review would continue until the end of July. Organisations which meet the criteria should have no difficulties and a sympathetic view would be taken.

Teaching in Brent

In a question from Councillor Kansagra, the issue was raised regarding teachers and seeking assurances that there would be no redundancies and confirming that the pay award was met in full. In a supplementary question Councillor Kansagra asked what pressure would be brought to bear on the Government to deliver a pledge of extra funding to compensate schools for the increases in spending outside of their control and asking the lead member to assure that schools would be notified of their budget share well in advance so that they could plan appropriately. Councillor John responded that funds had been built into the budget to cover the teachers' pay award and also for passporting. She was also pleased that recruitment and retention rates were good and that the authority had been singled out for praise by OFSTED. She confirmed there had been no redundancies. Councillor John also advised that a teachers' forum had been established to air issues.

Mobile Phone Masts

Councillor Sayers in a supplementary question was concerned at the delay in reporting on the Council's mobile phone mast policy. He asked whether the lead member was aware that across the country there was a coalition of community groups opposed to the siting of mobile phone masts close to schools and asked when there would be some action from the Executive on this matter. Councillor Jones responded that the Executive was taking the matter seriously and stated that the delay was due to a lack of conclusive evidence. The Stewart Report had given Telecom operators a greater degree of freedom and a code of practice was due to be issued by Government. Consultation would be taking place regarding the siting of phone masts near schools. A code of practice adopted by Government last year required the Council to have a named person responsible for this area. She stated it was a difficult matter and concerns would be taken on board.

School Admissions

A question in the name of Councillor C J Patel asked how many children had not yet been given their school admission for autumn 2003 and seeking comparisons across London and the country. In a supplementary, Councillor Patel asked whether the central database for admissions would be up and running in September and whether an overall picture would be provided to an early meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel and the Council Admissions Forum. Councillor Patel also asked for comment on the effect of neighbouring boroughs changes of Admission Rules. Councillor Patel also asked about the spread of travelling distances from children of Brent attending schools in the Borough and for information on trends relating to cultural or religious observances. Councillor John responded that some parents chose to send their children to a school some distance away and that there would be pressure on school places for good schools. She assured that the database would be ready in September and could not comment on the impact on Brent schools of Camden and Westminster's policy change. She noted that the population in Brent and London was increasing and the position on school places would have to be carefully considered. She also noted that the National Stadium would have an impact which would have to be taken into account.

9. Reports

The Council received a report from the Executive which included 'A Plan for Brent' Brent's Community Plan and the Best Value Performance Plan 2003/04.

Councillor Coughlin, in accordance with an arrangement for this meeting given the time constraints, forgo the usual introductions and moved the report. Councillor Nerva introduced the report from the Vice-Chair of the Overview Committee from the 15th April meeting and from himself for the 25th June meeting. He welcomed Councillor Thompson to the Chamber as a former Chair of Overview. He highlighted the achievements of the Roads Task Group and the Health Overview Task Group which would be considering the incidence of tuberculosis in the Borough. He also added that it had been suggested that small pieces of work be carried out by one or two Councillors plus an officer. He paid tribute to officers who had supported the Overview function and welcomed further suggestions from members.

Councillor Taylor introduced the report as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee. He expressed gratitude to officers that had attended and supported the Committee in particular Peter Goss, Democratic Services Manager, and was pleased to report that the Policy and Regeneration Unit would, next week, be short-listing for two posts to support the Scrutiny function.

The Council then went on to debate the items in the Executive report. Councillor Allie referred to the Best Value Performance Plan. He questioned the absence of targets/measures in key areas and felt that some of the policies did not address key principles. This he felt applied to the housing area and similarly so for environment and transportation. He urged the Executive to re-consider the plan. Councillor H B Patel referred to the Community Action Plan which was designed to encourage the community to articulate their aspirations. He questioned the degree to which the Executive listens to concerns put forward by residents such as over-development at the GEC site and over-parking in the Swaminarayan Temple area. He stated that people were concerned with crime, the condition of pavements and travel and also the imposition of controlled parking zones and Council tax levels. Councillor Crane welcomed the Best Value Performance Plan, noting that the health and social care issues had been raised by residents. He referred to the star ratings recently awarded to the hospitals and Primary Care Trust and the projects being jointly carried out with the PCT and also the investment for health local delivery plan which had been recently launched.

Regarding the Best Value Performance Plan, Councillor Rands accepted that the Best Value regime had been useful in terms of providing an insight into procedures, however there was no evidence of the promised savings that would result from the regime which was very costly. Councillor Davies welcomed the Best Value Performance Plan which would be used by the Performance and Finance Select Committee to monitor performance allowing officers and members to be held to account enabling an accurate picture to be available by July 2004. Councillor Daniel Brown questioned why the reports had not

been formally presented by the Executive at the meeting and introduced. He referred to targets in the Social Services area that were still not being met and other examples of poor performance which needed to be addressed. Councillor Bob Blackman referred to what he considered to be the selective quoting of targets when it was considered convenient. Councillor Gillani referred to the Performance and Finance Committee which had tried to consider the documents which she considered to be very detailed. She stated that some key performance indicators were not being investigated and requested feedback so that improvement could be made. She was also concerned at the quality of information provided.

Councillor Coughlin, in response, agreed that 5% Best Value savings should be achieved under the regime and undertook to look further into this. He stated that in some areas such as crime prevention the Council does not have total control/remit and as a result was not able to set targets, however crime had reduced by 16%. Regarding gun crime, he said there had not been a fatal shooting for three years. Regarding the Plan for Brent, this had been drafted as a result of a community conference and from the Council having regard to people's concerns and those of the public sector partners. Regarding the format of the Best Value report, this was largely dictated by the Audit Commission and the issues raised under the performance indicators were being tackled. Councillor Coughlin then moved the recommendations which were put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the 'Plan for Brent' Brent Community Plan be adopted;
- (ii) that the Best Value Performance Plan be noted and accepted.

10. **Motions Selected by Leaders of the Opposition Groups**

(i) ***Save our Conservation Areas***

Councillor Blackman introduced this motion which referred to recently concluded public consultation on the proposed de-designation of ten Brent Conservation Areas and the responses which demonstrated that the majority of people in these areas did not wish to lose conservation status. He attributed the decline in status to the Council's failure to monitor and enforce. He called on the Council to confirm that no changes would be forced on residents against their wishes and called on the Executive to withdraw the proposals and initiate discussions on the implementation of Article 4 Directives.

In discussion, Councillor Jones (Lead Member) quoted the terms of the Article 4 Directives and referred to a new publication from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and other agencies. The de-designation would allow for more funding to be spent on other maintained areas. She emphasized that the proposals were as recommended by an

independent review and a final decision had not been taken. Councillor Fox stated that the conservation area status had not been reviewed since the 1970's and that 32 areas was too large a number for officers to properly maintain. The aim was to protect those areas worthy of conservation. Councillor Rands urged the Executive to preserve and protect the Borough's amenities and referred to residents' concern that there would be a decline and loss of character in those areas that lose conservation status. Councillor R Colwill suggested that the Council re-visit the UDP and planning policies.

The Council then voted on the motion in the name of Councillor Blackman which was put to the vote and declared LOST.

In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 48 (d), the Conservative Councillors present asked that their assent be recorded.

(ii) ***Fighting for Our Post Offices***

Councillor V Brown proposed the motion in the name of the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group. She referred to the difficulties that would arise from post office closures including increased traffic and a further decline in local shopping parades. She noted that since this issue was discussed at the Extraordinary Meeting on 14th April a decision had now been taken to close the Gladstone Parade Post Office and also possibly Monks Park Post Office with a decision to close Carlyon being deferred.

Councillor J Long reminded members that the battle against Post Office closures had been long standing and in the past had been successful with cross-party support and backed by community campaigns. Councillor Fiegel recently attended a workshop with other Councillors and made it clear to the Post Office that the proposals were unacceptable particularly in regeneration areas.

The Council then voted on an amendment in the name of the Leader of the Council which was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:-

that further to the Council's recent debate on planned Post Office closures at an Extraordinary Meeting called by the Liberal Democrats, the Council records its considerable regret, sadness and anger that the attack on Brent's local Post Office branches has continued apace.

In particular, following the loss of Blackbird Hill Post Office, Council notes that:

- A decision has now been taken to close Gladstone Parade Post Office
- Monks Park Post Office is threatened with proposed closure

- A decision to close Carlyon Road Post Office has been deferred

Brent Council affirms the immense importance of local Post Offices to their communities, and the invaluable service they provide, especially to our elderly and vulnerable residents. The Council therefore welcomes the recent meeting between Post Office officials and representatives from all three main parties.

The Council therefore reaffirms its opposition to these closures and instructs the Chief Executive to formally express the opposition of all three Council groups to each proposed closure, and to seek the assistance of 'Postwatch' in making representations in the most severe cases.

In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 48 (c), the voting on the substantive motion was recorded as follows:-

FOR:	The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors Arnold, Beswick, R Blackman, Mrs N Blackman, N Colwill, R Colwill, Crane, Cribbin, Coughlin, Davies, Duffin, Farrell, Mrs Fernandes, Fiegel, Fox, Freeson, Gillani, Gladbaum, Halder, Harrod, John, Jones, Joseph, Kabir, Kagan, Kansagra, D Long, J Long, McGovern, Moher, Moloney, Nerva, O'Sullivan, B M Patel, H B Patel, H M Patel, R S Patel, Rands, Sattar-Butt, Sengupta, Singh, Taylor, Thomas, Thompson, Van Colle & Zakriya	(48)
AGAINST:	Nil	(0)
ABSTENTIONS:	Councillors Allie, D Brown, V Brown, Chavda, Hughes & C J Patel	(6)

The meeting ended at 10.20 pm

PETER LEMMON
Mayor

Mins0304/Council/full/cm28jli