

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 September 2005 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor C Moloney

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor H Gladbaum

COUNCILLORS:

Allie	D Long
Arnold	J Long
Bellia	Lorber
Beswick	Lyon
Mrs N Blackman	McGovern
R Blackman	Mendoza
V Brown	J Moher
Chavda	R Moher
N Colwill	Nerva
R Collwill	O'Sullivan
Crane	BM Patel
Cribbin	CJ Patel
Coughlin	HB Patel
Dromey	HM Patel
Duffin	RS Patel
Farrell	Sattar-Butt
Mrs Fernandes	Sayers
Fox	Shahzad
Freeson	Ms Shaw
Harrod	Singh
John	Steel
Jones	Thomas
Kabir	Van Colle
Kagan	Wharton
Kansagra	Zakriya

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Fiegel, Gillani, Halder, Lemmon, Rands and Thompson.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting of full Council held on 27th June 2005 be confirmed as a true and accurate record.

3. **Declarations of Interests**

At this meeting there were none.

4. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Ruth Moher to her first meeting of Full Council since her election.

The Mayor reported on the bombings on London's tube and bus network on 7th July. He stated that he now understood that two Brent residents lost their lives that day and on behalf of the Council he conveyed deepest condolences to their families and to the families of all the victims of this senseless act of terrorism.

The Mayor added that Brent Council officers had supported the emergency services and the Council had worked closely with the Metropolitan Police to ensure that the Muslim community did not suffer from an increase in hate crime. The Council had sent a "United We Stand" leaflet to every household, expressing revulsion at the bombings and affirming the Council's determination to maintain Brent's reputation for peaceful co-existence between diverse people and communities.

The Council stood for a minute's silence in memory of those that had lost their lives and been injured in the London bombings on 7th July 2005.

The Mayor reported on the success of the annual "Respect Festival" which celebrated the borough's harmonious multi-cultural community.

The Mayor reminded Council that on 6th July, the International Olympic Committee had declared that London had been selected to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Wembley would host the finals of the football competition and the Council was working closely with the

West London Alliance to ensure it played a full part in the Olympic cultural programme as well.

The Mayor reported that the resumed "Brent Countryside Day" took place the previous day in Fryent Country Park. He stated that the event was well received by local residents, thousands of whom attended.

The Mayor reported that the Civic Trust had recently awarded two of its much-prized Green Flag awards to Roundwood Park and to Gladstone Park. He acknowledged that the awards reflected the high standards of professionalism in the Council's Parks Service and paid tribute to the hard work and dedication of the staff within the service.

The Mayor reported that this was the last Council meeting at which Jenny Goodall would be present before moving on to a new position at the City of London. On behalf of the Council he thanked her for all her hard work and wished her well in her new role.

The Mayor welcomed Eileen McQuaid, who had joined the Council the previous week as the Mayor's PA.

5. Appointments to Committees

RESOLVED:-

that Councillor Mendoza be appointed to Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor Fiegel.

6. Items Selected by Non-Executive Members

(i) Choosing Health White Paper

Councillor Nerva introduced the item he had raised and asked for support from all sides of the Chamber in his request that the Executive should receive a report on the White Paper. He stated that discussion on health usually centred around treatment but this was more about prevention. There were wide variations in the standards of health amongst the population. He expressed disappointment that the Government was not pursuing a ban on smoking in all public places. Consideration was needed on what led to people smoking in the first place and he referred to the responsibility on schools to ban smoking and educate people on its risks. He also hoped for a clear commitment to improve the quality of school meals.

Members referred to recent reports that had shown a widening gap between the rich and the poor in terms of health. They supported the

drive to ensure school meals were more nutritional and that schools provided a healthy environment generally for children. It was suggested that of equal importance was the provision of meals to the elderly. Reference was made to the need for people to take up some form of physical recreation and the hope was that the Ashes success would encourage this. In support of this, the view expressed that it was vital to ensure the future availability of playing fields. Other members expressed disappointment that the Government had not gone further in banning smoking in public places given that it was still the biggest killer. The Council had a responsibility as an employer and had banned smoking in the Town Hall. However it was hoped that this had been done in consultation with staff and by offering support to those who needed it. Reference was made to the growing number of people classified as obese with a threefold increase in the number since the 1980s, including a growing number of children. In asking that the Executive consider these issues it was urged that it should do so in partnership with local health providers. A view was expressed that there was too much interference into people's lives with the Government telling them what they should and should not do.

Councillor Fox stated that he welcomed the White Paper and that good progress was being made on improving the health of Brent's residents. He pointed to the Bakerloo line deprivation measure that had showed a difference of 10 years in the life expectancy of people living at the northern end of the line to those living at the southern end within the borough. This had now reduced to 8 years. He accepted there was still a lot of work to do but pointed to the ban on smoking in the Town Hall, the development of the sports strategy and improved living conditions for the elderly. The Council had a responsibility to lead on creating a healthier community but he argued the time was not right for a report. He suggested that it would be better to wait until the Government announced expected further initiatives towards the end of the year at which time a joint report with the Primary Care Trust could be produced. Councillor Fox undertook to advise the next meeting of Council of when such a joint report would be produced. Members accepted Councillor Fox's undertaking.

(ii) New Civic Centre

Councillor Kansagra introduced the item he had raised by referring to the many discussions that had taken place over where within the Quintain development a new civic centre might be located. He felt there were many reasons to consider the development of the present Town Hall site. In the light of the possibility that the Town Hall might be de-listed, this would present the opportunity to consider the redevelopment of the building. The present site had the advantage of already being recognised by local people as a municipal facility.

Concern was expressed over the value for money of a new building given that the final cost of a new civic centre was still unknown and that

it should not fall as a burden on the local taxpayer. It was questioned whether putting the majority of Council services under one roof would be beneficial, and suggested that the current split site arrangement opened up accessibility to a wider population. Concern was also expressed over how any facility within the Wembley redevelopment area would cope at times when there were events on at the new stadium. In response it was questioned where the staff would be temporarily located if the present town hall was redeveloped. It was pointed out that only the administrative offices would be centralised with the One Stop Shops and other front line services remaining to serve the people.

Councillor John replied by saying that no decision had yet been taken on a new civic centre and that it was clearly preferable to have a consensus on the way forward because it would be a piece of municipal planning that would serve the next generation. Many of the existing Council buildings were not suitable for their purpose. She accepted that the finances had to add up but pointed out that the existing municipal stock was a burden on the local taxpayer. Councillor John stated that it was not likely that the current Town Hall would be de-listed and in any case it did not present a big enough site. She confirmed that the proposal for a new civic centre was the subject of cross party discussion and Members accepted this as the best way to take this item forward. Councillor John urged Members to feed in their comments.

(iii) Brent Triangle Limited

Councillor Sayers introduced the item he had raised by saying that many residents were deeply upset at the impending demise of Brent Triangle Ltd. He felt the Council would not be able to provide the same level of service as Brent Triangle offered, which ranged from a few hours respite to overnight stays. He wanted to know how the money saved from the closure of the organisation was going to be spent.

Members paid tribute to the quality of the service provided by Brent Triangle Ltd and the commitment of the carers. Concern was expressed over the future care arrangements of those presently helped by the organisation. Members wanted to know what the Council intended to do with the organisation's assets and how it intended to cover the services it provided. Whilst recognising that the organisation needed reform it was pointed out that without it there would be a burden placed on the Council.

Councillor Fox acknowledged the good work done by the people working for the organisation but stated that it had been set up 23 years ago when the provision of services was different. A new Chief Executive had been appointed and it was soon found that the organisation was in a serious financial situation that had previously been concealed. It was not meeting its performance targets. The

Council had asked for options to improve the situation and the Chief Executive had consulted with the Board of Trustees to see if the organisation could be remodelled. The Council had not taken the decision to close the organisation. The response the Council received was that the organisation would have to double its client base to be able to offer value for money and as such was not viable. It was now for the Council to ensure the money allocated for respite care was spent carefully. Assurances had been obtained that other sources of provision would be able to provide the service and efforts were being made to get the staff of Brent Triangle Ltd into jobs with other providers. It was sad to see a long established organisation close but Councillor Fox stressed it was not as a result of the Council's actions.

RESOLVED:

that the provision of the service offered by Brent Triangle Ltd in the absence of that organisation be considered as part of the Council's budget making process.

7. Report from the Executive

(i) The Treasury Management Annual Report 2004/05

Councillor Coughlin introduced the report and pointed out that it followed the CIPFA guidelines that had already been adopted. He also drew attention to the good work of officers in restructuring the Council's debt.

(ii) Wembley Update

Councillor RS Patel reported that good progress continued to be made on the building of the stadium with the next major project being the construction of the roof. He had been notified that the stadium would be completed by the end of January. He referred to the success in getting local people employed on site. Work on the three rail stations was on schedule. The stadium access corridor was now under development. By the end of September housing development work would begin and discussions were taking place over the provision of cultural facilities within the Wembley development area.

(iii) Kingsbury Pool

Councillor John reported that this matter had been the subject of further discussion at the Kingsbury and Kenton Area Consultative Forum because it was now very unlikely that the third private operator selected to provide a pool would proceed. The Council was therefore now consulting with local people on what they would like to see provided on the site.

(iv) One Stop Shops Performance

Councillor Thomas drew attention to the recent One Stop Shop annual performance report for 2004/05 and congratulated the staff on the

service they gave to the residents of the borough. After 14 years of operation the service still achieved satisfaction rates beyond its targets and Councillor Thomas highlighted some of the targets exceeded. He referred to the refurbished shop at Brent House and the number of enquiries received at each of the 6 shops.

(v) Council Reorganisation

Councillor John explained that the recent Council restructuring was almost complete but would now be subject to a further change as a result of the review of the Adult and Social Care service area following the departure of the director, Jenny Goodall.

8. Report from Chair of Overview Committee

In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair the report was noted.

9. Report from Chair of Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Kansagra submitted his report to the Council for noting.

10. General Debate

Members debated the items included under the report from the Executive. Reference was made to the escalating costs of building the new stadium and concern expressed over the later than originally scheduled opening of it. The danger of Council officers being put under pressure to pass safety certificates for its use was highlighted and the view given was that this was unacceptable and the stadium should have been finished by September. It was understood that there were real concerns over the construction of the roof. The safety of people visiting the stadium was also raised in that upon the early events taking place at the stadium only Wembley Park Station would be ready and the pressure put on this one station would have public safety implications.

Disappointment was expressed over the news of Kingsbury Pool not proceeding. Reference was made to how the present and previous administrations had tried unsuccessfully to get a pool on the site. However it was welcomed that local people were being given the opportunity to say what use they would like the site to be put to. The situation had been explained to people at the area consultative forum and they had understood the position. There were now exciting opportunities to develop the site. Some criticism was levelled at the loss of the pool and it was suggested that a pool could still have been provided if it had been accepted that it would be run as a private facility. This at least would have met some of the demand for a

swimming pool in the area.

Mention was made of the Brent Countryside Day in Fryent Country Park on 18th September and officers were congratulated on an excellent day. It was said that it was a shame the event had not taken place in previous years.

With regard to the Treasury Management report it was suggested that the figures hid the true level of debt and it was asked if there was an overspend in the Council which Members were not being made aware off.

The excellent service provided by the One Stop Shops was highlighted and reference was made to the nature of the enquiries dealt with in serving the diverse community that existed within Brent.

The Leader responded to the general debate. She stated that the Council had no control over the building of the new stadium but pointed out that the deal struck by the Football Association meant the Association was not liable to meet any overrun on costs. She acknowledged the part the Council's Health, Safety and Licensing team would have to play in issuing safety certificates and suggested this could be subject to further discussion at the cross party Wembley Review Group. No final plans for the proposed ramp-up events had been issued to the Council in advance of the roof being installed. The Leader suggested that the refurbished Wembley Park Station would be a great improvement on the old one with a large increase in capacity making it safer than in the past.

The Leader explained that the countryside event had been cancelled the previous year because past events had been washed out by heavy rain. The decision had been taken to move the event from June to September and she agreed it had been a very good event.

Regarding Kingsbury pool, the Leader explained that in 1994 local people had made it clear they did not want anymore of the parkland taken for the pool. If the Council had acceded to the developers requests this would have been one of the results.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the Treasury Management Annual Report 2004/05 be received;
- (ii) that the reports from Overview and Scrutiny be noted.

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

(i) High Density Developments

Councillor R Blackman introduced his motion by referring to the incredible pressure for new housing provision in the borough and the reducing amount of land available. He argued that there was not the infrastructure to support the number of homes the Borough was being pressed to provide and that the decision should be taken to only seek to meet the minimum target proposed under the London Plan. In addition future developers should be required to provide the ancillary facilities that additional housing needed. Councillor Blackman stated that the opportunity needed to be taken to ensure good quality design and quality of life instead of building ever higher at greater density without the necessary infrastructure.

The view was put that the Council should take responsibility and play its full part in addressing the housing shortfall in London by seeking to achieve the maximum level of provision. It was acknowledged that this would mean providing new schools. Reference was made to the Overview task group on housing density and design that had not been able to yet report to the Executive but had now found a way to complete its work. The work of the task group had shown how high density housing could be contentious and only worked when it was built to a high standard that made people want to live in it. It was hoped that the final report of the task group would show the Council how to proceed in this area. Mention was made of previous efforts to avoid placing families above the third floor and how this contrasted to the provision of high rise family housing now being pursued.

The lead member for Housing and Customer Services, Councillor Thomas, informed the Council that there were 19,600 families on the waiting list with 1,050 being rehoused; 4,500 families in temporary accommodation and the London Plan showing that the provision of housing was falling short of demand. He submitted that it was not an option to only meet the minimum targets. It was necessary to carefully scrutinise the London Mayor's proposals because the Council was ultimately left to implement them. As such the Council had met with GLA officials to discuss the density targets.

It was pointed out that the London Mayor's proposals were out for consultation and that the views being put forward at the meeting could be submitted to the Mayor. Comments were made that in the past house builders had been criticised for building sub-standard housing, especially in the public sector. House builders looked to maximise their profits and the Council had to ensure housing was built to a suitable and desirable standard with the necessary supporting infrastructure. It was submitted that with people living longer and an increase in single person households demand was increasing and the Council had a

responsibility to those on the waiting list. The government intended to increase the provision of public sector housing. That now being provided was generally to a higher standard than before and there was an awareness of the need to protect green spaces.

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

(The Conservative Councillors present asked that their assent to the motion be recorded).

(ii) *Standing up for Local Residents and our Community*

Councillor Lorber introduced his motion by pointing out that in contrast to the local leadership role for councillors promoted by government, the licensing legislation specifically excluded councillors from raising their concerns on an application. In addition the Council was not able to supply councillors with lists of applications received in their ward.

The lead member for Crime Prevention and Public Safety and chair of the Alcohol and Licensing Committee, Councillor Beswick, criticised the decision of the Liberal Democrat councillors not to serve on the Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Sub-Committees and made reference to newspaper stories they had promoted on the subject. Other Members supported this view by stating that whilst they were concerned at some aspects of the legislation, the Council had a duty to consider the applications otherwise they would all end up in the Magistrates Court outside the control of the Council. It was felt that those Members not prepared to take part should not then criticise those that were carrying out the Council's statutory duty.

It was pointed out in response to the motion that any criticism of daytime meetings was unfounded because under the old arrangement when the license applications had been heard by the Magistrates Court they were always held during the daytime. Members received an allowance for this work because of the time they were having to give to it. If local residents approached their ward councillor for help it was open for that councillor to represent them. It was acknowledged that both the Council and Government would be reviewing the arrangements for hearings and the rights of representation.

Councillor Steel moved an amendment to the motion that was put to the vote and CARRIED.

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

RESOLVED:

that the Liberal Democrats be approached to review their hypocritical

decision to not represent their constituents on properly constituted committees of the Council and change their misguided decision as soon as possible.

The meeting ended at 9.07 pm

C MOLONEY
Chair

Mins0506/Council/full/cm19sk