

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, 27th June 2005 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor C Moloney

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor H Gladbaum

COUNCILLORS:

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

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Dromey, J Moher, R Moher, B M Patel and Shahzad.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meetings**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meetings of full Council held on 11th May 2005 and 16th May 2005 and the Extraordinary Council held on 16th May 2005 be confirmed as true and accurate records.

3. **Declarations of Interests**

At this meeting there were none.

4. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor congratulated Councillors Alan Mendoza and Ruth Moher on their election and welcomed them to their first meeting of full Council.

The Mayor congratulated Ita MacNamara, Assistant Head Teacher at Kingsbury High School, on receiving an MBE in The Queen's Birthday Honours list.

The Mayor congratulated the Council's Transportation Unit for securing a Chartermark.

The Mayor referred to a recent report from the Local Government Ombudsman which complimented the Council's complaints procedure.

The Mayor reminded Members that Brent's Annual Respect Festival would be taking place on 17th July in Roundwood Park.

Finally, the Mayor welcomed Councillor John to the meeting following her serious riding accident the previous month.

At the invitation of the Mayor, Councillor Van Colle addressed the meeting. Councillor Van Colle spoke of the support he had received over the legal action he was taking in connection with the murder of his son. He publicly thanked all those that had written and spoken to him about it. He stated he and his wife now needed support more than ever until the outcome of the action he was taking was known.

5. **Appointments to Committees**

RESOLVED:-

that Councillor R Moher be appointed to Overview Committee and as Councillor Crane's alternative on Scrutiny Committee.

6. **By Election Results – 16th June 2005**

RESOLVED:-

that the election of Councillor Ruth Moher to represent Fryent Ward and Councillor Alan Mendoza to represent Preston Ward be noted.

7. **Question Time**

The selected questions submitted under the provisions of Standing Order 39 had been circulated together with written responses from the respective Lead Members. Members were invited to ask supplementary questions.

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

Congestion Charge Penalty Notice Appeal

The question from Councillor R Blackman asked what difference the case of Baroness Walmsley in getting a congestion charge penalty notice quashed would make to Brent. Councillor Blackman expressed concern over what he felt was the complacent answer he had received and asked whether the Council's parking enforcement scheme had been reviewed in light of the judgment. In his supplementary question Councillor Blackman asked if it was thought that the conferral by the Court of wide discretionary powers would lead to a rise in appeals and that parking attendants would face more public pressure at the point of issue.

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment and Planning) replied that the parking enforcement contract had recently been reviewed prior to being put out to tender for a new contract. Lessons had been learnt from experience of running the existing contract. The case referred to rested on the legal side and any such cases would have to be contested through the Courts.

Property Revaluation

The second question selected by the Leader of the Conservative Group was from Councillor H B Patel asking what the impact on Brent would be from the Government revaluation of all properties. Councillor Patel felt that all the factors referred to by the Lead Member as reasons he

could not answer the question could be estimated so that some prediction could be given. In his supplementary question he asked how the Council would be assessing extensions on the homes of residents of the Borough and what increase in Council Tax this would lead to.

Councillor Coughlin (Lead Member for Corporate Resources) replied that there were too many variables to be able to give an answer but he was sure that any variations would still leave Brent with one of the lowest Council Tax levels in London.

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

Efficiency Savings

The question, from Councillor Lorber himself, concerned Brent being shown in a survey as the second worst Council in London at finding efficiency savings for this year. Councillor Lorber was not present to ask his supplementary question and had delegated this to Councillor D Brown. Councillor Brown asked when the Executive would spend money on gating alleyways, new facilities for residents, planning enforcement, improving the environment, public toilets, emptying bins and tackling litter instead of spending money on ward working leaflets, other newsletters, allowances to Members on Licensing Committee, allowing 28-storey tower blocks to be built, bureaucracy to support the Mayor and Member/officer 'awaydays'.

Councillor Coughlin (Lead Member for Corporate Resources) replied that the reality was that the Council's efficiency savings were in line with Government targets. The commitment by the Council to find annual 2% efficiency savings was both realistic and achievable. He referred to other Liberal Democrat controlled councils that were struggling to meet their savings targets.

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

Noise and vibration from heavy freight using the North London Line

Councillor Nerva had asked what action the Council was taking to support residents affected by noise and vibration from heavy freight trains using the North London Line. Councillor Nerva referred to the excellent service provided by the North London Line but that this led to problems for local residents. In his supplementary question, he asked for assurances that Network Rail would be held accountable and that the Council and Brent Housing Partnership would act to safeguard Council-owned properties along the route.

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment and Planning) replied by commending the work of the Queens Park area councillors and the former and current MP for Brent South constituency in pursuing this issue. She expressed the hope that Network Rail would hold themselves accountable when the Council next met with them. In the meantime Councillor Jones undertook to obtain details of the properties involved so that she could reply to the question more specifically on this aspect.

Disabled Access at Bridge Park

Councillor J Long had asked what improvements there had been to disabled access at Bridge Park since the event in Bridge Park to celebrate The Year of the Disabled had been cancelled in 2003. Councillor Long added that whilst the cancellation of the event was unfortunate it was then understandable. She referred to a meeting held on 29th April 2004 from which an action plan had been produced to improve accessibility. From a visit to Bridge Park in March 2005 she found little had changed. In her supplementary question, Councillor Long asked when works would be completed and whether it was acceptable for them to take so long.

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment and Planning) replied that in addition to her detailed written answer she would follow up Councillor Long's complaint.

Local Strategic Partnership

Councillor Arnold had asked how the work of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) was disseminated to the Council and how the regeneration work undertaken by the Council was reported to the LSP. In her supplementary question Councillor Arnold asked whether there would be an opportunity to share the achievements across all the five neighbourhood renewal areas beyond producing performance reports.

Councillor John (Leader of the Council) replied that the Kilburn New Deal for Communities had been asked to participate in the LSP by reporting back on the activities in the area and by sending a representative to meetings to present update reports. She added that the LSP currently disseminated information, especially through the voluntary arm of the partnership.

Council Tax Collection Rate

Councillor Dromey had asked what was the current collection rate for Council Tax and how this compared with previous years.

Councillor Dromey was not present to ask his supplementary question.

Public Toilets

Councillor C J Patel had asked how long the public toilets in Barham Park had been inoperable, how this compared to other public toilets in Brent and what was being done to bring the facilities back into use. He added that he had been informed by park attendants that the toilets in Barham Park were often out of order. He also referred to the Executive's Forward Plan which originally showed that a report on public toilet provision would be submitted to the Executive on 13th December 2004. Still no report had been forthcoming. In his supplementary question, Councillor Patel asked when would the strategy be produced, why this had not been given priority, why the developers of the Copland Community School site had been asked to fund public art but not public toilets and whether it was agreed that all new major shopping and leisure facilities should be required to provide public toilets?

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment & Planning) replied that J C Decaux provided a good service. She agreed the Borough needed more public toilets but pointed out that this was discretionary provision and the Council had to find the funds. She hoped the report would be ready in August and denied the Council was in any way downgrading the importance of this issue. Councillor Jones added that she hoped to see extra provision made around the Wembley area and in at least two other town centre locations.

CCTV in Brent Housing Estates

Councillor Mrs N Blackman had asked whether the Council intended to increase the CCTV on its estates. She pointed out that Councillor O'Sullivan had been trying for years to get CCTV installed in Chalkhill. In her supplementary question, Councillor Mrs Blackman referred to the removal of play equipment from Barnhill Park and asked when the Council would provide CCTV in order to protect children and the elderly.

Councillor Beswick (Lead Member for Crime Prevention and Public Safety) replied that he was not aware of the specific location mentioned by Councillor Mrs Blackman and would look into it. However, he reiterated that CCTV was a technical resource which did not resolve anti-social behaviour. The Council had provided wardens and community support officers to deal with the threats caused by anti-social behaviour and these were more effective than CCTV. He acknowledged the seriousness of the concerns raised by Councillor Mrs Blackman.

Northwick Park Hospital Maternity Department

Councillor Mrs Fernandes had asked what information the Council had received regarding the problems she had read concerning the maternity department at Northwick Park Hospital. She added that this was a very serious matter which should have been avoided. It was vital that extra resources were put in and the Council kept informed of progress.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Mrs Fernandes asked if it was intended to provide a new birthing centre on the Northwick Park site.

Councillor Fox (Lead Member for Adults, Health and Social Care) replied by acknowledging the seriousness of the situation. Decisive action had been taken and it was essential to monitor the targets set to ensure improvements were made. He was not aware of any plans to provide a new birthing unit but he would keep Members informed of developments. The Heath Overview Panel had it in its remit to consider what was happening and he hoped the Health Care Commission report would soon be made public.

8. Report from the Executive

(i) Best Value Performance Plan

The Leader moved the recommendations in the report which had been agreed by the Executive on 20th June 2005. She drew attention to the changed style and content of the plan as a result of Government guidance for Best Value authorities within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) category of Good. It would also be necessary to make some minor amendments to the plan if the receipt of further outturn data made it necessary.

(ii) Local Development Framework – Statement of Community Involvement

The Leader moved the recommendations in the report which had been agreed by the Executive on 20th June 2005.

(iii) Council Tax Collection

The Deputy Leader stated that collection rates for Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) were at an all time high level in Brent with 93.4% of Council Tax collected and 97.8% NNDR collected. This made Brent the 6th highest increase in Council Tax in the country and 3rd highest in London and the 3rd biggest collection rate in London for NNDR. He put this success down to the collaborative working between the new contractor, Capita, and the Council's client side.

(iv) Wembley Update

The Deputy Leader reported on the building of the new National Stadium in light of the press reports around the financial standing of the contractor. He stated that the contractor, Multiplex, had taken significant actions to deal with the position it was in and had access to resources that meant there was no threat to the building of the stadium. Completion was on schedule with ramp-up events planned for April and the cup final in May 2006.

(v) Streetcare and Enviro-crime

The Lead Member for Environment and Planning reported on a number of initiatives designed to improve the cleanliness of the borough's streets. The Council was working with Streetcare and Onyx to provide an intensive cleaning programme, including enforcing trade waste arrangements and improving street cleaning. In addition a new Arboriculture service was being introduced. These changes were beginning to show improvements.

The Lead Member reported on the success of the alley gating programme during 2004/05 when sites were selected in consultation with local councillors and residents. She outlined the proposals for the current year to build on this success and referred to Springfield Mount as an example of working with local people to find a solution to a difficult problem. An education programme had been designed to teach young people caught dumping rubbish or dropping litter of the anti social behaviour of such actions. The Council now had new legislative powers to deal with such matters and was looking at how best these could be used.

9. General Debate

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

Concern was expressed at late night music concerts being held in the Wembley Pavilion beyond the time limit agreed with the Council and that local residents had complained about this. It was suggested that the Council should emphasise the agreed hours and take action to stop these being breached.

Concern was also expressed over the delay by Multiplex in completing the stadium with the original completion date of September 2005 being pushed back to January 2006. It was feared that the Council's officers would then be put under pressure to carry out all the safety checks in time to meet the agreed opening date and assurances were sought that public safety would be put first.

It was pointed out that the level of recycling in the country was not good some years ago but that this position had now improved. Local

residents valued the green box scheme and it was suggested that further initiatives could now be taken such as providing paper recycling containers outside stations where many people emerged with newspapers they wanted to throw away. Support was given to the Council's efforts to improve street cleanliness and to tackle the anti-social behaviour that contributed to the litter and rubbish on the borough's streets. Dealing with such behaviour assisted towards dealing with more serious anti social behaviour and led to safer neighbourhoods. The poor condition of Springfield Mount was raised and it was put that the alley gating scheme for that area was essential and local people would be disappointed if it did not go ahead.

The Leader responded to the general debate. She questioned the conditions the Wembley Pavilion operated under but agreed that it was not acceptable for local residents to be disturbed in such a way. She undertook to look into the matter further. The Leader was pleased to say that the Council's recycling target should be achieved and that the street cleaning operation was much better. The Leader pointed out that Brent was one of the ten most improved authorities in the country in 2004/05 and the introduction to the performance plan showed where major improvements had taken place. She submitted that ward working was the way local authorities would work in the future and that it would be introduced across the borough after the local elections in May 2006.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the Best Value Performance Plan for 2004/05, circulated separately from the report submitted, be agreed;
- (ii) that the revised Statement of Community Involvement, circulated separately from the report submitted, be submitted to the Secretary of State and for independent examination;
- (iii) that the report from the Executive be noted.

10. Motions Selected by Leaders of the Opposition Groups

(i) *Regeneration of Wembley High Road*

Councillor R Blackman introduced his motion by stating that 30 years ago Wembley High Road was the envy of North London but that it was now a poor shadow of its former self. He felt that only cross party action on the Council could deal with the task of regenerating the area. Action was needed to improve the attractiveness of the area in order to bring in retailers and the shopping public. A clear vision for the future of Wembley High Road was needed, which currently did not exist and Councillor Blackman sought to revitalise the debate on this issue.

Councillor RS Patel responded by saying that the Council had a strategy for the area as a result of 8 years work and it aimed to create a dynamic shopping area. He stated that the best way to sustain local shops was to have local people in work and using them. Councillor Patel added there were also other attractions in the Wembley area that would contribute to its regeneration.

Councillor Patel moved an amendment to the motion which was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

It was put to the meeting that the strategy for Wembley High Road was one of the Council's least successful. If it was working retailers would not be leaving. It was said that the High Road met no defined need and examples of other regenerated shopping areas were referred to. There was the danger that if the regeneration of the wider Wembley area provided additional retail space this could further detract from the viability of the High Road. Some Members felt it was time to review the strategy for the High Road to make it clearer to local people what was proposed and to provide adequate parking. It was claimed that families found it too inconvenient to go to Wembley High Road because of inadequate parking provision and expensive bus fares. An alternative view was put that the parking issue was a diversion from the serious traffic management issues that existed in the High Road which the Council had failed to deal with. It was also said that the meetings that took place between the Town Centre Manager and representatives of the traders were not open to the public to attend and as such local residents' views were not being taken into account. In response it was said that the High Road had a clear place in the Council's regeneration strategy and parking provision was already covered. In addition the current re-development of the three Wembley stations was essential to the regeneration of the area. The point made by Councillor RS Patel that the regeneration of the area went beyond the provision of shops was picked up and it was said that this extended into the supply of suitable housing and good education provision. The Leader expressed her agreement with the call for a cross party approach on this matter and stated there would be meetings arranged to discuss the issues. In the meantime the Town Centre Manager was working hard to realise the improvements planned for the High Road.

Councillor R Colwill moved an amendment to the motion which Councillor Blackman accepted which sought to add that an impact assessment on car parking and other shopping areas should be carried out and the implications reported back.

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

RESOLVED:

This Council notes the recent decisions by major retailers to close premises on Wembley High Road reducing still further Wembley High Road's viability as a shopping centre. This Council believes that there is now a need for a wholesale regeneration plan for Wembley High Road with a clear strategy which encompasses the opportunity created by the development of Wembley Stadium. This Council notes that such a strategy forms part of the Council's overall Wembley Regeneration Strategy. That strategy provides for the promotion of Wembley Central as a major shopping area and improvements to public transport, in particular improvements to Wembley Central Station as part of the re-development of Central Square.

(ii) ***Failure of Parking Service***

Councillor Lorber introduced his motion by referring to the large number of penalty notices accepted as wrongly issued and expressed the worry that many of the remaining number of penalty notices may well have been wrongly issued. The figures showed that the contractor was operating on the basis of a third of the notices being wrongly issued and this meant that attendants were being displaced from where they were most needed whilst they were issuing notices in error.

It was felt that Brent might be able to learn from the experiences of other parts of London where complaints had been made about their parking service and that this could be a task carried out by Scrutiny. It was felt to be an important issue for the Council. However the Council was reminded that a scrutiny task group had looked into some of the issues over two years ago and some of the recommendations produced by the task group had still not been implemented.

Councillor Jones disputed the interpretation of the figures used to show the level of wrongly issued notices. There were a number of reasons why notices were wrongly issued and she claimed the overall error rate was low and compared favourably with other boroughs. She also referred to the cost faced by the parking service in dealing with acts of vandalism. Councillor Jones pointed out that a new contract was about to get underway and it was hoped improvements would be seen. The point was made that local residents perceived the service to be unfair and that this needed to be tackled by the Council.

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

(The Liberal Democrat Councillors present at the time wished it recorded that they had assented to the above motion).

The meeting ended at 8.58 pm

C Moloney
Mayor