

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 October 2005 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor C Moloney

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor H Gladbaum

COUNCILLORS:

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

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Allie, Bellia, Dromey, Fiegel and BM Patel.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting of full Council held on 19th September 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 extended condolences on behalf of the Council to the victims of the earthquake in India and Pakistan Kashmir on 8th October 2005. He also referred to the bombings in Delhi on 29th October 2005.

The Mayor congratulated everyone involved with the new Fawood Children's Centre in Stonebridge for reaching the finals of the Royal British Institute of Architects Stirling Prize for British building of the year.

The Council stood for a minute's silence in memory of those that had lost their lives and been injured in the earthquake in Kashmir and the bombings in Delhi.

5. **Appointments to Committees/Appointments of Chairs/Vice-Chairs**

At this meeting there were none.

6. **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

Wembley Arena Pavilion – Noise Nuisance

The question from Councillor R Blackman asked what could be done about the noise level and finishing times of concerts following the many

complaints from local residents. He added that three concerts had resulted in excessive noise levels and that in moving from the Arena to the Pavilion there needed to be a recognition of the increased noise and a restoration of the standards previously set. Councillor Blackman suggested that Wembley (London) Ltd could not control the artists or their management and that the Council therefore should ensure local residents did not suffer excessive noise. In his supplementary question he asked what prevented the same standards for licences for the Pavilion concerts as for Wembley Stadium with finishing times of 10pm, noise levels strictly controlled and fines for rules breached.

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture) replied that she did not disagree with the views expressed by Councillor Blackman. Action had been taken as set out in her written reply and she would be taking the matter up further with officers.

Navratri celebrations

The second question selected by the Leader of the Conservative Group was from Councillor H B Patel asking why this year Brent Town Hall was not used as a venue for Navratri celebrations and what the financial loss was to the Council. Councillor Patel stated that the Hindu Council had been forced to cancel the event planned for the Town Hall because Brent Council had increased the rent. The Hindu Council had not in the past paid a deposit so could not be in breach of that requirement. In his supplementary he asked why the Council increased the rental from £10,000 to £22,500 and why the Hindu Council had been asked to pay a deposit when it had never before been asked to do this because it always paid the money from Brent Council's grant money.

Councillor Coughlin (Lead Member for Finance & Corporate Resources) replied that a letter had been sent to the Hindu Council on 5th October 2004 asking about the booking for this year and setting out the new hire rates. He referred to another letter dated 10th November 2004 which set out the booking at the rates quoted and this was confirmed in a further letter dated 23rd March 2005. On 9th June 2005 the booking agreement was signed by the Hindu Council. Councillor Coughlin stated that the facts were that the Hindu Council had known for over a year what the position was. It had not been Brent Council that had cancelled the event at the Town Hall but the Hindu Council.

School places

The question selected by the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group was from Councillor Wharton asking how many pupils were without a school place in Brent, divided between primary and secondary age and what had been the financial cost and rise in average class sizes. He referred to the School Organisation Plan which divides Brent into five planning areas in an attempt to avoid primary pupils not having to

travel long distances to school. In his supplementary question, Councillor Wharton asked how many primary placements had been arranged for the current term and how many of these children had been placed in a school in a planning area other than the one they resided in, broken down by planning area of residence.

Councillor Lyon (Lead Member for Children and Families) replied that he had made it clear that there were no unplaced primary age school children and the question suggested that the issue was being misunderstood. He undertook to look into whether the information existed to meet the request for the placements to be broken down by area of residence.

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

Local Democracy Week

Councillor Cribbin had asked how many Liberal Democrat councillors had participated in Local Democracy week. In her supplementary question, she referred to the failure of the Liberal Democrats to fill their places on committees, to participate in the licensing process or to participate in Local Democracy Week and asked if the basic councillors' allowance should depend on a basic level of participation in the work of the Council.

Councillor Kagan (Lead Member for Local Democracy and Consultation) replied that Liberal Democrat councillors continued to claim their allowances at a cost of £70,000. She agreed with the sentiment within Councillor Cribbin's question.

Referrals to the Standards Board

Councillor Harrod had asked if there were too many referrals to the Standards Board considered to be frivolous and whether this would be conveyed to the Liberal Democrat Group. Councillor Harrod added that referring a number of irrelevant items to the Standards Board was the style of the Liberal Democrat Group. In his supplementary question, he asked if it was agreed that the Liberal Democrats should concentrate on important issues such as help and aid to the elderly, the young, the sick, the disabled and the homeless.

Councillor Kagan (Lead Member for Local Democracy and Consultation) replied that she hoped the Chief Executive would investigate any alleged misuse of Council resources during election times and also expressed the hope that Liberal Democrat councillors would contribute to the work of the Council by attending its meetings.

Sprinkler systems in schools

Councillor J Long had asked how many schools in Brent had sprinkler systems installed and what steps were being taken to ensure all new schools/school extensions had them fitted. Councillor Long stated she was disappointed to note that the only sprinkler system installed so far was in a Local Education Authority run school. In her supplementary question she asked for clarification on whether the Authority was positively in support of the fitting of sprinkler systems and if so what was being done to install them in schools outside the control of the Authority such as Copland Secondary School, any new City Academy and the Preston Manor High School extension.

Councillor Lyon (Lead Member for Children and Families) replied that health and safety in all schools was important. A health and safety schools committee had been established and health and safety officers had been appointed in every school. He undertook to reply in writing to Councillor Long on the exact policy of the Council but was sure that it was the same for all schools.

The following four questions had been selected from the remaining questions submitted.

Brent Triangle

Councillor C Patel had asked to what extent the Lead Member had been consulted about the issues relating to Brent Triangle and what direction he had given officers. Councillor Patel welcomed the written answer he had received but felt that the details supplied had been provided to Members too late. In his supplementary question he asked why a statement had not been made to Full Council earlier and what action would the Council take to assist any investigations by or referrals to the Charity Commissioners whilst keeping all Members informed.

Councillor Fox (Lead Member for Adults, Health and Social Care) suggested that attention had not been paid to the information given out. The Council did not run the organisation and he had reported on developments as he had received the information. He replied that he had been open about the situation throughout such that an article had appeared in the Wembley Observer. The carers had commented on how good the Council had been in providing everybody who had lost the service provided by Brent Triangle with an appropriate alternative service. Council staff had worked hard to achieve this for which he thanked them.

Planning application by Genesis Housing

Councillor Gillani had asked whether the Council was listening to the residents on the issue of a 'tall landmark building' presented in a planning application by Genesis Housing following a well attended meeting of the Kilburn and Kensal Area Consultative Forum. Councillor Gillani added that she found it odd that such a development should be proposed in such a densely populated area bringing with it a large number of families that would put pressure on school places. She stated that she was pleased to hear that Genesis had withdrawn their plans for a 128 flat high rise tower on the Salusbury car park after pressure from local residents and in her supplementary question she asked what change to the brief the Executive would be encouraging Genesis to make and would it conform to what local residents wanted on the site.

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture) pointed out that the scheme had been withdrawn following discussion with the Council's planners because it did not meet the Council's requirements. She replied that the Council would have to balance the views of local residents with the planning guidance for the site and that consideration would be given to school, health etc provision in the area. Councillor Jones added that there were already large blocks in the area and that they tended to work well in the private sector. She accepted that this could be different for the public sector but such provision could not be automatically ruled out.

Ward working

Councillor Lorber had asked how much ward working had cost to date split between leaflets and officer support compared to projects of benefit to local people. He added that Liberal Democrat councillors had previously highlighted the poor value for money of the scheme with more money being spent on bureaucracy and leaflets than on ward projects. He also referred to dozens of responses received and 25 people attending a local meeting organised by Liberal Democrat councillors compared to a Council organised meeting at which only 2 people attended. In his supplementary question he asked for full details of the costs of the scheme compared to the cost of actual projects delivered, if it could be ensured that ward councillors led on ward working and not Council officers or the Executive, if it could be ensured that cash would be released for the provision of gates in numerous alleyways in Alperton, as requested by local residents and if action would be taken to ensure ward working represented value for money by ensuring at least 80% of the budget was spent on actual schemes.

Councillor Kagan (Lead Member for Local Democracy and Consultation) replied that she had given a breakdown of the budget in

her written answer. She stated that the cost of bureaucracy was less than the benefits for local residents and that these benefits would be greater if Liberal Democrat and Conservative councillors supported ward working. One aspect of ward working was in trying to bend mainstream funding into local schemes and therefore the gating of alleyways in Alperton was likely to be carried out.

Parking restrictions in Barnhill

Councillor Kansagra had asked if the views of residents around Toley Avenue area opposing the introduction of yellow lines and parking bays would be listened to. He added that the written reply he had received stated that there would be 'signs only' schemes in the former environmental areas in Barnhill ward which included the conservation area but not the Toley Avenue area. In his supplementary question Councillor Kansagra asked if notice would be taken of the petition submitted to Highways Committee asking that this area be included in the 'signs only' scheme now rather than waiting until the new stadium opened.

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture) replied that the Council had been talking to local residents since August but she was not aware of any direct contact coming from the Toley Avenue area. If further consultation was now carried out it would delay the whole scheme and adversely affect thousands of people. If the scheme worked consideration could be given to extending it to other areas.

7. Reports from the Executive

(i) Wembley update

The Leader reported that work on building the new stadium was progressing well with the pitch soon to be laid. The contractor was working to a timetable that would see the stadium handed over ready for testing, including holding 'ramp up' events, by end March 2006. She added that 100 local people had been found work on the site through Brent in2work.

The Leader reported that the work of refurbishing the Wembley Arena was progressing well and that the band Depeche Mode had been booked as the first event to be held in the new Arena.

The Leader further commented on work being undertaken on Arena Square and the first new block of homes to be built in the regeneration area. The refurbishment of the stations was progressing well and no more closures were anticipated. Further improvements to Olympic Square were being made.

(ii) *Diwali 2005*

Councillor RS Patel reported that from the reports he had received the Diwali celebrations in the borough were going from strength to strength each year. In excess of 20,000 people from many of the communities in the borough attended this year's celebrations, some wearing award winning costumes created by Mahogany Arts. The celebrations culminated in a spectacular firework display in Barham Park. He thanked all those people who had worked hard to organise the event. Councillor Patel wished everyone a happy Diwali and a happy and prosperous new year.

(iii) *Local Democracy Week*

The Leader congratulated all those people involved in the events that took place during Local Democracy Week, particularly the officers that had organised them and the young people who had taken part. She acknowledged the involvement of Labour and Conservative councillors in the activities that took place and congratulated Councillor Gladbaum on being chosen for the second year running as the young persons' champion in 'I'm a councillor get me out of here'.

(iv) *Referrals to the Standards Board for England*

The Leader referred to the decision of the Standards Board not to investigate the referral by Councillor Lorber of all 35 members of the Labour Group for alleged misuse of Council resources. She considered the referral as frivolous and expressed the hope that similar actions would not be taken in the future.

8. Report from Chair of Overview Committee

There was no report from the Chair to this meeting.

9. Report from Chair of Scrutiny Committee

There was no report from the Chair to this meeting.

10 General Debate

Councillor Sayers thanked other councillors for the support they had given to the item he had raised at the last meeting of the Council concerning Brent Triangle.

Councillor Moher referred to the dismissal of the referral to the Standards Board as reported by the Leader. He questioned whether certain activities carried out by Liberal Democrat councillors amounted to a misuse of Council resources. Councillor Moher apologised for

implicating the Liberal Democrat Group Support officer in what he said about the activities being run from the Liberal Democrat Group Office.

Councillor Lorber stated that it was an obligation on any member of the Council to report to the Standards Board any suspicion they had of wrong doing by other members. He rebutted the accusations made by Councillor Moher that he had done anything wrong.

Reference was made to the successful Diwali celebrations and the amount of money given or raised to support these. It was suggested that a proportion of the money should go direct to the groups which bore the costs of preparing the floats etc. rather than to the organising committee. Compliments were passed on to the Hindu Council for their efforts to limit the disturbance caused by fireworks by asking that they be not used after 11pm and it was hoped that such a message could be given out to the wider population as 5th November approached.

The comment was made that the 100 jobs that local people had been placed in was a small number given the multi million pound development of the stadium. The fear was expressed that crime and the new licensing laws would jeopardise the successful operation of the new stadium with the Council being reminded that in the past pubs in the area had been shut on match days to avoid violence. It was the understanding that the Football Association intended to announce their decision on holding the cup final at Wembley when they made the draw for the third round of the FA cup which would be in December. Despite hearing positive messages the fear was that the stadium would not be finished in March and therefore the next cup final would not be held at Wembley.

Attention was drawn to the success of Local Democracy Week with a plea that in future primary schools be encouraged to get involved.

The Leader responded to the general debate. She expressed her hope that the concern over the holding of the cup final next May would prove to be unfounded. She supported the call to ask people not to use fireworks after 11pm. She responded to the comment about passing on some of the funds for organising the Diwali celebrations by pointing out the Council had a responsibility to ensure proper arrangements were made and to direct funds through the Hindu Council. The Leader emphasised that it had been wrong to mention the Liberal Democrat Group Support officer in discussion on the referrals to the Standards Board. She expressed her extreme concern that an officer of the Council had been included in the referral to the Standards Board and made it clear that the Administration had no intention of picking on officers to further political causes.

RESOLVED:-

that the report from the Executive be noted.

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

(i) ***School places***

Councillor R Blackman introduced his motion by referring to the allocation of school places this year as being a crisis. He thanked the Director of Children and Families for the briefing note that had been circulated to all Members but asked why a full report on the matter had not previously been put before all Members. He suggested the Executive chose the good news to report to Members but not the bad news. He questioned the dependence being placed on creating another City Academy when demand could be met by expanding existing schools. He stated that the Lead Member for Children and Families had misrepresented the views of the Conservative Group to local people.

Reference was made to the School Organisation Plan published in 2003 which planned for a 5% margin in capacity within schools. It was suggested that it could be seen 2 years ago that there would be shortages as schools began to get full. It was questioned whether the Local Education Authority was working with accurate information. It was also put that the Government White Paper on education reform would make matters worse by removing the role of the Education Authority and setting up a competitive edge between schools. There was general agreement that there was a shortage of secondary school places in the borough but a difference of opinion as to whether this was yet critical and being properly dealt with. It was submitted that the Council was well aware of the position and taking action to rectify it. The expansion of existing schools was a viable solution but a new school would still be required. Planning for a new school had a long lead in time and that was why discussions on this were already taking place. Mention was made of the standard of education in the existing City Academy and that the motion proposed sought to reward the success of existing schools. In defence of the exam result record of the City Academy the point was made that it would only be proper to judge performance after 5 years when the first year group had been through a life cycle of the school.

Councillor Lyon responded to the motion by suggesting that there was an inability in the Chamber to understand education policy. He stated that information had been made available and offers made to both Opposition Groups to brief them on the situation. The Council was following a clear strategy of creating a new school, enhancing existing schools and attracting new resources. The motion suggested some members were against this strategy.

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

(All Conservative councillors present wished it recorded that they had assented to the motion submitted.)

(ii) ***Save Queen's Park and Kilburn from tower blocks blight***

Councillor Lorber introduced his item by stating that there existed the opportunity to establish a consistent policy on the building of tower blocks across all wards in the borough. He submitted that local residents did not want tower blocks in the borough.

The view was expressed that there was a disconnection between the planning service and local people. On the one hand it was said that the Council was open to listening to the views of local residents but on the other it was directed by policy. There appeared to be a drive to cater for 'landmark' buildings across Labour controlled London authorities. Concern was expressed that once permission was given for high rise blocks to be built there needed to be strict monitoring of the development to be sure it accorded with the permission granted. The pressure on housing was recognised but it was considered by some Members that tower blocks were unsuitable for family accommodation. They were suitable for some categories of person but the drive to develop a number of high rise blocks would result in over provision for the wrong category of person. Councillor Van Colle moved an amendment to the motion by the insertion of the following after '....Kensal Forum' in point 1:

"or indeed where more than 200 homes are proposed to be built in one development elsewhere in Brent."

It was submitted that the motion was redundant and inaccurate. Genesis Housing had withdrawn its planning application because of concerns expressed for a variety of reasons. Various planning guidance for the borough did not specify high rise tower blocks. The Unitary Development Plan was already under review and councillors had been asked to submit their comments. It was for them to take up this invitation.

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

The meeting ended at 8.55pm

C MOLONEY
Chair

Mins0506/Council/full/cm31ok