

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, 15th September 2003 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor P Lemmon

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor A Shahzad

COUNCILLORS:

Allie	D Long
Arnold	J Long
Bellia	Lorber
Beswick	Lyon
R Blackman	McGovern
Mrs N Blackman	Moher
D Brown	Moloney
Chavda	Nerva
N Colwill	O'Sullivan
R Colwill	B M Patel
Crane	H B Patel
Cribbin	H M Patel
Coughlin	R S Patel
Dromey	Rands
Farrell	Sattar-Butt
Fox	Sengupta
Freeson	Shah
Gladbaum	Ms C Shaw
Halder	Singh
Harrod	Steel
John	Taylor
Jones	Thomas
Joseph	Van Colle
Kansagra	Zakriya

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors V Brown, Davies, Duffin, Fiegel, Mrs Fernandes, Gillani, Hughes, Kabir, Kagan, CJ Patel, Sayers, Thompson and Wharton.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Councillor Rands informed the meeting that he had not received an answer to a question he had raised under standing order 39, which was noted. Councillor Allie stated that he felt that the minute of his contribution to the debate on the Best Value Performance Plan considered at the Ordinary meeting did not reflect the tone of his criticism.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 28th July 2003 be approved as a true and accurate record, subject to Councillor Sattar-Butt being shown as present;
- (ii) that the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 28th July 2003 be approved as a true and accurate record.

3. **Declarations of Interests**

Councillor Moher declared an interest as Chair of Governors of Wembley High School in regards to the Executive's item on education matters.

4. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor reported on the double shooting that had happened in Kensal Green resulting in the death of a man and a young child. He gave notice that there would be a community vigil outside the house where the tragedy occurred between 6pm and 7pm on Tuesday 16th September and that a police conference was being arranged.

The Mayor was pleased to inform members that Brent Housing Partnership had been awarded a 3 star rating with excellent prospects.

The Mayor referred to the excellent GCSE and 'A' level exam results within the Borough.

The Mayor reported on his attendance at the official launch of the Capital City Academy and referred to the new science and technology block at Wembley High School.

Finally, the Mayor welcomed Val Jones, new Director of Human Resources and Diversity, to the meeting.

5. **Black And Minority Ethnic Service User Consultative Forum**

Members received a report requesting an amendment to the Council's Constitution in order to incorporate a new Service User Consultative Forum, the Brent Black and Minority Ethnic Service User Consultative Forum.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the establishment of the Black and Minority Ethnic Service User Consultative Forum as a Brent Service User Consultative Forum be agreed;
- (ii) that the terms of reference of the Brent Black and Minority Ethnic Service User Consultative Forum in Appendix 1 for inclusion in Article 10 of the Council's Constitution be agreed;
- (iii) that Councillor Izaharul Halder be appointed as Forum Chair.
- (iv) that an allowance be paid to the Forum Chair at the same rate as the allowance paid to the Chairs of the other Forums, namely £4,340 for a full year, and that the Council's Member's Allowances Scheme set out in the Constitution be amended accordingly;
- (v) that Councillor Kabir and a Conservative councillor to be notified, be the additional members on the Forum.

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

At this meeting there were none.

7. **Items Selected by Non-Executive Members**

(i) ***Wembley Development***

Councillor Arnold introduced the item she had raised which referred to the dissatisfaction felt by Wembley residents over levels of street cleaning and asked what resources were available to support a safe, clean environment in Wembley. Councillor Arnold stressed that this was a matter of great importance to local people. She also asked what initiatives there were to ensure local access to new opportunities.

Councillor Jones responded with reference to the Wembley Development Framework. She stated that this envisaged greater access by public transport with improvements to stations, sustainable developments and street planting along principal roads. Councillor Jones submitted that the level of street cleaning was of an average standard but acknowledged there were pockets of poor performance. However there were already plans to address these. A new contract specification for street cleaning and refuse collection was under consideration.

Councillor R Patel added that there were a number of key initiatives to ensure the concerns of local residents were addressed as a priority. This would include support and training for access to jobs, work on improving the stations, estate roads, bus and cycle routes and the development of cultural activities and public arts.

Councillor HB Patel felt there was a lack of support by the Council for whilst he supported the redevelopment of the stadium ancillary problems had not been addressed. He cited the parking issues and insufficient help to local businesses and residents.

Councillor Nerva supported the commitment to improving access by public transport and hoped to see the promotion of Ealing Road as a spin off to the redevelopment.

Councillor R Blackman stated that there were more qualified better-trained people in the area but that the redevelopment would only provide unskilled jobs in the service industry. The key issue was the attraction of long term professional jobs to the area.

RESOLVED:-

that the Executive be requested to consider further the issues raised by this item.

(ii) ***Air Pollution in Neasden***

Councillor Harrod referred to Neasden as suffering from a lack of fresh air caused by dust from the local recycling and car breaking works. In addition drains on the roads were constantly blocked and the heavy use of the North Circular Road caused intolerable nuisance. He felt that improved wheel washing/sprinkler systems for vehicles leaving the works sites were needed, the relevant UDP provisions needed to be enforced and targets for improvement adhered to.

Councillor O'Sullivan stated he was pleased that this item had been raised and support the view about the condition of the drains and pavements.

Councillor Lorber referred to the car breaking works being in place for a number of years and that the recycling works were granted permission for use of their site in 1999. He felt concern for the area was belated and asked if there was to be any action to deal with the problems. He added that there was a need to identify what was causing the dust and felt that the Executive should be asked to ensure planning controls were being enforced.

Councillor Steel stated that he had travelled through the area for a number of years and recognised the air pollution that existed. Some of it was due to diesel pollution and he felt there should be more Government funding to ensure lorries not meeting emission controls were dealt with.

Councillor Jones responded by pointing out that there were several different uses on the sites in question and that much of the activity was under the regulation of the Environment Agency. The Council had some powers it could use and these would be kept under review. She undertook to look into the possibility of monitoring the air quality in the area with a view to identifying whether a particular operator was responsible for the pollution.

RESOLVED:-

that the Executive be requested to consider the issues raised by this item and the response by Councillor Jones, Lead Member for Environment and Planning.

(iii) **Educational Standards in Brent**

Councillor Gladbaum submitted her item by stating that giving opportunities and enhancing life chances for young people could not be over estimated. This extended beyond exam results and required a cultural shift. What she saw as the divisive competition between schools in the past had gone and it was now important to maintain co-operation between schools.

Councillor Kansagra offered his congratulations to everybody involved in the achievement of the excellent exam results within the Borough. He felt that the foundations of these results had been laid in the 1990s. However he felt that the problems over school funding and the proposals to change the exam structure were not good for the future of education. He felt that the teachers should be left to get on with their jobs.

Councillor Lorber also welcomed the good exam results and was grateful to the teachers, parents and governors for their work. He submitted that what was needed now was a period of certainty. He expressed the hope that the Government would address the funding issue because schools had used balances and repairs budgets to meet the teachers pay award and teacher vacancies still remained.

Councillor Lyon responded by saying that it was a myth that there had been a school-funding problem in the Borough. He referred to Opposition budget proposals that would have seen some areas of education being cut. He stated that the Council should be proud of the recent exam results, which showed an improvement beyond the average improvement level in England. He informed the Council that there was a lot of activity going into maintaining and improving education standards in the Borough.

RESOLVED:-

that the Executive be requested to note the views expressed under this item.

8. **Procedural Motion**

Councillor Moloney moved a procedural motion which was put to the meeting and declared carried:

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the Leader be permitted to speak for up to 20 minutes in order to provide a report back to members for information purposes only on those matters which were notified to members the previous Friday by the Leader.
- (ii) that members should be given an opportunity during the general debate to respond to those matters raised by the Leader.

9. **Reports from the Executive**

Councillor John reported on matters that had been before the Executive at the meetings on 21st July and 18th August 2003.

(i) ***Education Matters***

Councillor John added her congratulations to all involved in the achievement of the good exam results. She referred to the opening of the new science and technology block at Wembley High School. Councillor John also reported on her presence at the official launch of the Capital City Academy which was

proving popular with parents to the extent that it was over-subscribed, and referred to the wonderful facilities at the school.

(ii) ***River Brent Restoration Project – Phase 2***

Councillor John reported on her attendance at the opening of phase one of the River Brent restoration project, which now provided a nice walk along part of the river and had enhanced the surrounding environment.

(iii) ***Festivals Programme***

Councillor John referred to the review of the future management arrangements of the festival programme. She especially mentioned the Diwali Festival, which because of its success required the Council to consider how it would be run in the future to ensure health and safety issues remained at the top of the agenda.

(iv) **Review of the non-Brent managed youth and community centres**

Councillor John referred to the officer briefing on the review that had facilitated many councillors being involved in the review.

(v) ***Willesden Sports Centre PFI – Selection of Preferred Bidder***

Councillor John reported on the decision of the Executive to appoint a preferred bidder but that the Executive would take the final decision on 22nd September when the position on the all weather pitch was known.

10. **Report from Chair of Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Taylor submitted his report and pointed out that it now included the activity of the various sub-committees established by the new scrutiny arrangements. These had all met and had begun to develop ways of working. There had also been progress on the appointment of scrutiny support staff so that soon all the resources the Council had made available to directly support scrutiny would be taken up.

11. **General Debate**

Members debated the items included under the report from the Executive.

Other members acknowledged the good exam results and the new facilities at Wembley High School and the Capital City Academy. Some concern was expressed around the static primary school exam

performances and what this held for the future. It was also pointed out that Preston Manor High School was heavily oversubscribed and whilst this was a reflection on the success of the school it demonstrated a need for increased capacity for school places. The Executive was congratulated on the conduct of the review of non-Brent-managed youth and community centres which had proved helpful to a number of members. It was hoped this way of working would be developed for the future when considering issues of such wide-ranging interest to members.

A concern was raised about the perceived lack of consultation with the community on what sort of Diwali festival the Council wanted to see happen. It was also suggested that there were more important Hindu festivals to celebrate that the Executive should consider.

Councillor Van Colle raised the specific issue of the flooding of the Wealdstone Brook which he had raised at the Executive when it had considered the River Brent Restoration Project. He stated that he had not received a response to his concerns.

Councillor John responded to the general debate by assuring Councillor Van Colle that she would take up the issue raised by him. She did not accept the proposition that the Executive should consider supporting other festivals and felt this matter had been raised out of context. The Council was already engaged in discussions with the voluntary community and had recently published a document called 'from patronage to partnership'.

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

(i) ***Violent Crime in Brent***

Councillor Blackman introduced his motion by firstly conveying his shock over the recent shooting incident in Kensal Green and passed on his condolences to the victims' family. He stated that as detailed in his motion many crimes were on the increase and clear up rates were low. He wanted to see an extra 300 police on the streets of Brent and referred to the number of inexperienced police deployed across the borough. He felt that in the multi-cultural community that comprised Brent there was a greater need for experienced policing.

In debating the motion it was submitted by some members that crime reduction targets were not being met and that violent crime was on the increase. Reference was made to an article by a reporter based on his experiences of living on the Stonebridge Estate. It was felt by some members that tougher action was needed against those caught committing crime. It was submitted that people's perception of crime was based on their experiences. The point was made that it was not down to the police that the number of burglaries was down but due to

people taking action to install greater security measures at their premises.

Other members submitted that one reason for the increase in crime figures was the increase in the reporting of crime. It was felt to be over simplistic to call for more police numbers. Extra police had already been recruited and it was a matter of how they were deployed. Local campaigns and local meetings were also needed to energise communities to help prevent and combat crime. Reference was made to a large police operation that took place in the borough under Operation Trident. This was particularly successful because it had the support of the local community. It was felt that there should be more faith in the police demonstrated. There was activity taking place on the Stonebridge Estate with residents and the police working together to give out a message to criminals that they were not welcome in Brent.

Councillor Beswick (Lead Member for Community Safety) responded to the debate by submitting that action was being taken to deal with crime. He pointed to the increase in public spending that would be required in order to recruit the number of extra police being suggested and queried how this would fit with Conservative proposals to cut public spending. He accepted that some forms of crime were on the increase but pointed out that others were in decline. The key was that action was being taken to deal with the issue.

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

(ii) ***Street Cleansing***

Councillor Lorber introduced his motion by stating that services to local residents dealing with the removal of rubbish and graffiti and with anti-social behaviour were abysmal and that it was time that resources were directed towards improving them. He had timed his motion so that the issues raised could be given proper consideration and resources identified during the budget making exercise for next year.

In debating the motion it was submitted that local residents were fed up with dirty streets and it was time to take action against the contractor. It was recognised that it was the actions of people that led to much of the dirt in the streets and it was felt that young people needed to be taught to be more responsible as they grew up.

Councillor Jones, Lead Member for Environment and Planning, responded to the debate by pointing to the performance digest regularly produced by the Environment Service which showed a culture of improvements taking place. She accepted there was still a way to go but pointed out that the Council could not instruct the contractor to employ more staff. Nevertheless the Council did fine the contractor for

poor performance. There was specific funding available to deal with graffiti removal and the number of abandoned cars on the streets of Brent was reducing.

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

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm

PETER LEMMON
Mayor

Mins0304/Council/full/cm15si