

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, 20th October 2003 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor P Lemmon

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor A Shahzad

COUNCILLORS:

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

1. **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence were submitted.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting of full Council held on 15th September 2003 be approved as a true and accurate record.

3. **Declarations of Interests**

At this meeting there were none.

4. **Order of Business**

RESOLVED:-

that standing order 38 relating to the order of business be waived in so far as to allow the following item to be taken at this stage of the meeting.

5. **Presentation to Former Councillor Eric McDonald**

At the invitation of the Council, Eric McDonald was present to receive a plaque from the Mayor in recognition of the 40 years service he had given as a Councillor for the Boroughs of Wembley and Brent. Members paid tribute to his work as a councillor and to the personal qualities he possessed. (A fuller record of the tributes paid to Eric McDonald is available as a separate document).

6. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor wished everyone a happy Diwali. He added that the Brent Diwali festival was launched on Saturday in Ealing Road and had been a great success.

The Mayor congratulated Councillor Kabir on the birth of her grandson named Jay and Councillor Sengupta on the birth of his grandson named Xavier Sidhartha.

The Mayor expressed condolences to Councillor Sayers on the recent death of his brother.

The Mayor announced that the memorial service for Paul Daisley was to be held on 6th November at 2.00pm and reminded members that this would see the launch of the Paul Daisley Trust in support of Colon

Cancer Concern. The first fund raising event for the Trust would be on 21st November at 8.00pm at the Corrib Rest in Salusbury Road.

It was with sadness that the Mayor announced the recent death of James (Jim) Hughes who was a Councillor for the old Brentwater Ward from 1971 to 1982. The Council stood for a one minute silence in memory of James Hughes and Members paid tribute to him.

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.

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

Education Budget

The question from Councillor R Blackman asked what action was being taken to meet the Government's requirements for details of the Education budget to be submitted by the end of December. In a supplementary question, Councillor Blackman stressed the seriousness of the timing aspect of submitting the education budget in December given that the Council will not be clear about the exact amount of the grant settlement until January. He asked what status would the proposed schools budget have in December and would the Council be able to adjust it when the position on Government funding is known?

Councillor Lyon (Lead Member for Education, Arts and Libraries) replied that he had set out the timetable as accurately as possible in his answer and that the Council's budget would not be final until it was agreed in March. Also, an important aspect in determining the schools' budget was the production of pupil numbers, information that was not available until January. Final figures could not be agreed before then but he gave notice that the Council would be committed to meeting the passporting requirements.

Buses Using Staverton Road

The next question was from Councillor Gillani concerning buses using Staverton Road. Councillor Gillani expressed her appreciation that this matter was to be reviewed by the Mayor of London. Councillor Gillani stated that whilst waiting for the Mayor of London to carry out his proposed review on bus routes in Brent East, which would include

Staverton Road area, there should be a meeting with local residents so that they were consulted on any alternatives to be considered. In a supplementary question, she asked if she could be informed of when such a meeting would take place?

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment and Planning) responded by saying that the Council had done its best to press for this issue to be looked at and she hoped the review would be thorough. However, she could not say at this stage how consultation would be carried out but would urge that this be clarified quickly.

The next question had been selected by the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group.

Council Tax

The question from Councillor Lorber himself, regarded the level of increase of the Council tax for 2004/05. As a supplementary question, Councillor Lorber asked whether, given that Councillor Coughlin could not say what the limit on the Council Tax rise next year might be, why it was necessary for him and the Labour Group to waste £9,000 on their budget planning awaydays and would not the money have been better spent on street cleaning and other services of direct benefit to Brent Council Tax payers.

Councillor Coughlin replied by referring to the Liberal Democrats alternative budget presented last May which was only a little under that finally set by the Administration. Councillor Coughlin stated that the Administration's budget planning process allowed a professional look at setting the next year's budget and the more practice they had at it the more they got it right.

There then followed three questions selected from Labour backbench members.

Rainwater Road Gullies

Councillor Gladbaum had questioned who was responsible for the maintenance, inspection and repair of rainwater gullies. She added that her question had been prompted by the fact that upon any walk around the borough she never failed to find a number of blocked gullies. However, she was pleased with the comprehensive answer she had received and did not have a supplementary question to ask.

"Healthy Living" in Schools

Councillor Crane had asked how the Council was promoting "Healthy Living" in schools and how many schools were taking part in the government's 'fruit scheme for schools'. In his supplementary

question, Councillor Crane asked whether there was any evidence that the scheme was proving successful.

Councillor Lyon replied that he was grateful to Councillor Crane for drawing attention to this matter. He referred to the importance of the Council's sports strategy in promoting healthy living and stated that he had been startled by the statistics on child obesity.

Crossrail

Councillor Nerva had asked what action was being taken to ensure Crossrail came to Brent. In his supplementary question he asked if the Crossrail petition could be brought to the attention of the widest possible number of Brent residents and to support the activities of the GLA member Lord Toby Harris on this matter.

Councillor John replied that having been led to believe that Crossrail branches would service north west London there was now the opportunity to get the proposal reconsidered. She stated that it was clear that the people of Brent and Harrow would not be able to fully contribute to the economic regeneration of the area without adequate rails links and she undertook to take the opportunity presented by the petition to raise awareness of the issue along the lines indicated by Councillor Nerva.

There then followed four questions drawn from the general ballot.

Housing LOCATA Bids

The first was a question from Councillor Allie asking what the number of LOCATA bids made by Brent residents were. He asked as a supplementary question what steps had been taken to remind residents to make bids and how the apparent overbidding would affect the more vulnerable people.

Councillor Thomas in response pointed out that the LOCATA scheme was not an answer to supply problems but rather a mechanism to allocate what provision existed. It was open to the more vulnerable to bid for a property and the benefit of the scheme was that it opened up choice. He submitted that the LOCATA scheme was a good scheme that worked well and was an improvement on previous arrangements.

Budget Balances

Councillor Steel had asked about the legal position on the level of balances held by the Council. In his supplementary question, Councillor Steel asked by how much more it was proposed to raise the Council Tax in order to put more money into balances.

Councillor Coughlin responded by saying that the reason for putting money into balances was to protect the position of the Council and that the Director of Finance was required to ensure there were adequate balances. He referred to the past when balances had been used to keep the Council Tax down.

Road Resurfacing

Councillor R Colwill had asked what condition a road had to be in before it was resurfaced. In his supplementary question, Councillor Colwill asked if, in future, priority would be given to roads in conservation areas and specifically mentioned Wellacre Road.

Councillor Jones replied that this would not be the case. Wellacre Road had been inspected and appeared quite low in the list of priority roads for resurfacing. She added that it was no less safe in Conservation Areas.

Road Safety Around Schools

Councillor V Brown had asked when the last borough-wide survey of road safety around schools had been carried out. In her supplementary question, she asked when a comprehensive audit of road safety at schools would be carried out, why works had not been carried out at schools where money had been allocated and when all schools could expect safety schemes to be in place.

Councillor Jones replied that funding for the safer routes to schools programme came from Transport for London. The Council took the issue very seriously and made efforts to access this funding as much as it could. There were a lot of schools in the borough and it would take time to look at them all.

9. **Report from the Executive**

Councillor John reported on matters that had been before the Executive at the meeting on 22nd September 2003.

(i) ***Unitary Development Plan – Response to Representations and Further Proposed Modifications***

Councillor Jones referred to the report, which set out the Council's proposed response to the representations received to the proposed modifications to the UDP and moved the recommendations.

(ii) ***The Treasury Management Annual Report 2002/03***

Councillor Coughlin introduced the Treasury Management Activity and Performance during 2002/03 and moved the recommendations.

(iii) ***Annual Complaints Report 2002/03***

Councillor D Long referred to the report that had been submitted to the Executive on 13th October 2003 on complaints about Brent Council. He stated that this was the 4th annual report and recommended all members to read it. It showed Brent climbing from 31st in London on the level of complaints to the Ombudsman 4 years ago to 15th. The Ombudsman had expressed confidence in the Council being able to handle the complaints made against it and this contributed to a huge saving in the resources devoted to dealing with complaints. The Executive had noted the report and Councillor Long thanked the officers in the Corporate Complaints Team for their hard work.

(iv) ***Voluntary Sector Conference***

Councillor John reported on the conference held on 2nd October 2003 which she explained was part of the Council's consultation with Brent's vibrant voluntary sector.

(v) ***Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs)***

Councillor John reported on the ASBOs taken out against a number of youths and the effect this had had on the quality of life for people living in the locality of the Welsh Harp ward.

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

Councillor Taylor submitted his report and added that all Members should note that a seminar on scrutiny was being arranged for 1st December as part of the member development programme, and that details would be circulated.

11. **General Debate**

Members debated the items included under the report from the Executive and Chair of Scrutiny Committee.

Concern was expressed that areas of the voluntary sector were experiencing financial crisis. It was said that the consultation exercise did not take account of the views of the voluntary sector but instead

was finance driven. The hope was expressed that the views of the conference would be addressed and the funding issues resolved. It was put that the conference had been poorly timed to take place during the day when a number of people could not attend and that the venue had not been fully accessible.

It was submitted that the Council's response to representations on the UDP did not address the acute need for housing in a fair and proper manner. Specific mention was made of the former Phillips garage site which the UDP designated for housing despite the Inspector recommending it as suitable for a mixed use development.

Reference was made to the anti-social behaviour orders taken out against seven youths and the impact this had had on the lives of people who had been terrorised by these youths. Quality of life for people had improved and the local Ward Councillors wished to congratulate the Police, Council and Brent Housing Partnership on working so closely together to bring about this action. It was suggested that incentives needed to be devised to encourage people who had witnessed anti-social behaviour to come forward to give evidence. The Government was commended for introducing anti-social behaviour orders and it was suggested that people now needed to be informed of exactly what these orders were and of the Council's powers in this area. Concern was expressed that the problems caused by the seven youths may simply have been pushed into another area by taking out these orders. It was asked if it was possible to evaluate how successful the action had been in removing the menace.

Arising from the report from the Chair of Scrutiny Committee, concern was raised over some aspects of the Wembley Redevelopment Scheme, particularly around the intention to restrict parking within the development. It was suggested that the proposal was impractical and would make life a misery for local residents in the surrounding area. The request was made that extra parking provision should be made available on another part of the development site.

It was put that whilst the number of complaints to the Ombudsman had gone down, the number of complaints to the Council had increased. Whilst the Council claimed that complaints handling had improved and that it was learning from its mistakes, it was submitted that there was no evidence of this. The level of complaints against the Revenues and Benefits Service remained very high. It was felt that the Council's complaints procedure was too elaborate and that the cost to the Council of dealing with complaints was too high.

Councillor John responded to the general debate. She pointed out that the voluntary sector conference had begun the process of consultation with the voluntary sector. It was important that if the activities of the voluntary sector were to be supported by the Council

they needed to fit with the Corporate Strategy of the Council. The exercise was not about cutting funding, as had happened in some other London boroughs. She thanked members for raising the issue of anti-social behaviour orders that had been taken out and agreed that the authority should not be complacent about their wider effects. Councillor John expressed the view that some members were trying to make good news sound bad when it came to the report on complaints handling, but accepted there was a problem with the Revenue and Benefits Service. Finally, she voiced her opposition to the idea that the Wembley Redevelopment should contain more parking provision. She stated that local residents would need help against the demands made by the new Stadium but that parking in the area could not be encouraged.

Councillor Rands moved an amendment to the recommendations of the Executive regarding the UDP in order to reflect the view of the Inspector that a proper investigation should be carried out on the former Phillips garage site to see if it could be developed for mixed use including some housing to a size and density that was appropriate. This was put to the vote and declared LOST. In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 48 (c), the voting on this motion was recorded as follows:-

FOR: Councillors Allie, Mrs Blackman, R Blackman, V Brown, N Colwill, R Colwill, (26)
Duffin, Mrs Fernandes, Fiegel, Gillani,
Hughes, Kansagra, Lorber, O'Sullivan,
C J Patel, B M Patel, H B Patel,
H M Patel, Rands, Sayers, Shah, Ms
Shaw, Steel, Taylor, Van Colle & Wharton

AGAINST: Councillors Arnold, Bellia, Beswick,
Crane, Cribbin, Coughlin, Davies,
Dromey, Farrell, Fox, Freeson,
Gladbaum, Halder, Harrod, John, Jones,
Joseph, Kabir, Kagan, D Long, J Long,
Lyon, McGovern, Moher, Moloney, Nerva,
RS Patel, Sattar-Butt, Sengupta, Singh,
Thomas, Thompson & Zakriya (33)

ABSTENTIONS: None

(0)

RESOLVED:-

Unitary Development Plan – Response to Representations and Further Proposed Modifications

- (i) that the responses to the representations set out in the report and attachments be agreed;
- (ii) that the Further Proposed Modifications, be placed on deposit from November 3rd to December 15th;
- (iii) that the revised UDP, as amended by the Further Proposed Modifications, be adopted as the Council's Replacement Plan unless, in the opinion of the Director of Planning, further substantive objections to the proposed further modifications are received.

The Treasury Management Annual Report 2002/03

- (iv) that the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2002/03 be approved.

12. Motions Selected by Leaders of the Opposition Groups

(i) ***London's Structure of Governance***

Councillor R Blackman introduced his motion by emphasising that the intention of the review by the GLA was to reduce the powers and number of London boroughs. He called on the Executive to set out its opposition to the review and to campaign for a transfer of powers away from unelected quangos to local government.

Councillor Moher welcomed the defence of elected bodies and stated that although the creation of the GLA had signified a reversal in the number of quangos the number of newly created quangos had not been reversed. He moved an amendment to the motion to add opposition to the transfer of powers away from local government to quangos. This was accepted by Councillor Blackman.

Councillor Hughes stated that local Councils should have more power and reduced local accountability had had a detrimental effect on voter turnout. He moved an amendment to the motion to add that the Council welcomed the review of London governance, including the need to move power from quangos to elected bodies, consider the need for the Government Office for London and Minister for London, consider the balance of power between the London Mayor and the Assembly and the need for the Government to recognise London's needs. The amendment also sought consequential amendments to the last paragraph of the substantive motion.

That Council proceeded to debate the motion. Members generally supported the motion by emphasising the need for increased local accountability. It was pointed out that a regional approach had been adopted for the delivery of health provision and adult education through the Learning and Skills Councils. Councils knew when it was appropriate to work across borough boundaries with partners and at the same time had mechanisms in place through which to consult local communities. It was suggested that the removal of 'local' government would further alienate young people from the democratic process. Members considered that democratic accountability needed strengthening and that any proposal to set up a regional structure across London would do the opposite.

The Council then voted on the This amendment in the name of Councillor Hughes which was put to the vote and declared LOST. The motion in the name of Councillor R Blackman, as amended, was then put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

that this Council notes the current review being undertaken by the GLA into London's Structure of Governance. This Council opposes any transfer of powers away from Brent Council to the GLA. Furthermore, this Council rejects the proposals to reduce the number of London Boroughs, which would see the creation of 7-10 "Super Boroughs". This Council instructs the Chief Executive to prepare a report opposing the proposed changes and calls on the Executive of Brent Council to take a positive lead on opposing the proposals. The Council further notes the continued growth of an unelected quangocracy that is usurping the powers of democratically elected representatives. The Council therefore calls on the Executive to oppose any further transfer of powers from local authorities to quangos and to lobby the government to transfer powers from existing quangos to local and, where appropriate, national government.

(ii) ***Restoring Confidence in Brent***

Councillor Shaw introduced the motion selected by the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and made particular reference what she considered to be the poor state of the local environment including the condition of roads, pavements, graffiti and refuse collection. She also referred to the growing problem of rats in the borough.

In debating the motion a reference was made to some of the views put forward at the Liberal Democrat Party conference

which would not be welcomed in Brent. Some support was given to the aspects of the motion that referred to abandoned cars, provision of litter bins, improved street sweeping, provision of toilets and improved road maintenance.

In responding to the debate, Councillor Coughlin, Lead Member for Corporate Resources, submitted that the election of Sarah Teather, MP and the condition of Brent's streets was an inappropriate combination given her role as a councillor on another London borough which had received a low CPA rating on environmental issues. He also made comparisons with other Liberal Democrat run authorities in addressing the contents of the motion.

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 9.40 pm

PETER LEMMON
Mayor

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