

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, 19th April 2004 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 | Lyon |
| Beswick | McGovern |
| Mrs N Blackman | Moher |
| R Blackman | Moloney |
| V Brown | Nerva |
| Chavda | O'Sullivan |
| N Colwill | B M Patel |
| R Colwill | C J Patel |
| Crane | H B Patel |
| Cribbin | R S Patel |
| Coughlin | Rands |
| Davies | Sattar-Butt |
| Dromey | Sayers |
| Farrell | Sengupta |
| Fiegel | Shah |
| Fox | Ms C Shaw |
| Freeson | Singh |
| Gillani | Steel |
| Gladbaum | Taylor |
| Harrod | Thomas |
| John | Thompson |
| Jones | Van Colle |
| Kabir | Wharton |
| Kansagra | Zakriya |

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Duffin, Mrs Fernandes, Halder, Joseph and Kagan.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meetings**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meetings held on 26th January (Ordinary) and 26th January (Special) and the 1st March 2004 (Special) be approved as accurate records.

3. **Declaration of Interests**

At this meeting there were none.

4. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor was pleased to announce the recent appointment of Duncan McLeod as Director of Finance and the Council congratulated him on his success. The Mayor also congratulated the 30 young people from the Borough who had taken part in a mini-marathon in Brent; noting that one of the participants was Councillor Nerva's daughter, Harriet.

The Mayor reported on the recent visit of the Prime Minister to the Borough for the launch of Metropolitan Police's Safer Neighbourhoods scheme in Stonebridge.

In support of his Charities, the Mayor announced a quiz was due to take place on Friday 23rd April and all members were encouraged to take part. On Sunday 25th April, he would be taking part in a London Mayors' Dick Whittington Charity walk from Highgate Hill to Mansion House.

The Mayor's Charity Ball was due to take place on Saturday, 8th May and raffle tickets were on sale. He encouraged all to attend what promised to be a most enjoyable evening.

The Mayor also had to announce that the planned visit of the Mayor of South Dublin to the Borough, scheduled for 23rd April, had to be cancelled following the announcement of the visit to their borough of The Taoiseach.

The Mayor invited members to his Fair Trade Network meeting due to take place in the Parlour the following day.

5. **Non-Executive Member Items**

The Council then considered items selected by Non-Executive members submitted under Standing Order 40.

(i) *Review of Street Name Signage*

Councillor Colwill called for a review of street name signage across the Borough in particular for illegible street signs that had been damaged or vandalised. Members in support referred to the importance of street signage in creating a good impression and a suggestion was made that Council staff in carrying out other duties such as street cleaning could keep a log of the condition of general street furniture, grass verge cutting etc and report back. Councillor Jones, as Lead Member for Environment, responded that a survey had been commissioned starting in the Kingsbury area which would then be rolled out to the rest of the Borough to be completed by September 2004. In the meantime, signage reported as faulty would continue to be replaced and, following the survey, there would be a removal and replacement programme. She encouraged Councillors to monitor the situation when out on their regular rounds.

(ii) *Chalkhill Estate CCTV*

Councillor O'Sullivan raised the issue of CCTV for the residents of Chalkhill Estate as requested by the residents on previous occasions. He considered that this would go some way to reducing the fear of crime. Members in discussion referred to other initiatives to reduce crime and their effectiveness. Members also considered whether CCTV should be extended to other roads in the surrounding area and emphasized the work the Council was doing with partners to reduce crime. Reference was also made to whether the installation of CCTV in some areas served to displace crime. Councillor Thomas (Lead Member, Housing) responded and commented that provision for such an initiative in Chalkhill had not been made in the 2004/5 budget and questioned whether the Opposition's budget proposals had done so. He suggested that the issue be discussed at the Chalkhill Joint Development Board and referred to a recent meeting attended by the Police where the crime statistics outlined for the area did not identify the area as one of high crime. Councillor Thomas outlined other initiatives in partnership with the police which he felt had served to reduce crime in the area.

(iii) *Disposal of Waste*

Councillor Farrell's item referred to the disposal of waste, welcoming initiatives in the budget package that related to environmental services, in particular the introduction of alley-gating in the Welsh Harp Ward

which had helped to reduce unauthorised dumping. She considered that some residents and traders needed to be reminded of their responsibilities and suggested a public awareness campaign, possibly through the Brent Magazine. Other members concurred and suggested that a civic amenity site would attract people to act lawfully and dispose of waste in the correct manner. Reference was made to the design of recycling facilities which should be made as visibly appealing as possible to encourage use.

Councillor Jones (Lead Member, Environment), in response, advised that pilot schemes for alley-gating were taking place, ward councillors would be consulted and public meetings held. She outlined the criteria for selection which would include affordability and sustainability. Alley-gating committees would also be established and a borough-wide communication strategy would be launched. Additionally, two enforcement officers would be employed. Plans were also progressing regarding the Twyford Tip as a civic amenity site and careful consideration would be given to the visual impact.

RESOLVED:-

that these items be referred to the Executive for further consideration.

6. Reports

Report from the Executive

Councillor John (Leader of the Council) introduced the report from the Executive which included reference to the Education Standards Annual Report 2002/3 considered by the Executive on 8th March 2004 and an update on items selected by non-Executive members at Council during 2003/4. She had also given notice of other items for discussion at this evening's meeting namely, Wembley Stadium, post office closures, Anti-Social Behaviour and the Safer Neighbourhoods Launch in Brent.

In introducing her report, Councillor John firstly referred to news received after the publication of the Council Summons regarding the closure next year of the Guinness Brewery in Park Royal. In addition to regretting the impact on employment, she was also sad at the ending of a long standing relationship between the Brewery and the Borough. In relation to an update on Wembley Stadium, the Leader referred to the Wembley Review Group another meeting of which was now scheduled for early May. This meeting would be hosted from York House and attended by the Chief Executive of Wembley National Stadium Ltd who would give the latest position regarding the development, in particular the raising of the arch.

On Post Office closures, Councillor John thanked those who had taken part in the cross-party Overview Task Group. While two post offices

were still listed for closure, five had been granted a temporary reprieve while further investigations took place.

Regarding tackling anti-social behaviour, Councillor John felt that residents of those communities where ASBOs were in place were supportive of their introduction. However, she also announced that the National Council for Civil Liberties were taking the Council to Judicial Review in view of the publicity surrounding some orders. The Council would be defending the action taken. On Safer Neighbourhoods, Councillor John referred to the recent visit of the Prime Minister, the Police Commissioner and the Mayor of London to the Borough to launch the three initiatives taking place in Stonebridge, South Kilburn and Wembley. The programme would be rolled out across the capital supported by dedicated staff and the Police and be a reassurance for members of the public.

Councillor Lyon (Lead Member, Education, Arts and Libraries) referred to the Education Standards Annual Report 2003 and was pleased to report that the authority was within one per cent of the national average of achieving five Grade 'A' to 'C's'. He felt this was a tremendous achievement for secondary schools given the number of pupils within the Borough who had English as a second language or who were asylum seekers. On the value added tables, Brent was the 10th most improved authority in the country. He recognised that disparities in performance still remained and would be a priority for the School Improvement Service, Education Action Zones and Excellence in Cities initiatives. He encouraged the members to attend the meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel due to meet on 21st April to consider the report in detail.

Councillor R S Patel (Lead Member, Regeneration) gave an update on the Wembley Stadium and the changing face of Wembley resulting from the development of the National Stadium. The completion date remained at September 2005 despite delays in the raising of the arch which was now imminent. Work progressed in other areas, a Masterplan for the surrounding area had been approved by the Executive and a planning application had been submitted by the London Development Agency for Wembley Stadium Station Hub. Work had also started on the Wembley Park site. A further £60m had been approved for station improvements and funding was in place for the stadium access corridor. Councillor R S Patel considered that the whole of Wembley would be transformed by this world-class development.

The Council also noted the decision taken by the Executive under the Council's urgency provisions.

Report from the Chair of Overview Committee

Councillor Nerva outlined the work of the task groups in particular the Post Office Task Group which had been an opportunity for cross-party working for the benefit of Brent residents. Progress on other task groups was also outlined including the TB Task Group, whose report would be published in May and who were working closely with the Primary Care Trust to come up with recommendations to increase access to treatment. Regarding the Housing Diversity and Urban Impact Task Group, he was meeting with officers to look at the implications and report back. Consideration was also being given to a process for consultation on Overview reports and effective mechanisms for feedback. The Overview Committee had also suggested improvements in the member consultation protocol and would be watching progress.

Report from the Chair of Scrutiny

Councillor Taylor was pleased to report that the Committee and Scrutiny Panels were continuing with their work. He referred to the visit in March to the House of Commons where members had met and been briefed by Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, (Chair of the House of Commons Transport Select Committee). All in attendance had been impressed with her advice and much enjoyed the visit. Further visits to other local authorities would be arranged. Councillor Taylor was pleased to announce the launch of the Overview and Scrutiny Website and the first edition of the Spotlight newsletter which updated members on Overview and Scrutiny activities. He reminded the relevant members to attend the forthcoming meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board.

8. General Debate

Members, in the discussion on the Post Office closures, referred to the co-operation between two parties on the Council and it was noted that while there was a commitment to review the position regarding some post offices, these could still close despite representations. Councillor R Blackman stated that the Council should encourage the use of post offices for the collection of Council Tax pointing out that there was a transaction charge within Brent. He stated that within Harrow this was subsidised and in other boroughs, free. He urged the Executive to introduce a policy change and make it easy for people to pay their Council Tax in this way. Councillor Thompson referred to the lessons learned as a result of the Task Group particularly the value of joint working. He outlined how the Task Group had carried out its work during the time available and the consultation and visit that had taken place. He paid tribute to Postwatch (Greater London) who had been an ally and also thanked staff in the Policy and Regeneration Unit for

their support. Councillor Thompson expressed the hope that those post offices most critical to their communities would be saved.

On Wembley Stadium, members discussed the delay in the raising of the arch and associated concerns for residents' safety. The reason for the delay was questioned. In addition, the lack of information surrounding proposals for additional schools, hospitals and other medical services while development continued apace, was regretted. An additional recent concern related to the potential for flooding from the nearby brook and members suggested there was a need for more 'joined-up thinking'. It was felt that the Masterplan had not been sufficiently scrutinised and that it should have flexibility to take account of the concerns of those affected.

Regarding education standards, members looked forward to the meeting of the Lifelong Learning Panel for a discussion on the report and were pleased at the positive findings. The Director of Education, Arts and Libraries was asked to thank head teachers and their staff for all their efforts. However, it was recognised that there was no need for complacency and that under-achievement was still a concern even though there were a number of projects in existence to address this issue. Attention was drawn to the need for the Council as corporate parents to ensure that the particular needs of Looked After Children were addressed. It was suggested that future reports should contain information on these children's performance. An underlying cause of low standards was seen to be poverty and reference was made to the recent Government announcement of a policy to give children from families on low incomes a grant to allow them to stay on at school. An alternative view was put emphasizing the importance of parental motivation in tackling underachievement. Another contribution drew attention to attainment levels and trends pointing out that performance in some subjects was in decline at key stage 1 level and that, were it not for the inclusion of a few high performing schools, the position would not be as positive.

Regarding anti-social behaviour, the work of the Neighbour Relations Team was commended. However the suggestion that this Unit also take on broader responsibilities for mediating in neighbour disputes was not supported as this would place additional demands on an already scarce resource.

Councillor John, in response, agreed that the Neighbour Relations Team should not be charged with additional responsibilities of mediation as this would harm their effectiveness. On education standards, she accepted that there was a high variability across the Borough in terms of performance and agreed that English as a second language was not the only concern. However, she felt that the statistics should also be able to reflect ethnicity and new arrivals into areas. In relation to paying Council Tax at post offices, Councillor

John stated that there were there were 58 alternative pay point outlets across the Borough at convenient locations and she urged the Post Office to reduce their charges. On the question of the progress on the new National Stadium Development, Councillor John gave a detailed account of the reasons for the perceived delay in raising the arch but pointed out that the arch had originally been scheduled to be raised in June 2004. She assured that at the forthcoming meeting at York House, members would be apprised of the latest position. She also assured that education, health services and water were being considered by the Council and partner agencies as part of the Wembley redevelopment programme.

RESOLVED:-

that the actions taken in response to the Non-Executive member items raised at Council be noted.

9. Motion Selected by the Leader of the Conservative Group

Congestion Charging

Councillor R Blackman introduced his motion on Congestion Charging. He felt that the charging regime had not been the sole reason for the reduction in traffic levels in central London but had accelerated a decline that had already commenced. He stated that the charge was disastrous for businesses, had a poor collection rate and that income levels were not as high as had been previously anticipated. Councillor Blackman expressed the view that current proposals for the Zone to be extended to parts of Brent would lead to chaos on Brent roads. Members questioned how the funding gap would be bridged – whether by the GLA or through higher Council Tax levels. The Zone was said to have had an adverse effect on shops even big department stores and reference was made to the adverse effect on business activity which would impact on economic activity generally. The motives and timing behind the Mayor of London's London-wide consultation on the extension was also questioned. Councillor Wharton circulated an amendment in his name recognising that the congestion charge had succeeded in reducing traffic congestion in central London, but stating that there was a resulting adverse effect on other transport projects and an increase in Council Tax. He called on the Mayor of London to withdraw the proposals for extending the congestion charge until the technology had improved. Other members welcomed the proposed extension of the congestion charge which it was felt would have a positive impact on traffic flow in Brent East.

Councillor Nerva referred to the recent meeting of Kilburn/Kensal Area Consultative Forum attended by Transport for London officers and the Brent and Harrow GLA member. There were major concerns over the inclusion in the Congestion Charge Zone of the cemetery which was on

a private road. He also questioned the fairness of Kensington and Chelsea residents possibly being able to enter central London at a reduced rate and travel cheaply throughout the whole of Zone 1. However, on the whole Councillor Nerva supported the congestion charge noting the health concerns related to traffic congestion. He pointed out that there was a long period of consultation and emphasised the need to maintain good relations with Transport for London. Councillor Nerva then proposed a further amendment in his name, calling on the Mayor of London to withdraw the proposal pending further consultation.

The Council then moved to the vote and Councillor Wharton's amendment when put to the vote was declared LOST. The Council then voted on the amendment in the name of Councillor Nerva which when put to the vote was declared CARRIED. The Council then voted on the substantive motion which was also CARRIED.

RESOLVED:-

that this Council notes the proposed extension of the Congestion Charge to the west of London and the fact that it includes part of Brent. This Council further notes the success of the Congestion Charge but is opposed to the proposed westward extension of the Congestion Charge Zone as currently proposed.

This Council notes that Kensal Green cemetery lies within the boundaries of the proposed zone. This means that mourners and those visiting the graves of their loved ones will be forced to pay the congestion charge or leave their vehicles in Kensal Green and cross the Harrow Road. In addition, the impact of the new zone may cause commuters and shoppers to leave their vehicles elsewhere in Brent and use the Underground or other railway stations. This may cause problems for local residents and traders. This Council therefore calls upon the Mayor of London to withdraw this proposal pending further consultation.

10. Motion Selected by the Leader of the Liberal Democratic Group

Restoring Confidence in our Street Services

The Mayor advised that, on the advice of the Borough Solicitor, this motion in the name of Councillor Lorber would fall. The Borough Solicitor explained that as Councillor Lorber had not nominated anyone in his place to speak to the motion, it fell. Councillor requested that the position on this matter be clarified.

On a Point of Order, Councillor Rands sought clarification on the protocol for debate and the effect of the Mayor rising during a debate.

He also questioned how long a member had to be present in a meeting in order to be included in the list of members in attendance.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm

P LEMMON
Mayor

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