

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, 24th April 2006 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor C Moloney

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor H Gladbaum

COUNCILLORS:

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

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Dromey, Halder and Singh.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting of full Council held on 6th March 2006 be confirmed as a true and accurate record.

3. **Declarations of Interests**

At this meeting there were none.

4. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor announced with sadness the recent death of former councillor for Cricklewood ward, Mr Eugene Boyle and the death of Raymond Dorè-Boize, KSG, former Mayor, Alderman and Councillor for Brent and Willesden for 26 years. Raymond was a prominent and long-serving councillor, known to many throughout the Borough and especially in St Raphael's ward. Members paid tribute to both former councillors.

The Mayor congratulated the Council on achieving a three out of four-star rating in the recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Joint Area Review. He stated that the Audit Commission had commented favourably on the Council's capacity to deliver its ambitions, its robust financial management and value-for-money service provision. The report concluded that Brent was a good authority that was improving well. The Mayor thanked everybody who had worked so hard to achieve this very positive result.

The Mayor reported on a recent visit from the Council's twin local authority in South Dublin. The Mayor of South Dublin and a delegation were invited to spend two days in Brent. The visit had focused around housing issues and the delegation had the opportunity to meet staff from the Housing service and Brent Housing Partnership (BHP). They were shown the good work that Brent Council and BHP have been doing in the local community, with visits to a number of places including Fortunegate housing and Stonebridge Housing Action Trust.

The Mayor thanked everyone who had attended his Charity Spring Ball on 8th April, which had been a great success and a very enjoyable event with over £6,500 raised on the night for his chosen charities.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Van Colle to make a statement to the Council.

Councillor Van Colle reported on the legal action he had been involved in since the tragic death of his son. He expressed his great appreciation for the continued support he had received from many people in the Council and hoped he could rely on this support for a little longer until the case was concluded.

5. **Appointments to Committees**

RESOLVED:-

that Councillor Davies be appointed as 1st alternate to Councillor Allie in place of Councillor Lorber and Councillor Lorber be appointed 2nd alternate to Councillor Allie in place of Councillor D Brown on the Planning Committee.

6. **Children and Young People's Plan**

The Brent Children and Young People's Plan (2006/9) had been produced in response to the Children Act 2004. The single plan covered the work of statutory agencies and voluntary and community groups, whose work impacts on Brent's children and young people.

The plan was designed to achieve an integrated approach to strategic planning so that services would be consistent, complementary and coordinated. The plan was developed following an analysis of community needs, existing performance indicators and views expressed by children, young people and their families.

The single Children and Young People's Plan had been available for public and partner consultation since 10th January 2006 with the formal consultation period ending on 28th February 2006. The plan was agreed by the Executive on 13th March 2006 subject to final approval by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board which was obtained on 17th March 2006. The Plan took effect from 1st April 2006.

Councillor Lyon introduced the plan by reminding Members of the action the Council had taken in order to safeguard the well being of children in the borough. He drew attention to the six strategic priorities supported by 32 objectives set out in the plan, and stated that this work remained a major priority for the Council. In response, it was pointed out that Brent was an increasingly densely populated borough and decisions taken on other issues presented potentially serious challenges for children with needs. It was stated that the Council had been dilatory in providing youth facilities and had issues to resolve around the provision of a

second City Academy. These were challenges the new Council would need to address. Reference was made to past decisions to sell education buildings and, together with the issues surrounding the proposal for a second City Academy, this cast a shadow over the provision of education in the borough. The question was asked as to why local authorities were not being allowed to run the education service rather than having forced on them the establishment of City Academies.

RESOLVED:

that the Children and Young People's Plan be approved, and the six strategic priorities listed in paragraph 3.7 of the report and the Performance Indicators and Targets shown in Appendix 2 of the report as approved by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board be agreed.

7. Vote of Thanks to Retiring Members

Members of the Council paid tribute to those Members not seeking re-election. Members spoke in appreciation of the work undertaken by Councillors Cribbin, Fiegel, Gillani, Harrod, Lemmon and Rands during their time on the Council and Councillors Cribbin, Davies, Fiegel, Harrod, Hughes, Lemmon and Rands responded.

RESOLVED:-

that this Council notes that Councillors Cribbin, Davies, Fiegel, Gillani, Halder, Harrod, Hughes, Lemmon and Rands will not be seeking re-election on 4th May 2006 and therefore takes this opportunity to thank them for their service to Brent Council and wish them well in the future.

6. Items Selected by Non-Executive Members

(i) Clean up Days

Councillor Shah introduced the item he had raised by stating that the Council was failing local residents through the lack of joined up actions to tackle traffic problems and litter in Ealing Road. He stated that there was a lack of parking enforcement and recycling bins. He requested that a regular clean up day be re-introduced for the area.

Councillor Jones (Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture) replied that resident surveys showed that a rising number of people were satisfied with the action the Council was taking, including improvements in the level of street cleaning. There was already a commitment to maintain the area on all days and specific clean up days had already taken place. Action was being taken across the board and in partnership with other agencies when required.

Councillor Jones submitted that there was no reason for the matter to be referred to the Executive.

(ii) Funding the voluntary sector – older persons' services

Councillor Wharton introduced the item he had raised by asking that the Executive use some imagination in its relationship to the voluntary sector and the services it provided for the elderly. As an example, he explained that the Council had changed the way it funded the voluntary sector by imposing contracts that dealt only with the severest of needs and did not recognise the wider role the voluntary community played in supporting people to live fuller lives.

Councillor Fox (Lead Member for Adults, Health and Social Care) replied that the Administration had made year on year increases in the investment of older persons services. However the Council would not be diverted from prioritising those with critical and substantial needs. The Council worked with the voluntary sector to enable it to play a wider role in meeting peoples' needs. Existing activity meant that it was not necessary to refer the matter to the Executive.

(iii) Housing overcrowding – planning enforcement

Councillor Shaw introduced the item she had raised by stating that as many properties were sub-divided into flats, the Planning Service was not providing an effective enforcement service to ensure such conversions had the proper permission. She asked the Executive to review the planning policies relating to houses, review the enforcement procedure, lobby for improved planning laws and engage more enforcement staff.

It was put that the item did not refer to overcrowding but to building density. It was said that there was no increase in the number of houses in multiple occupation and no large increase in the number of houses converted into flats. The Council had made resources available to work with private sector landlords and did take enforcement action. The Quality of Life Scrutiny Panel and the Planning Committee had discussed the issue of enforcement and it was pointed out that not all members attended these meetings. Questions were asked as to how landlords could access information from the Council and who was responsible for providing this service.

Councillor Thomas (Lead Member for Housing and Customer Services) responded by saying that a landlords forum had been operating for many months and any responsible landlord would know how to access the information. He reiterated that the issues of housing and overcrowding were not the same. There was a clear process for dealing with planning applications. Extra resources had been made available to deal with the new requirements of the Housing Act 2004 and policies were in place to deal with housing overcrowding.

Councillor Thomas acknowledged that overcrowding was a problem and stated that the Housing Corporation would be allocating additional resources to address this issue.

RESOLVED:

that the items raised above be not referred to the Executive.

7. Report from the Executive

(i) Pilot Controlled Drinking Zone

Councillor Beswick introduced the report by stating he did not think the item was contentious. Controlled Drinking Zones introduced in Camden and Westminster would have an impact on Brent and so it had been decided to take action to mitigate this problem. He said that street drinking caused annoyance to local residents. The report acknowledged that many street drinkers had problems that they needed help with and this formed part of the proposal. Councillor Beswick pointed out that the proposal also needed agreement from the police.

(ii) Comprehensive Performance Assessment

Councillor John reported on the recent scoring of the Council under the new harder test as a three star Authority which was improving well. She referred to the report from the Audit Commission and congratulated the Council's staff on this achievement. Councillor Lyon reported from the recent Joint Area Review of Children's Services. He referred to the scores of ten 3s and two 2s and stated that he was aware of only two out of twenty authorities that had scored better. He submitted that the staff deserved support in the work they were doing.

(iii) Twyford Tip

Councillor John reported on a recent visit to Twyford Tip by the Environment Minister, Ben Bradshaw MP. She referred to the very good recycling service provided and the longer opening hours now in operation. She paid tribute to the work of the Overview task group on waste management and recycling, many of whose recommendations had been used.

(iv) Willesden Green Library Centre

Councillor John referred to the very successful opening event for the newly refurbished library centre and noted that the new museum was on target to open on 25th May 2006.

8. Report from Chair of Overview Committee

Councillor Thompson referred to his report and felt that all those Members who had been involved in the work of the Overview

Committee would have found it productive. He explained that most of the work had been undertaken in task groups and he thanked the members of the task groups for their work. Councillor Thompson also drew attention to the work of the Health Overview Panel and thanked Councillor Farrell for her work as Chair. Councillor Thompson also acknowledged the work and support of officers.

9. Report from Chair of Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Kansagra submitted his report to the Council for noting. He stated that he hoped that the next Administration would review the structure of Overview and Scrutiny to ensure that Executive members were properly held to account.

10. General Debate

Members debated the items included under the report from the Executive. Concern was expressed that the proposed controlled drinking zone would be enforced. Concern was expressed that the Council was rushing into taking a decision because of the action of Camden Council and that it would lead to the dispersal of the problem to other areas of the borough. Other views expressed were that this would provide a solution to the problem of street drinking in the area and that as a pilot it could be monitored to ensure its success before any other zones were considered. The point was made that if it did prove successful such a zone would need to be considered in Wembley when the new stadium opened.

Members acknowledged the result of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and thanked the officers for their work. A note of concern was raised that the assessment identified that some Members of the Council were not fully involved in the democratic process. Another view was that the CPA inspection placed an unnecessary bureaucratic burden on the Council.

The Leader responded to the general debate. She acknowledged that other areas of the borough might need to be considered for CDZs but stressed the importance of first piloting the arrangement. She sought to reassure Members that the bars and restaurants in the Wembley area did not generally plan on staying open for 24 hours except for the few times certain events were held at the stadium.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the implementation of a pilot controlled drinking zone in the area around Kilburn High Road and South Kilburn be approved for an initial period of 6 months;

- (ii) that the area to be designated as a public place, as shown on the map attached to the report, be agreed;
- (iii) that further options for the implementation of CDZs elsewhere in Brent be considered following an evaluation of the agreed scheme six months from the date of implementation.

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

(i) ***Improved Environmental Services in Brent***

Councillor R Blackman introduced his motion by saying that residents were concerned at the condition of the pavements and secondary roads in the borough. He was astonished at the budget cut made by the Council on roads maintenance and stated that many roads were in a dangerous condition. The programme of priority roads included virtually no secondary roads. Councillor Blackman felt this needed to be reviewed and an immediate injection of £2M added to the programme.

It was submitted that whilst some roads and pavements in the borough remained below standard, nevertheless, the Council had put resources into improving secondary roads. It was always desirable to increase resources but the sheer weight of traffic meant that improvements were needed. The question was put as to where the £2M would come from. Questions were asked on how priorities for improvement were established when it sometimes appeared that roads already in a satisfactory condition were further improved before other roads that were in a far worse condition. Furthermore it was suggested that action on traffic control in some areas would help save money on maintenance.

Councillor J Moher moved an amendment to the motion.

Whilst agreeing with much of the motion put forward the question was asked as to who was best placed to deal with the issue. Those boroughs covered by the congestion charge had seen a reduction in the amount of car usage. The Council was still spending more than previous administrations. It was suggested that the Council wasted money on producing publications and that it would be better spent on improving services. Reference was made to the roads with potholes and the danger particularly to the elderly of poorly maintained pavements. It was submitted that a lot of damage to pavements was caused by adjoining building works and not car usage. It was emphasised that this was the issue raised most frequently by residents. It was put that in some cases money was wasted by patch repairs when the road needed to be renewed. A plan of action was required for the borough.

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

RESOLVED:

this Council notes that improving public services can only be achieved by local government working together with central government as detailed in the report by the National Audit Office and the Audit Commission. This report states that central and local government need to work closely together and make the best use of other agencies. The emphasis is on the importance of clarity of purpose and well-defined responsibilities. In this regard, we are pleased to note that Brent has been consistently in the upper tier for funding allocated by Transport for London for principal roads – nearly £7 million since 2001/02 – over £13 million for improved carriageways and footways.

This Council recognises that improvements to Brent's pavements and road surfaces need to be better resourced. This is made even more urgent as Brent has seen an increased car ownership level of over 7% since 2000 and, according to new research, has one of the highest levels of traffic of any London borough.

This Council recognises that broken pavements and poor road surfaces are one of the biggest issues in all the wards across the whole of Brent and London and therefore this Council calls on the Executive to carry out a borough wide survey before compiling a framework to identify all the pavements and roads that must be fully repaired within the next few years with its own resources and assistance from central government and other agencies. This Council believes that Brent should lead the way in formulating a serious plan for better pavements and roads for Brent. We will prioritise funding for this purpose over the course of the next Administration.

(ii) *Protecting the Local Environment and Quality of Life in Brent*

Councillor Davies introduced the motion submitted by Councillor Lorber. He stated that the Council's planning guidance allowed high density high rise developments and that local people did not want a tower block in the Queens Park area for fear that it would destroy the local environment.

In response to the motion, it was pointed out that the issue of the Queens Park tower block had been discussed at the Kilburn and Kensal Area Consultative Forum where considerable opposition was voiced and members of the forum were pleased when the application had been withdrawn. It was reported that the planning application ran into considerable problems even before it was considered by the area consultative forum. The planning application was not acceptable to the

Council because there was not to be enough community benefit and that the building was too tall. Although the Queens Park site needed developing, the scheme presented would not happen. In response to the part of the motion calling for the Copland School site development to be stopped it was pointed out that this had been agreed by the Planning Committee and a Section 106 Agreement entered into so it would not be proper to go back on this.

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

12. **Queens birthday**

The Mayor proposed a motion congratulating the Queen on her 80th birthday.

RESOLVED:

that the Council's congratulations to the Queen on her 80th birthday be recorded.

The meeting ended at 10:00 pm.

C MOLONEY
Chair

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