

## 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, 30<sup>th</sup> October 2006** at **7.00 pm**

### PRESENT:

**The Deputy Mayor**  
Councillor HB Patel

### COUNCILLORS:

Ahmed	Jones
Allie	Kansagra
Anwar	Leaman
Arnold	D Long
Mrs Bacchus	J Long
Baker	Lorber
Bessong	Malik
Beswick	Matthews
Blackman	Mendoza
D Brown	Mistry
V Brown	J Moher
Butt	R Moher
Castle	Moloney
Chavda	Motley
Clues	O'Sullivan
Colwill	Pagnamenta
Corcoran	CJ Patel
Coughlin	H M Patel
Cummins	Jowney
Detre	Shah
Dunn	Ms C Shaw
Dunwell	Singh
Eniola	Sneddon
Farrell	Steel
Mrs U Fernandes	Tancred
Fox	Thomas
Hashmi	Tullett
Hirani	Van Colle
Jackson	Wharton
John	

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of The Worshipful The Mayor, Councillor Joseph and Councillor Crane.

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2006 be confirmed as a true and accurate record subject to:

- amending minute 4 to include Councillor Blackman referring to the death of Joan Cowan, a past councillor, and her being included in the tributes;
- amending the fourth paragraph of minute 12 (iii) to indicate that Councillor Colwill (Lead Member for Adults, Health and Social Care) put forward the point made.

**3. Declarations of Interests**

The following declarations were made:

Councillor HM Patel	Interest in item 9 (c) by virtue of working in a post office. He left the meeting room during discussion of the item.
Councillor Mrs Fernandes	Interest in item 9 (a) by virtue of employment within the NHS.
Councillor Farrell	Interest in item 9 (a) by virtue of employment within a health trust.
Councillor HB Patel	Interest in item 9 (c) by virtue of his wife working in a post office.

**4. Mayor's Announcements**

The Deputy Mayor reported that the Mayor was in Dominica as a guest of the Dominican Prime Minister and had asked that her apologies be passed onto everyone for her absence. He stated it was his understanding that it was a rare event in Brent for the Deputy Mayor to chair Full Council.

The Deputy Mayor reported with sadness the recent death of former councillor Reg Freeson who passed away on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2006 after a brief illness. He added that it was a tribute to Reg to see so many friends and colleagues attend his funeral service. The Deputy Mayor welcomed Reg Freeson's wife Charlotte, his daughter Ruth and her partner Wayne to the meeting of Council.

The Deputy Mayor was happy to inform members that 2006 provisional data showed that Brent had seen a 2.8% improvement in the number of pupils achieving 5 or more A to C grades, from 57.5% to 60.3%. This meant that Brent continued to perform above both London and national

averages. There had also been an improvement in the number of pupils achieving 5 or more A to C grades that included English and mathematics, from 46.6% last year to 48.4%. Again this showed that Brent was performing above both London and national averages using this new measure.

The Deputy Mayor reminded members that the Mayor's Christmas Ball would be taking place on Saturday 9th December in the Paul Daisley Hall. The Mayor hoped to see many Councillors present to support this event.

The Deputy Mayor reported that he was delighted to attend the hugely successful Diwali /Hindu New Year celebrations on 14th October which was attended by a record number of people. He added that it was also a great pleasure to attend the Eid Festival on 29<sup>th</sup> October and offered his sincere congratulations to everyone involved in the organisation of both events.

Tributes were paid to the life and work of The Right Honourable Reg Freeson after which the Council stood for a minute's silence in his memory.

## **5. Items Selected by Non-Executive Members**

### **(i) *Wembley Stadium protective parking scheme***

Councillor Mendoza introduced the item he had raised by saying that whilst the previous Administration consulted on a parking scheme it imposed a scheme that many local residents did not want. The scheme used marked bays that restricted parking rather than making it easier for local residents. He urged the Executive to reconsider the scheme and move to a permits only system.

The point was made that the previous Administration undertook a lot of consultation on this matter, including the Conservative Group and whilst a lot of criticism was made there were no constructive alternatives suggested. Many meetings with residents were held and a majority were in favour of a protective scheme. The records showed a commitment to review the scheme. The point was made that it was not practical to suggest that most people attending the stadium could come by car. However, it was submitted that for many years local residents resisted the introduction of road markings and many who responded to the consultation indicated a preference for an alternative scheme. It was put that it was not adequate just to call on the Executive to review the scheme but there needed to be a commitment to provide equal opportunity for all residents in the area to park.

Councillor D Brown (Lead Member for Highways and Transportation) expressed his gratitude to Councillor Mendoza for raising the item but pointed out that the Council currently had a parking scheme which was already subject to review. The Highways Committee had discussed this matter and had already acknowledged that the scheme would be reviewed. He assured members that all views would be taken into account when the scheme was reviewed.

(ii) *Improvements to Roe Green Park*

Councillor R Moher introduced her item by stating that she was proud of the borough's parks. She referred to consultation carried out one year ago on plans for Roe Green Park after which residents were informed of improvements that would take place. She sought the Executive's confirmation that funding would be available to complete the scheme.

In opposition to this it was requested that the Executive should not make such funding available at this time and instead resurrect the proposal to provide a swimming pool which, it was submitted, local people wanted.

Councillor Van Colle (Lead Member for Environment Planning and Culture) responded by confirming the Executive's commitment to the parks service. However he did not want to commit the Executive to completing the improvements to Roe Green Park before considering the option of providing a swimming pool. He hoped an affordable proposal could be worked up that would provide a swimming pool and improve the park. Whilst it was the Executive's intention to improve all Brent's parks he could not undertake to make funding available for Roe Green park at this stage.

(iii) *Secondary school places*

Councillor Butt introduced his item by expressing concern over the availability of school places. He referred to examples of where there was no place for a child and where a school had around 80 on a waiting list. Given the scale of the problem he urged the Executive not to defer a decision on providing a new City Academy school.

In response it was submitted that the previous Administration had failed to take account of the increasing numbers of children moving into the borough as a result of new housing developments and that was why there was now a shortage of school places across the borough. Children were having to go to schools in neighbouring boroughs. It was submitted that the proposal to build a City Academy school on a site at Wembley Park had been resisted in the past by the Planning Committee.

It was put that a new school would be provided but not where it would create cross borough travel by pupils. The view was put that the decision to provide a new school could be made immediately, given the funding package currently available and that this needed to be done. The view was added that demand for school places meant that just expanding existing schools was not enough and that a new school was needed quickly.

Councillor Wharton (Lead Member for Children and Families) acknowledged the importance of the item raised by Councillor Butt. He stated that parental choice had not been available in practice in the borough for a number of years given Brent's rising population. The warning signs and past opportunities had been missed. Proper recognition of the rising population was not reflected in the government's calculations. Councillor Wharton stated that a realistic plan to address the shortage would soon be produced.

RESOLVED:

that the responses from the Executive on Wembley Stadium protective parking scheme, Roe Green Park and secondary school places be accepted.

## 6. Report from the Executive

### (i) *Islamia/Avenue School amalgamation*

Councillor Wharton (Lead Member for Children and Families) reminded members that The Avenue School was an independent Muslim school that successfully applied for voluntary status in 2005. Since then however, differences had arisen which had led to the trustees of the school site giving the school notice to quit by January 2007 when the lease expired. Efforts were now being made to merge The Avenue School with the Islamia School and to utilise capital funding that had previously been made available for improvements to The Avenue School. The Council was doing all it could to resolve this situation which was not of its making.

### (ii) *Local Development Framework*

Councillor Van Colle (Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture) reported that an enormous amount of effort had gone into producing a draft Local Development Framework for consultation. It contained some differences to the old Unitary Development Plan particularly around tower blocks and contained a larger section on design standards. He encouraged all members to consider the document and let him have comments.

(iii) *Community Access to Schools*

Councillor Wharton (Lead Member for Children and Families) reported that the Executive had considered an overview and scrutiny task group report on community access to schools. Having personally served on it he had hoped it would bring forward ideas around how to make facilities available for wider community use but the work of the task group had got entangled with the topic of extended schools. The Executive had asked that the issues be separated and would be giving further consideration to each issue.

(iv) *Temporary Accommodation*

Councillor Allie (Lead Member for Housing and Customer Services) reported that the Council had successfully reduced the number of households in temporary accommodation and he thanked the officers for their work in achieving this. He reported on action taken to provide additional units of affordable housing and the work undertaken by Perry Singh, Assistant Director of Housing (Needs/Private Sector) in launching the START project to support more vulnerable tenants.

(v) *Donation of Mosaic to Brent Museum*

Councillor Van Colle referred to a mosaic relocated from the Palace of Arts to the Brent Museum. He thanked Quintain Estates for the donation. Councillor Lorber (Leader) reported that on behalf of the borough, he had been formally presented with the mosaic for preservation. He urged everyone to support and visit the Brent Museum which also offered activities of to interest children.

(vi) *John Billam*

Councillor Blackman (Deputy Leader) stated that 5 years ago the Council had agreed to sell this facility but had not collected any money for it. He was pleased to report that the balance owing to the Council, together with interest, had now been collected and that a suitable management scheme had been put in place. This represented action being taken by the new Administration.

(vii) *Wembley Stadium update*

Councillor Lorber (Leader) was pleased to report that legal agreements had been reached between parties that would secure the completion of the National Stadium and set out the Council's ambitions for 2012. The challenge for the next few years was to ensure that the opportunities for the Stadium to make positive contributions to the local area were taken. This

was particularly the case for the 2012 Olympics and run-up events.

## **7. Report from the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor D Long introduced his report, pointing out that the first meeting of the committee had only taken place on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2006 at which task groups had been established to consider a tourism strategy and the relationship between the voluntary sector and the Council.

## **8. General Debate**

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

Surprise was expressed by some members that changes had been made to the Local Development Framework at the Executive after it had been to Planning Committee where similar alterations had been rejected following detailed cross party consideration. Most changes appeared to be unnecessary. It was felt that some amendments appeared to ignore the green issues facing the borough and global warming and did little to benefit the borough. An alternative view was put that the framework had undergone many significant changes in order to make it a spatial document that reflected well on the council and served the residents well. The statement of community involvement had gone before a public inquiry in order to get some changes made and as a result it was now a practical, working document.

Reference was made to the provision contained in the Education Act 2002 for schools to provide facilities for people living in the local area. The view was expressed that schools should be at the centre of local communities. The task group on community access to schools appeared to only have considered part of the issue and not addressed the cost of extended use. The government had not provided sufficient funding and the cost should not fall on the Council taxpayer. The Executive was urged to further consider this issue.

It was submitted that improvements to parks, school results, a successful museum, reducing the use of temporary accommodation, finalising arrangements for the sale of John Billam and making provision for a new school was all the work of the previous Administration. From information before the Forward Plan Select Committee it appeared that cuts in services were being made, including services to the elderly and the voluntary sector.

Additional points were made arising from the report to the Executive on the use of temporary accommodation. It was pointed out that the only decision taken by the Executive was to change the LOCATA banding system. Concern was expressed that the homeless and those in overcrowded conditions were considered as well as those in temporary

accommodation. The Executive was asked to re-consider the balance of provision between these groups.

The Executive was accused of not being familiar with the extended schools policy and so unable to appreciate the work of the task group on community access to schools. The proposals were not about exclusive community access but about having access to the planning of activities that were taking place in schools already. The extra costs would therefore only be marginal and the Executive was urged to facilitate community access to schools.

In response to the general debate, members of the Executive stated that serious underfunding issues in Children and Families and Adult Social Care, not previously been dealt with, were having to be addressed. The present Administration was having to work with the budget inherited from the past Administration and within a structure of cash limits. This was compounded by government policies directed to health providers that threatened services with huge potential financial consequences for the Council. Despite the claims of the opposition it was pointed out they had lost the recent election.

RESOLVED:-

that the reports from the Executive and Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

## 9. **Motions Selected by the Group Leaders**

### (i) *Cuts to our health services at Willesden Community Hospital and across Brent*

On behalf of the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Sneddon introduced the motion by saying that having attended the opening of this modern building with modern facilities it was now threatened with closure. Many voluntary groups using the centre faced an uncertain future and all this was to address budget deficits elsewhere. This led to the Council having to maintain what services it could and in turn suffer the financial consequences.

Councillor Powney moved an amendment to the motion seeking to amend the first paragraph, delete the second and third paragraphs and adding support to the campaign by Dawn Butler, MP. He added that he was glad to hear the concerns being expressed despite indications from a member of the Executive that he did not believe the centre would close.

Councillor Colwill moved an amendment to the motion making reference to the large amount of resources spent on Willesden Community Hospital which was now threatened with closures



and the further threat to the Accident and Emergency department at Central Middlesex Hospital.

In debate it was stated that instead of attacking government policy the Council should be more concerned with cuts being proposed to its own services. If there was concern about threatened cutbacks at Central Middlesex Hospital then members should support the campaign by Dawn Butler, MP. An alternative view was put that government action was impacting on the Council and so the motion needed to be supported. Brent PCT was being penalised for inefficiencies elsewhere and should be supported by the Council to take a stand against these threats.

The amendment to the motion moved by Councillor Powney was put to the vote and declared LOST. The amendment to the motion moved by Councillor Colwill was accepted. The motion in the name of Councillor Lorber, as amended was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

#### RESOLVED:

This Council expresses grave concern at the proposed closure of a 26-bed ward at the new Willesden Health and Social Care Centre (previously Willesden Hospital) as one of a swathe cuts to local health services in Brent being forced upon the Primary Care Trust and North West London Hospitals Trust by the Government's funding regimes.

The Council notes that these in-year cuts have nothing to do with the performance of Brent PCT or their own management of budgets, are not driven by an assessment of local need, so cannot by definition be part of a sensible longer-term strategy.

The Council also notes that the original savings of £20 million demanded from the PCT have now increased by a further £2.6 million, further threatening essential services across Brent.

The Council values the commitment by Brent PCT to consult partners and stakeholders about the proposed savings plan. However, it remains deeply concerned at :

- any proposals to close Hospital or Health Centre wards, facilities or A&E departments
- the likely financial impact on the Council's own needs-led Adult Services provision of some of the plans being introduced to keep people out of Hospital
- the likely reduction in budgets for sensible illness prevention programmes

- the severe effect on hardworking local voluntary organisations such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Bereavement Service and many others.

This Council records its disappointment and disbelief at the absurdity of doing up Willesden Community Hospital, spending large amount of resources recently and then threatening to close the 26 bed ward and threatening further closures such as the Accident and Emergency department at Central Middlesex Hospital.

Council therefore RESOLVES to :

- oppose and lobby strongly against the proposed ward closure at Willesden Health and Social Care Centre and any other ward closures in Brent;
- continue to engage with the PCT and Hospitals Trust, via the Health Select Committee and other forums, to try to minimise the loss of health services;
- ask the Leader and Chief Executive to write to the Secretaries of State for Health, and for Communities and Local Government, outlining the Council's concerns for the future of our local health, adult and community services;
- lobby the Government to change Health funding so that PCTs like Brent are not penalised, and residents do not suffer from imposed cuts, because of the situation elsewhere.

In accordance with standing order 47 (c) the voting on the motion in the name of Councillor Lorber was recorded as follows:

FOR: Councillors Allie, Anwar, Baker, Bessong, Blackman, D Brown, V Brown, Castle, Chavda, Clues, Colwill, Corcoran, Cummins, Detre, Dunn, Dunwell, Mrs Fernandes, Hashmi, Hirani, Jackson, Kansagra, Leaman, (41) Lorber, Malik, Matthews, Mendoza, Mistry, Motley, O'Sullivan, Pagnamenta, CJ Patel, The Deputy Mayor (HB Patel), HM Patel, Shah, Ms Shaw, Sneddon, Steel, Tancred, Tullett, Van Colle and Wharton.

AGAINST: None (0)

ABSTENTIONS: Councillors Ahmed, Arnold, Bacchus, (19)  
Beswick, Butt, Coughlin, Eniola, Farrell,  
Fox, John, Jones, D Long, J Long,  
J Moher, R Moher, Moloney, Powney,  
Singh and Thomas.

(ii) *Ward working*

Councillor John introduced her motion by referring to discussion at the Constitutional Working Group which showed that the subject of neighbourhood working was very important to all three political groups. She cited examples of local spending decisions and opportunities created at a local neighbourhood level through the pilot ward working scheme.

Councillor Castle moved an amendment to the motion adding that in extending ward working it should involve ward councillors more directly and give residents greater control. He felt the pilot ward working scheme had been a partial success but was too wasteful. He expressed the hope that a consensus view could be reached at the Constitutional Working Group which provided a structure over which local residents had real influence.

Whilst supporting the motion as amended it was stated that the pilot ward working scheme was too officer led. The soon to be published local government white paper would again show central government meddling in local government affairs and set out expectations for new local arrangements. The view was expressed that it was not necessary to implement expensive arrangements but the point was emphasised that local ward councillors needed to have a greater say over the provision of local services. Care had to be taken not to allow local activists who took it upon themselves to campaign on many different issues to gain preferential treatment over the general local population. It was felt that the pilot ward working scheme had been good in intention by encouraging local residents to come up with ideas but badly implemented in that officer and councillor roles had been confused. An example of an initiative that was raised by local people but had not been supported by the officers was raised. Any scheme had to be based on ward councillors representing the views of local residents. It was said that the motivation for introducing a scheme needed to be supported for it to work and the motivation behind the pilot ward working scheme was challenged as being for the benefit of local councillors. An alternate view was that the benefit of ward working had been to provide a structure within which ward councillors could take up the issues they had always been interested in. It was suggested the biggest benefit had been the

ability to influence spending decisions taken at the centre in order to lever in services to the local area.

The amendment to the motion moved by Councillor Castle was accepted. The motion in the name of Councillor John, as amended was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

This Council notes the partial success of ward working pilot schemes and resolves to extend neighbourhood working to the whole borough although not necessarily in the form of the original ward working pilot schemes. The extension should involve the ward councillors more directly, and give the residents a greater control over matters that directly affect their everyday lives.

(iii) *Our valuable Post Offices*

Councillor Blackman introduced his motion saying that people had already been forced to travel further for their post office and now even more were under threat of closure. Post offices were vital to the community and further closures could not be afforded. This was of particular concern to pensioners and those people who did not have a bank account.

Councillor J Moher moved an amendment to the motion seeking to recognise the work of postal workers. He stated that it was clear that the Post Office needed greater investment but instead was being starved of funding.

Reference was made to previous campaigns against post office closures which had attracted support from all three political parties. The point was emphasised that those post offices that remained faced increase demand and were further from the people that needed the service. The profit motive behind running post offices was questioned in light of the public service they provided. The point was made that post offices provided financial inclusion to those most likely to be excluded and were being closed to save relatively small amounts of money. Members were pleased that the Council was united on this matter and hoped to influence government proposals.

The amendment to the motion moved by Councillor J Moher was accepted. The motion in the name of Councillor Blackman, as amended was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

This Council reiterates its commitment to putting pressure on the Government to support the post-office network and its long term sustainability.

This Council believes that thousands of post-offices could be forced to close without decisive Government action as reported by Postcomm. Already Brent has suffered unacceptable closures on Post Offices. The Department of Trade and Industry has refused to say whether official contracts such as payment of pensions and the renewal of TV licences will continue after March 2008.

This Council places on record its support for pensioners and all local residents who rely on a local post-office for their pension and benefit payments and recognises the social impact of closures on the community.

The Council also recognises the social and economic role that post-offices play and calls on the Government to make a decision on payments that will be made via Post Offices so that a plan can be developed to enable Post Offices to continue their work.

The Council and all three party groups recognises the hard work of postal workers and sub postmasters and it supports their campaign to retain the network.

*(Councillor HB Patel declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the above item and left the meeting room during the discussion and voting thereon).*

*(The Deputy Mayor and Councillors Farrell and Mrs Fernandes declared personal interests in the above item).*

9. **Councillor Van Colle**

The Deputy Mayor on behalf of the Council welcomed Councillor Van Colle to the meeting following his recent hospital stay.

The meeting ended at 9.55pm.

HB PATEL  
Deputy Mayor