

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, 17th November 2003 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor P Lemmon

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor A Shahzad

COUNCILLORS:

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

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors N Colwill, Davies, Farrell, Mrs Fernandes, Thomas and Zakriya.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting of full Council held on 20th October 2003 be confirmed as a true and accurate record, subject to the final paragraph of minute 11 being amended to reflect the view of the UDP Inspector on the former Philips garage site and to a recorded vote being shown as having been taken on the motion put by Councillor Rands (amendments incorporated).

3. **Declarations of Interests**

At this meeting there were none.

4. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor congratulated former Mayor Len Snow and his wife Joan on reaching their 80th birthdays and celebrating their Diamond wedding anniversary.

He also congratulated Councillor Halder on the recent birth of his baby girl.

The Mayor congratulated all concerned with the organisation of Diwali 2003. He felt this had been the best ever both at Ealing Road and at local temples and particularly mentioned Councillor Ramesh Patel who had worked hard with Transport for London and local residents to ensure that access to the Neasden Temple was better than before.

The Mayor alerted councillors to the first fund-raising event for the Paul Daisley Trust on 21st November at the 'Corrib Rest', Salusbury Road, NW6.

It was with sadness that the Mayor announced the death of Mr John McGlone, a member of the Labour Party in Willesden for more than 50 years and an active member of local trade unions.

The Mayor invited everyone to his Christmas Party on Saturday, 13th December 2003.

5. **Procedural Motion**

Councillor Moloney moved a procedural motion that had been circulated in his name, which was put to the vote and CARRIED:-

RESOLVED:-

that the debate on Summons items 5(a) and 5(b) be taken together and that the Labour Group, Conservative Group and Liberal Democrat Group be allowed one member each to speak for up to three minutes on the items and any member wishing to move a motion or amendment to a motion may only do so during their three-minute contribution.

6. **Councillor Access to the Local Government Pension Scheme and Adjustments to Brent's Discretionary Policies**

Members' Allowance Scheme

Councillor R Blackman stated that he did not feel that there had been the opportunity to properly discuss these issues. He felt that there remained outstanding issues around what was expected of councillors within their differing roles and that this needed to be resolved before a scheme of allowances could be agreed. He also felt that there was a need for a more independent view of what the allowances should be with greater standardisation across London.

Councillor Lorber moved a motion circulated in his name not to make pension contributions for councillors in the current financial year, to ask the Standards Committee to consider the matter and to reconsider the issue as part of the budget making process later in the year. In putting the motion he stated that any further report on the issue should explain what alternative pension schemes existed that would not require the Council taxpayer to make a contribution. Councillor Lorber referred to the recommendations of the Association of London Government's independent review panel on Members' Allowances which he felt were in conflict with Brent's scheme. He moved a further motion circulated in his name asking the Council to note that the number of special responsibility allowances under Brent's scheme was higher than that recommended by the independent panel and asking that the matter be referred to Standards Committee for it to take a view on both the number of SRAs, and the levels of payment. The motion also put forward some views on what other changes to the scheme should be made and proposed that only changes that reduced the cost of the allowance scheme should be implemented in the current financial year.

Councillor Kagan pointed out that the Association of London Government independent panel had reported on the new regulations regarding pensions and co-opted members and otherwise was not

recommending any substantial changes to the level of allowances set out in its previous report which the Council had had regard to when agreeing its current scheme. She stated that she would be moving not to include any councillor in the pension scheme for the time being, pointing out that nearly 50% of members only received the basic allowance and the pension benefit for them would not be meaningful. Her motion also included a proposal to pay the co-opted and independent members an allowance in line with the recommendation of the independent panel but at a lower rate. Councillor Kagan made the point that the independent panel recommended that members receiving allowances should report on their activities on an annual basis. To this end role descriptions for members were being developed and it would be proposed that all members should report on an annual basis on their duties and activities for that year. Finally, Councillor Kagan pointed out that her motion proposed SRAs for the Chairs of the Scrutiny and Overview sub-committees. Councillor Kagan then moved the motion which had been circulated in her name.

The motion put by Councillor Lorber on pensions for members 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:	Cllr Lorber	(1)
AGAINST:	Councillors Arnold, Bellia, Beswick, Mrs N Blackman, R Blackman, V Brown, N Colwill, R Colwill, Crane, Cribbin, Coughlin, Dromey, Duffin, Fiegel, Fox, Freeson, Gillani, Gladbaum, Halder, Harrod, John, Jones, Joseph, Kabir, Kagan, Kansagra, D Long, J Long, Lyon, McGovern, Moher, Moloney, Nerva, O'Sullivan, B M Patel, H M Patel, H B Patel, R S Patel, Rands, Sattar-Butt, Sayers, Sengupta, Singh, Steel, Taylor, Thompson and Van Colle	(47)
ABSTENTIONS:	None	(0)

The motion put by Councillor Lorber on a members' allowances scheme was put to the vote and declared LOST.

The motion put by Councillor Kagan was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the Council agrees not to include any councillor in the pension scheme for the time being;
- (ii) that appendix 1 to the report on members' allowances be adopted subject to the following amendments:-
 - (a) that the allowance paid to voting co-opted members (including the members of the Standards Committee) be set at £200 per annum; and
 - (b) that in any case where a member is suspended or partially suspended all member allowances are withdrawn from that member for the period of the suspension.

7. **Appointments to Committees**

RESOLVED-

that the membership of Planning Committee be changed as follows:-

Councillor D Long be appointed 1st alternate for Councillor Cribbin in place of Councillor John

Councillor Beswick be appointed 1st alternate for Councillor Singh in place of Councillor Jones

8. **Items Selected by Non Executive Members**

(i) ***Review of Bus Lanes in Brent***

Councillor Steel introduced the item he had raised concerning the implementation of bus lanes, particularly in Wembley High Road, the Harrow Road and the proposals for Willesden High Road. He asked the Council to call on the Executive to conduct a review of all the bus lanes implemented in the borough and seek withdrawal of those considered inappropriate. Councillor Steel added that on some roads bus lanes remained empty because buses did not run efficiently and he called for an overall reduction in the number of bus lanes rather than an increase.

Councillor Nerva stated that bus drivers were now better skilled in their jobs and there were more bus journeys in London now than 30 years ago. He stated many people could not afford to use a car and buses and bus lanes gave the majority of people the opportunity to move efficiently around London. He hoped that bus journeys could be improved rather than obstructed.

Councillor Gillani stated that many traders in Willesden High Road did not want a bus lane introduced. Nevertheless the Highways Committee had decided to re-consult people in Willesden High Road and there was a feeling that the Council was already committed to the implementation of the bus lanes.

Councillor R Blackman referred to the negative impact bus lanes had on residential areas because the smaller local roads became rat runs as drivers sought to avoid the main roads which were restricted with a bus lane. He felt that the impact of bus lanes should be assessed on all roads in the area and not just the main road in question. He stated he was in favour of bus lanes where they were assessed as appropriate.

Councillor Jones responded by stating that she was pleased that this matter had been raised but pointed out that bus lanes took up only a small area of London's roads. Bus lanes were only introduced after consultation with the frontagers. Where issues had arisen site visits took place to look at the implications of introducing bus lanes. Councillor Jones felt no useful purpose would be served by referring this matter to the Executive.

RESOLVED:-

that the matter be not referred to the Executive.

(ii) ***Town Hall Security***

Councillor H B Patel introduced the item he had raised concerning the need for better security at the Town Hall. He asked that the Council call on the Executive to conduct a proper review of security at the Town Hall. He added that security measures had been put in place at other Council buildings but not at the Town Hall and this had led to a number of incidents occurring. The Council needed to provide a safe secure environment where staff could concentrate on their work.

Councillor R Colwill emphasized that the Town Hall was the only Council building with an open door policy. He felt it was not for individual members of staff to have to protect themselves and the building. Proper investment in security was needed.

Councillor Coughlin responded by stating that this issue had been raised before and was being treated out of proportion to the risk. The Town Hall was a public building and would remain so. Various official inspection regimes had commented favourably on the openness and public accessibility of the building. Security had recently been reviewed and all

councillors had been made aware of this. The Council would reiterate to all staff the security guidance that needed to be followed but he did not see any purpose in referring the matter to the Executive for further consideration.

RESOLVED:-

that this item be not referred to the Executive.

(iii) **Anti-Social Behaviour**

Councillor Singh introduced his item by referring to the action taken against a gang of youths in the Welsh Harp Ward. He asked for the impact of anti-social behaviour orders to be assessed and to look at other ways in which the Council and its partner agencies could take action against anti-social behaviour. He stressed the serious impact some people's behaviour had on other people's lives. He referred to the sense of relief within the community since the anti-social behaviour orders had been served. However, it was imperative that the root causes of such behaviour were addressed and that there was a focus on prevention and rehabilitation. Nevertheless strong action against anti-social behaviour was required and he felt this needed all-party support and the support of all partner agencies in order to take the most effective action.

Councillor Duffin supported the raising of this issue and referred to problems within his Ward on which he had written to the Leader. He expressed concern that the draft Housing Service Development Plan did not identify the additional resources he felt were needed in this area.

Councillor Lorber stated that the anti-social behaviour orders had already been broken and there was uncertainty over how minor breaches would be dealt with. He felt the problem was caused by inadequate Police resources and that the Police Authority in London was centralised rather than under local control. He also questioned why it took so long for the authorities to gain the anti-social behaviour orders.

Councillor Steel disagreed with the points made by Councillor Lorber and expressed his support for Councillor Singh's item. He hoped that every aspect of anti-social behaviour could be dealt with.

Councillor Moloney stated that by pursuing anti-social behaviour orders the authorities had shown that they were prepared to take action to address the problems.

In response, Councillor Beswick stated that it had taken £68,000 to prosecute the seven youths involved and that did not include officer time. The Council had called on its partner agencies to identify resources to pursue anti-social behaviour orders where necessary. There were other cases either proceeding through the courts or being looked at and this demonstrated the seriousness with which the Council regarded this matter. He accepted that an assessment of the action taken around anti-social behaviour orders was appropriate but added that the Council had put resources into supporting this work.

RESOLVED:-

that the Executive be requested to consider the impact of the anti-social behaviour orders taken out against the "Press Road gang", with a view to looking at ways and means by which the Council and its partner agencies could further tackle anti-social behaviour.

9. Reports from the Executive

(i) ***Update on Items Selected by Non Executive Members at Council during 2002/03***

Councillor Kagan referred to the report as circulated and moved that the Council note the actions taken.

(ii) ***Decisions Taken by the Executive under the Council's Urgency Provisions***

Councillor Kagan drew attention to the two items on which decisions had been taken by the Executive under the Council's urgency provisions.

(iii) ***Report from Chair of Overview Committee***

Councillor Nerva submitted his report and referred to the Overview and Scrutiny event taking place on 1st December 2003. Councillor Nerva outlined the workload of the Overview Committee. The Waste Management task group had completed its work and meetings had been held with lead members to explore how the task group's proposals could be accommodated within the budget discussions and he thanked Councillor Van Colle for his work as Chair of the task group. Councillor Nerva looked forward to the outcomes of the Older People's task group. He stated that the scrutiny of health was now in its second phase; where last year deliberations took place on what arrangements would be made this year the Health Overview Panel had been created. One of its first task was to

look at TB within the Borough. Work had also started on how information from the area and user forums could best be processed for inclusion into the work of the Council and an outcome on this was expected in February. Finally, he mentioned the work being undertaken regarding Post Office services. He thanked all members and officers for their work in support of the Overview function.

(iv) ***Report from Chair of Scrutiny Committee***

Councillor Taylor stated that although he had no written report to submit to the Council this time, the Management Board had reviewed the number of meetings of scrutiny sub-committees that had taken place so far which totalled 19. He reassured the Council that a lot of activity was taking place to make the new scrutiny arrangements work.

10. **General Debate**

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

Councillor Freeson questioned the accuracy of the response given to the non Executive member item concerning strategic planning for Kilburn High Road and hoped that this could be corrected. He questioned why the Council had not been told that what was requested by Councillor Thompson in his item had not been progressed due to lack of resources. He hoped quicker action could be taken in future. Councillor Rands felt that lack of progress was a recurring theme on the items raised by non Executive members and that the whole process needed to be reviewed.

Councillor Van Colle raised the issue of the report of the Waste Management Task Group. He spoke of the possible confusion concerning recycling which needed to be clarified and emphasized the scope for a combined heat and power facility within the Wembley redevelopment area. He looked forward to the introduction of the task group's proposals. Other members hoped that the issue of waste management was seen as a priority by the Council and that recycling initiatives could be progressed and expanded.

Councillor Jones acknowledged the points made regarding waste management which would be discussed by the Executive in December. She also acknowledged the delay in pursuing initiatives around the Kilburn High Road area. Councillor John added that the Executive would take account of the points made regarding tracking the non-Executive member items raised and reporting to Council on progress. She acknowledged that infringements of the anti-social behaviour

orders had occurred and that the authorities had to remain vigilant but stressed that the gang had now gone from the area. She acknowledged the points made about waste management and recycling.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the actions taken as a result of the non Executive members' items raised during 2002/03 be noted;
- (ii) that the items considered by the Executive on 12th November 2003, which were not included in the Forward Plan, be noted.

11. **Procedural Motion**

Councillor Moloney moved a procedural motion regarding the 1st reading debate, which was put to the vote and CARRIED.

RESOLVED:-

that the time allowed for the 1st reading debate be extended to one hour with the Leader being given up to five minutes to present the reports, to be followed by a general debate to begin with the Deputy Leader and the Leader being called to make a final contribution to close the debate.

12. **1st Reading Debate of 2004/05 Budget**

The Leader asked the Council to reflect on the progress it had made over the years. She referred to the various awards it had won including three Beacon Council awards, the achievement of liP across almost all of the Council, twelve Chartermarks, nine Beacon schools, two Leading Edge schools and 27 other awards. She also referred to the various Inspection regimes that had commented favourably on the Council's performance. The Leader quoted from passages of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment report which had recently been updated. She stated that this demonstrated a record of success for the Council which she intended to build upon. She stated that the Council's priorities were the residents' priorities.

At this point the time permitted for the Leader's speech had expired and Councillor D Long moved that the Leader be further heard to allow her to complete her speech. This was CARRIED.

The Leader continued by referring to the recent successful anti-social behaviour orders taken out against seven youths and the 14 unacceptable behaviour orders being pursued. She stated that the Administration would continue to build on the successes achieved.

The Leader stated that this item provided the opportunity for non-Executive members to put forward ideas for inclusion in the budget but she made it clear that the Administration would continue to concentrate on improvements to the public realm. She concluded by drawing attention to the building of the new National Stadium which would provide the catalyst for the regeneration of the surrounding area.

Councillor Coughlin emphasized that the papers before the Council did not reflect the views of the Administration or anyone else at this stage but instead were a position statement based on the information currently known. He pointed out that there were additional issues to consider which were the Prudential Capital Scheme, local discretion on Council Tax discounts and the possibility of capping. He pointed out that 75% of the Council's funding came from Government grant. He drew attention to the budget matrixes and the savings and growth bids that had been identified. Councillor Coughlin announced that it was the Administration's intention to fully passport the schools' budget. He welcomed the 4% increase per pupil. He welcomed the chances the new Prudential approach to borrowing for capital purposes presented for local authorities. Councillor Coughlin drew attention to the powers for offering discretionary discounts and the drawbacks to this as set out in paragraph 14.9 of the report. Councillor Coughlin concluded that there were difficult decisions to be made but the Administration was clear about its priorities and would ensure that Brent continued to have one of the lowest Council Taxes in London.

Councillor Gladbaum raised the issue of the relocation of The Grange Museum. She stated that on its present site insufficient people were able to attend the museum despite it being well known. Next year the Council should know if a Heritage lottery bid had been successful.

Councillor Rands felt that improving the condition of the Borough's quieter roads was a priority to which some longer term thinking was required. He also felt that a report on how to deal with the maintenance of grass verges should be prepared acknowledging that whilst such verges were aesthetically pleasing, the practicalities were that many in narrow roads were unsuitable. He also felt that residents suffered from an erratic refuse collection service with a frequent reason for refuse not being collected being given as a vehicle breakdown. He referred to the problem when service roads were adopted by the Council but did not appear to be added to the street-sweeping contract. Finally, Councillor Rands referred to the difficulties the Sudbury Court Residents' Association had encountered in attracting sufficient planning resources to support their conservation area. Planning had suffered from a turnover of staff and he felt there was a need for a longer term investment in time, training and money within Planning to look after the Borough's conservation areas. Instead an exercise had been carried out to review them. He felt that a number of the growth areas included

in the Corporate Services list needed to be reconsidered so that funding could be re-directed.

Councillor Harrod expressed his wish to see extra money made available to develop more initiatives around anti-social behaviour orders and provide support for victims. He also felt action needed to be taken to redress the debt of money owed to rent payers who in the past had borne a disproportionate liability which had advantaged the Council tax payer. He pointed out that for five of the last six years there had been no rent increase and he hoped that it would not be necessary to increase rents for next year.

Councillor Allie commented that the priorities for spending in 2004/05 provided no commitment to addressing the dire need for housing in the Borough and to bring existing housing up to decent standards and reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. He also referred to the issue of housing for key workers and pensioner poverty, stating that many pensioners were unable to adequately heat their homes.

Councillor J Long felt the Council needed to provide funding for an additional civil advice worker to deal with all the cases received by Trading Standards. She also referred to the lack of a mobility forum which would affect many people and she asked whether the Council would lose out in attracting funding because it had not got such a forum in place.

Councillor Fiegel referred to the size and structure of the Communications/Consultation Unit and referred to the number of publications it produced. He felt resources could be re-directed to improve the conditions of roads and pavements in the Borough.

Councillor Thompson welcomed the Administration's intended aim of increasing resources to improve roads and pavements. He felt it essential that these sums were not reduced from the level indicated in the papers. He made a particular request for investment in the regular cleansing of the new paving in Kilburn High Road to keep it looking good. He also made a request for resources to be allocated towards the repair of the chapel and pathways in Paddington Cemetery and the consequent need to support the Cemeteries Investment Programme.

Councillor Sayers maintained there was an absence of any parking enforcement officers within his area of the Borough. He stated that Hassop Road had become a 'no go' area. He alleged that traffic wardens were not carrying out their job properly and cars were being left parked in the road all day. He referred to what he saw as the disgraceful condition of the Cricklewood Broadway pavement. Councillor Sayers also felt that the Council had failed to address the derelict condition of Dollis Hill House. Finally, he mentioned his

disappointment that once again the Brent side of Cricklewood Broadway did not have any Christmas lights.

Councillor Arnold spoke in support of the warden services and their successes. She felt that efficiency measures needed to be encouraged and an increase in the services supported. She felt other initiatives around the warden services and the pursuit of anti-social behaviour orders also needed supporting.

Councillor Van Colle stated that there was a lack of planning enforcement within the Borough which allowed developers to constantly breach planning control. He referred to the Environmental Services' Service Development Plan which indicated an intention to pursue the implementation of controlled parking zones which he felt were deeply unpopular in some areas. With regard to waste recycling, Councillor Van Colle stated that the Overview task group had thought that the investment required would be met by capital monies but the papers indicated that this would be met by revenue funding. He also referred to the recommendation of the task group to re-sign the location of recycling facilities which appeared not to have been picked up.

Councillor Lorber stated that there was general dissatisfaction over lack of enforcement within controlled parking zones. He also stated that there was a need to improve the Onyx contract. He felt it was time to address the street cleaning and associated services by taking them back in house. He felt that there needed to be a start made in planning to improve the cleanliness of the Borough.

Councillor R Blackman pointed out that the Liberal Democrat Group had previously supported the award of the contract to Onyx. He also stated that many of the services that had received awards, as referred to by the Leader, had begun their improvement under the previous Conservative Administration. Councillor Blackman stated that the reality was that the Government largely controlled the level of Council Tax the Council would have to levy and the key issue was therefore how much the Government grant would be for Brent and the affordability level of residents. They had already suffered from large increases and the proposals in the papers before Council represented an unsustainable level of spend.

The Leader responded to the first reading. She made it clear that the Administration had no intention of cutting back on the number of publications produced by the Communications and Consultation Unit. She stated that an increased level of funding had already been spent on improving roads and pavements within the Borough in an effort to address what was a London-wide issue. She accepted that the Paddington Cemetery was a good asset to the Borough. She confirmed that wardens were operating effectively in the Borough and stated that a decision on Dollis Hill House would be made soon. She

expressed some sympathy for the point made regarding the need to address the condition of the quieter roads in the Borough and to improve the refuse collection service in some areas. She made it clear there was no intention to cut back on the corporate centre and return to the past when the corporate centre was reduced to an unsustainable level. She expressed some sympathy with the views regarding enforcement within controlled parking zones. The performance of Onyx was subject to scrutiny but she stressed that the bin collection rate stood at 99.8% so only a few residents were missing out. Finally, she reminded the Council that the Liberal Democrat's alternative budget for the present year had been only a little lower than the Council's budget.

RESOLVED:-

that the reports from the Executive and the Director of Finance on the 1st Reading of the 2004/05 Budget be noted and that the views submitted by members during the course of the first reading debate be referred to the Executive for further consideration.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

P LEMMON
Mayor

Mins0304/Council/cm17ni