

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, 31st January 2005 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor

Councillor A Shahzad

The Deputy Mayor

Councillor C Moloney

COUNCILLORS:

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

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Davies, Halder, Nerva, Sattar-Butt and Sengupta. Apologies for lateness were submitted on behalf of N Colwill, R Colwill and Lemmon.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting of full Council held on 29th November 2004 be confirmed as a true and accurate record, subject to clarification over whether Councillor Shah was present for any part of the meeting.

3. **Declarations of Interests**

Councillor Lorber declared a personal interest in the discussion concerning a proposed casino in Wembley raised under the General debate and took no part in the voting or discussion thereon.

4. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor reported with great sadness the passing away of former councillor Alderman Eric McDonald on 4th December 2004. The Mayor spoke for the Council in saying that Alderman McDonald would be sadly missed and he welcomed his family who were in attendance at the meeting.

Members of the Labour and Conservative Groups paid tribute to the work of Alderman Eric McDonald during more than 40 years service to the people of Brent as a councillor for the Queensbury Ward of both Wembley and Brent Councils. It was felt that his name should be remembered in some permanent way.

The Mayor reported with regret the death in December of former councillor Roy (Gilbert) Dance.

The Mayor was sorry to announce the unexpected death of Councillor Farrell's mother.

The Mayor referred to the tsunami disaster by placing on record that on 26th December 2004 one of the worst natural disasters in modern history took place in the Indian Ocean killing more than 200,000 people in its wake. He extended on behalf of the Council sympathy to those people who lost friends and loved ones. The Council supported all sections and faiths of the community who were doing all they could to support the Disaster Emergency Committee. He referred to a Memorial Service taking place at the Town Hall on 22nd January.

The Mayor reported on the multi faith holocaust service held at the Town Hall on 23rd January, which was well attended by people of all religions and cultures. The service also marked the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp by the allied forces.

Before proceeding with the rest of his announcements, the Mayor asked that everybody stand for two minutes silence in memory of Ex councillor Alderman Eric McDonald, former councillor Roy Dance and all those who perished in the tsunami.

The Council stood in silence for two minutes.

The Mayor was pleased to announce that John Keble C of E Primary School had been removed from special measures and congratulated the staff, governors and students for the significant improvements made at the school.

The Mayor was pleased to report that LOCATA, the choice based lettings system for local authorities run by five West London councils and three housing authorities had won a top prize in the E-Government National awards

The Mayor was delighted to announce that the Council's rating in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process had increased from Fair to Good. Brent was now one of the ten most rapidly improving local authorities in the country and he thanked members and officers who had helped achieve this.

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Harrod to the meeting following his accident in which he received extensive injuries. Councillor Harrod addressed the meeting and thanked members from all parties for the best wishes he had received. He also raised the issue of the expense of using Patientline in hospitals to make telephone calls and gave notice that he would be taking this matter further.

Finally, the Mayor reported on the Eid Festival held the previous day.

5. **Procedural motion**

Councillor Moher moved a procedural motion relating to discussion on the report on the calculation of Council Tax Base for 2005/06.

RESOLVED:-

that in respect of Summons item 5 the Liberal Democrat Group, the Conservative Group and the Labour Group, called in that order, be allowed one member each to speak for up to three minutes on the item before moving to the vote.

6. Calculation of Council Tax Base 2005/06

This report set out the Council Tax base calculations to be used for 2005/06. The level of Council Tax base set by Members is used in the calculation of the Council Tax for 2005/06. Regulations require that the Council Tax base is set by 31st January prior to the start of the financial year.

Councillor R Blackman moved a motion to set the collection rate for the Council Tax for 2005/06 at 99% which was put to the vote and declared LOST.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the collection rate for the Council Tax for 2005/06 be set at 97.5%.
- (ii) that In accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the amount calculated by the Council as its Council Tax Base for 2005/06 be set at **92,879**.

7. Scrutiny of the Rebuilding of Northwick Park Hospital

This report informed Members about the consultation process for the proposals to rebuild Northwick Park Hospital. The report had previously been considered by the Health Overview Panel.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that a joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee be established with such other authorities as are consulted by the NW London Hospitals NHS Trust in connection with the proposed rebuilding of Northwick Park Hospital;
- (ii) that Councillors Farrell and Fiegel be appointed to serve on the Joint Committee;
- (iii) that the terms of reference for the joint Committee as set out in Appendix One to the report submitted be agreed.

8. Appointments to Committees/Appointments of Chairs/Vice Chairs

RESOLVED:-

that Councillor Kansagra be appointed in place of Councillor R Colwill on the Standards Committee.

9. 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.

Freedom of Information Act

The question from Councillor R Blackman asked how many files had been removed from the Legal and Democratic Services Unit as a result of the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act and how the Executive could be sure no deliberate destruction of any official information took place. Councillor Blackman added that he felt his question had not been answered and further asked exactly what instructions were issued in Legal and Democratic Services regarding the destruction of files, documents and emails prior to the Freedom of Information Act and how many files were destroyed between 1st September 2004 and 31st January 2005?

Councillor Kagan (Lead Member for Democratic Services) replied that the Freedom of Information Act was designed to introduce transparency and she reassured Councillor Blackman and the Council that no shredding of documents had been ordered as a result of the introduction of the Act. She warned Members to be cautious asking such questions because it suggested criminal activity. The Council complied with the guidance issued by the Department for Constitutional Affairs and there were officers in each department responsible for ensuring the requirements of the Act were followed. Members had received a briefing note on the matter. Councillor Kagan pointed out that the Council's Legal Services were LEXCEL accredited and such action as suggested by the question would not be permitted.

Proposed Casino in Wembley

The second question selected by the Leader of the Conservative Group was from Councillor Van Colle, asking what the Executive's attitude was to part of the Quintain owned land around the new stadium being used for a major casino. In his supplementary question, Councillor Van Colle asked whether the Executive would welcome a casino and suggested that, taking into account all the social implications, Wembley would not be a good location and that other leisure uses would be preferable.

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment and Planning) responded by saying that she could not be more specific than welcoming anything that helped regenerate the Wembley area as long as it adhered to the Council's planning and other considerations. She asked what would be a good location and pointed out that any such

venue would attract a different clientele to those that presently visited betting shops and amusement arcades. Any proposal to develop a casino in the area would be tested against the Council's policies.

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

Redevelopment of Copland School

The question, from Councillor Lorber himself, regarded the sale of land near Copland School to facilitate a development to which local residents were opposed and asked when the Executive would demand proper Government funding for school redevelopment. In his supplementary question, Councillor Lorber asked why the Council was secretly negotiating the sale of the land before planning permission was granted.

Councillor Lyon (Lead Member for Education , Arts and Libraries) replied that he was not aware that the Council was carrying out secret negotiations.

There then followed three questions selected from Labour non-executive members.

Patientline - Charges

Councillor Harrod had asked whether the Executive would agree that patients in hospital should be able to contact their family and friends by telephone at an affordable cost and that the charges made by Patientline were exorbitant. Councillor Harrod added that Patientline UK had installed its systems in 140 hospitals across the country, including in the Brent PCT area. In his supplementary question Councillor Harrod asked if the Executive would agree to refer the matter to Overview Committee with the request that a task group be established which could take evidence from staff of the PCT and the users of the service.

Councillor Fox (Lead Member for Health and Social Care) replied that he had not received complaints from users of the North West London Hospital Trust about this matter. Communications were very important to patients and he agreed that the vulnerable should not be taken advantage of. Councillor Fox supported referring the matter to Overview to investigate further.

Nuisance caused by Pigeons

Councillor J Long had asked what action was being taken to reduce the feeding of pigeons. She added that following on from an earlier question she had asked on this matter the problem still existed. The proposal was to erect more 'do not feed the pigeons' signs but she did not feel that this would deter the person who dropped 18-20 slices of bread on the pavement. Councillor Long maintained that this amounted to littering the streets and therefore the Council should be

able to take action against such people on this basis. She asked what was going to be done to deal with this problem; whether it was regarded as anti social behaviour and was it right that the lives of the majority were being blighted by the actions of a few.

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment and Planning) replied by assuring the meeting that action would be taken to combat this problem. Greater use of the Brent magazine and the Council's web site would be made to get the message across. Notices warning against the practice of feeding pigeons would be placed in libraries. Also, Town Centre wardens and Streetcare would look out for ways of reducing the problem.

Help for the Victims of the Tsunami Disaster

Councillor Joseph had asked what the Council had done to help the victims of the tsunami disaster. She was grateful for the reply and asked the Leader to comment further.

Councillor John (Leader of the Council) stated that she had attended the inter community service on 22nd January. This had been followed by the Holocaust Remembrance event held the following day and she had been struck by the contrast between man made and natural disasters. She had recognised one similarity and that had been the number of children killed in both. Councillor John remarked on the magnificent response to the tsunami disaster by the British people.

There then followed four questions drawn from the general ballot.

Cost of Implementing new Licensing Arrangements

Councillor O'Sullivan had asked how much the Council was budgeting to implement the new licensing arrangements. He added that the proposals for 24 hour drinking had caused much concern. He claimed that many doctors were saying that the facts about the effects of drinking on health were being hidden and the police were also concerned at the effect drinking had on people. In his supplementary question, Councillor O'Sullivan asked whether the Executive would agree that the Government should delay the implementation of the Licensing Act 2003 in the light of the concerns he had referred to.

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment and Planning) stated that there would not be any delay in implementing the Act. She added that she was pleased to hear representatives of the Conservative Party taking their share of responsibility for the health of people.

Provision of Toilets in the Wembley Area

Councillor V Brown had asked how many additional self-cleaning toilets could be provided in the Wembley area if the Council scrapped its Wembley Way leaflet. Councillor Brown added that the Council was not meeting needs at present and one additional site on event days was not enough.

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment and Planning) replied that the provision of toilets was discretionary and a strategy report on the provision of toilets in the borough would soon be submitted. She agreed that one additional toilet on event days was not sufficient.

Council Tax Collection

Councillor Shah had asked how much the Council had written off in uncollected Council Tax to which he had received the answer that the Council had not written any amount off in the past three years and that it was Council policy to pursue all outstanding monies.

Councillor Shah was not present to ask his supplementary question.

Proposals for a City Academy

Councillor Kansagra had asked what proposals there were for a City Academy in the Wembley area. He added that there had been no consultation on the proposal and yet it appeared that decisions had already been taken. He again asked where exactly had the Executive earmarked a site and had proper consultation been undertaken.

Councillor Lyon (Lead Member for Education, Arts and Libraries) replied by pointing out that Brent had been among the pioneers of creating a City Academy. There was a distinct process that had to be followed following which formal consultation would be carried out. The acquisition of land was a quite separate matter. School capacity issues had been considered by the School Organisation Committee and he confirmed that discussions were taking place with a prospective partner. A prospective site was being sought in the Wembley area because that was where provision was needed. Councillor Lyon explained that at this stage he could not disclose details of the site or of the prospective partner. He had discussed the matter with secondary heads and offered to provide a confidential briefing on the proposals to Members.

10. **Report from the Executive**

(i) 2003/04 Joint Audit Inspection Letter

The Leader drew attention to the 2003/04 joint audit inspection letter that had been reported to the Executive on 17th January 2005. This was the best inspection letter the Council had received and the first joint inspection undertaken by the Audit Commission and the Council's external auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers. The outcome of the inspection had been to categorise the Council as having improved from 'fair' to 'good'. Councillor Coughlin added that the Council was now just a few points from being categorised as 'excellent'. This inspection had shown that huge improvements had taken place in social services, benefits service and cultural services. Added to this was the fact that other services had not slipped in their performance. He stated that this had all taken place on the back of one of the lowest

rates of Council Tax in London and was something of which the Council could be proud.

(ii) Mapesbury Dell Doorstep Green

The Leader referred to the report submitted to the Executive on this initiative and stated that she had visited the green and had been greatly impressed. She urged other Members to make time to visit the area.

(iii) Olympic Bid 2012

The Leader reported on the visit to the borough by the International Olympic Committee on 17th January and moved a motion in support of the bid which had been circulated to all members under cover of a letter dated 28th January 2005.

(iv) Wembley Stadium Update

The Leader referred to the progress being made on the building works and stated that a meeting would soon be arranged to brief Group Leaders on the latest position with regard to the development of the stadium and proposals for a new civic centre. She also reported that security issues were under consideration. It was being planned for the opening of the stadium to be marked by two ramp up events before the 2006 cup final was held there. She had urged that local schools be given the opportunity to be involved in the events leading up to the opening of the stadium. Councillor RS Patel provided further detail of the progress made on the building works for the stadium. He explained that it was now not going to be possible to complete the underground car park by the opening date. He further spoke on the progress of the station redevelopment works and the relocation of Wembley market.

11. Report from Chair of Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Taylor submitted his report and highlighted the range of activity undertaken by Members. He particularly mentioned the visit to the GLA, his attendance at the London scrutiny networking meeting and drew attention to the forthcoming joint meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider the budget.

12. General Debate

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

Reference was made to the audit inspection letter and whilst acknowledging the improvements that had taken place it was stated that the letter made it clear where improvements still needed to be made. It was again noted that Brent remained below the London average in its rate of Council Tax. The Council was making good progress and it was a credit to the performance of staff. However the point was made that the auditors did not take account of the views of residents.

Whilst supporting the Leader's motion on the London Olympic bid, Councillor R Blackman submitted that it was important to recognise that arising out of the proposal to raise money through the lottery, 12% of the proceeds would go to the Treasury. This would be unacceptable to the people buying a ticket who would want all the money to go towards supporting London hosting the Olympics and as such would halve the burden falling on London taxpayers. Already many in West London were questioning the benefits they would see from paying extra Council Tax to fund the Olympics. He therefore wished to send a message to the Government and moved an amendment to the motion adding that the Council call on the Government to approve tax exemption for the proposed Olympic Lottery.

The meeting was informed of the dance show put on by local school children in support of the Olympic bid and it was pointed out that they were the generation for 2012.

Reference was made to the tsunami disaster and the human suffering on a scale that was unimaginable. Thousands of people were still missing, many living in makeshift camps and many visitors to the area dead or missing. The response across the world had been one of solidarity with generous donations and rescue teams and emergency supplies being deployed. An assessment of the long term needs now should be undertaken.

Mention was made of the proposal for a casino in the Wembley area and it was said that there was a large amount of local opposition to it. It was questioned whether this was a good place for such a facility. Councillor Van Colle moved a motion that the Council should state that Wembley was not a suitable site for a major casino.

It was put to the meeting that while voting for the Iraq election was open at the Wembley Conference Centre over the weekend, traffic was at a standstill in the Wembley area so it was clear that the roads would not be able to cope when the first football match took place at the new stadium. It was submitted that this issue was not being dealt with.

The background to the Mapesbury Dell Doorstep Green was outlined by reference to the first meeting held with residents some 5 years ago when they expressed concern over a patch of land and the Council heard their aspirations. Following huge enthusiasm from the local community and in the face of the Council not having the resources to fund the project a large amount of money was raised by local residents from a number of sources which led to the huge achievement seen today. The support given by the Parks Service was also recognised. The point was also made that adequate maintenance would be needed and that this was something the Council did not always factor in.

The Leader responded to the general debate. She acknowledged the points made about the low level of Council Tax in Brent and comparisons that could be drawn with neighbouring boroughs. The Leader expressed some sympathy for the motion put by Councillor R Blackman but stated that she could not support it in advance of more details being available. On the question of casinos, she responded that Parliament had debated the issue, heard the concerns expressed and consequently reduced their number. The Gambling Bill addressed many issues and proposed improvements in many other aspects of gambling. Finally she congratulated the Parks Service for establishing new planting sites in various parts of the borough and confirmed that the maintenance of the sites had been provided for.

The amendment to the Leader's motion submitted by Councillor R Blackman concerning the proposed Olympic lottery and the motion submitted by Councillor Van Colle on the siting of a casino were put to the vote and declared LOST.

In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 48c the voting on Councillor Van Colle's motion was recorded as follows:

FOR: Councillors Mrs N Blackman, R Blackman, N Colwill, R Colwill, Duffin, Fiegel, Mrs Fernandes, Kansagra, O'Sullivan, B M Patel, H B Patel, HM Patel, Rands, Sayers, Taylor, Steel and Van Colle.
(17)

AGAINST: The Mayor, The Deputy Mayor and Councillors Arnold, Beswick, Crane, Coughlin, Cribbin, Dromey, Farrell, Fox, Gladbaum, Harrod, John, Jones, Joseph, Kabir, Lemmon, D Long, J Long, Lyon, R S Patel, Kagan, McGovern, Moher, Thomas, Thompson and Zakriya.
(25)

ABSTENTIONS: Councillors Allie, Bellia, V Brown, Chavda, Freeson, Lorber, Singh and Wharton.
(8)

RESOLVED:

- (i) this Council notes:
the London bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games and the important role that the National Stadium at Wembley will play in the sporting programme;
- (ii) this Council believes:
 - 1) that these games would be a sporting celebration for the whole country and have the potential to bring a lasting sporting, economic, social, health and cultural legacy to the whole of Greater London;
 - 2) that a successful bid has the potential to benefit this borough through:

- Encouraging sports development and healthy lifestyles.
 - The use of local training venues for pre-games acclimatisation for visiting athletes.
 - Participation in the cultural festival that would take place before and during the games.
 - Opportunities for members of our diverse communities to take part as volunteers in the run-up and during the games.
 - The promotion of all of London as a business and tourist destination for UK and international visitors.
 - Opportunities for local businesses that operate in sectors relevant to the games.
 - The development of transport infrastructure across London;
- 3) that the West London sub-region has a particularly important contribution to make to the sporting and cultural aspects of the Olympics/Paralympics as has already been demonstrated in the West London Alliance (WLA) publication presented by the Leader of the Council to Lord Sebastian Coe in October 2004;
- 4) that the UK as a whole will reap the benefits of a London Olympic and Paralympic games and therefore that the costs should, so far as possible, be shared by the entire country. Since all Londoners are expected to contribute extra council tax, it is essential that the benefits of and legacy from the games are distributed fairly across the whole of Greater London and not just confined to five East London boroughs;
- (iii) This Council therefore resolves:
- 1) to give its full support to London's bid to stage the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games and agrees to work to maximise the opportunities afforded to this borough and to London through a successful bid;
 - 2) to support the ALG in seeking a clear limit on the amount of funding that will be raised through the GLA precept on the council tax to support the bid and the holding of the games;
 - 3) to work with the WLA to promote the West London 'offer' and to ensure a prominent role and a lasting legacy for the sub-region before, during and after the games take place.

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

(i) ***John Billam Sports Hall***

Councillor R Blackman introduced his motion by stating that a lot of money had been spent on the sports hall, but the contractors had allegedly not been paid. He said that whilst there could be a number of reasons for this it was not until his members had started asking questions that a deposit had been paid. It was now 4 years after the

decision on the future of the sports hall had been taken and less than a tenth of the capital receipt owed to the Council had been received. Councillor Blackman stated that whilst it was not suggested that the Gujarati Arya Association (GAA) had done anything wrong it was the responsibility of the Council to safeguard public assets.

Councillor Coughlin explained that the deposit had been received on 10th February 2002 upon the signing of the agreement. The balance was payable when the works were complete. The works were now 80% complete and it was in the best interests of the GAA to see the works completed. He challenged Councillor Blackman to say whether or not he wanted to forego on the agreement with the GAA. It was put that there had been plenty of time to complete the works and the community should by now have the opportunity to use the facilities. However the counter view was put that the delay in the building works was down to problems between the GAA and their builders. The GAA had tried hard to get the building works finished and had already paid over a large amount of money. It was put to the meeting that if the Council had been more open about its dealings in the matter it would not have got to the stage it had. There was nothing in the original agreement to suggest that the project would not be finished 4 years later. The intention of the motion was to gather information and ensure a public asset was protected. There was no intention to criticise the GAA.

The Leader responded by saying that it was not unusual for an organisation to find itself in dispute with its builders. The GAA had raised a lot of money towards the refurbishment of the building. The fact that the time for completion of the works had been extended several times had only served to assist the organisation in trying to complete the works. It was not for the Council to interfere in a dispute such as this. Completion of the works, including the provision of changing rooms, had now been awarded to another contractor and it was anticipated that the works would be finished by end of April. The GAA was committed to providing an opening event in April and the Leader stated she looked forward to attending it.

The motion submitted by Councillor R Blackman was put to the vote and declared LOST.

(ii) ***The Cost of Ken Livingston***

Councillor Lorber introduced his motion by saying that public transport only worked when it was affordable. It should not be disguised that the minimum bus fare was now £1.20. This and the high fares on the Tube were unfair and leading to greater car use.

In support it was said that those on lower incomes tended to use buses and such an increase in fares hit them unfairly. It was submitted that when the Greater London Assembly rejected the Mayor's budget he

turned to increasing fares instead of looking for savings elsewhere. Councillor R Blackman moved an amendment to the motion adding that whilst he supported the Freedom Pass, the Council should note that the effect of increasing fares had been to increase the cost of the Freedom Pass and this represented another stealth tax on the Brent taxpayer. The amendment was accepted by Councillor Lorber.

It was submitted that London had never had so many buses on the road as at present. It could not be denied that the London Mayor's transport strategy was working. It was accepted that the fare rise was substantial but it was pointed out that this did not extend to the Freedom Pass or the under 16's. It represented an investment in the transport of the future.

The motion submitted by Councillor Lorber as amended was put to the vote and declared LOST.

The meeting ended at 10.05 pm

A Shahzad
Mayor