

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, 23rd April 2007 at 7.15 pm**

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor B Joseph

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor H B Patel

COUNCILLORS:

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

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Allie, Baker, Coughlin, Detre, Mrs Fernandes, Leaman, D Long, Matthews and HM Patel.

Council was informed that Councillor D Long had been taken to hospital and the Mayor spoke on behalf of Members in hoping that he would soon be well.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting of full Council held on 5th March 2007 be confirmed as a true and accurate record.

3. **Declarations of Interests**

Councillor Van Colle and Councillor Farrell declared a personal interest in items reported to Council by the Executive.

4. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor wished everyone a very happy St George's Day.

The Mayor reported that she planted a tree on 19th April to mark the abolition of the Slave Trade. The was a very successful event and was supported by mayors from several boroughs, along with local residents, community and voluntary organisations and the Group Leaders.

The Mayor stated that on 21st April, she, along with other mayors, attended the presentation of a birthday card for the Queen, which took place at Windsor Castle.

The Mayor announced that Councillor Anthony Dunn had recently married Ms Felicity Hunt and offered congratulations on behalf of herself and members of the Council. The Mayor also announced that Councillor Gavin Sneddon had recently become engaged to Emilia Jakubowska. She wished them every happiness for the future.

The Mayor reminded Members that her Grand Spring Ball was taking place on Saturday 28th April in the Paul Daisley Hall. Tickets were still available from her office. She hoped it would be well supported so that as much money as possible could be raised for her charities, the Down's Syndrome Association and the Shooting Star Children's Hospice.

The Mayor drew attention to the progress of those petitions received under standing order 68 set out on the schedule circulated.

Finally the Mayor thanked everyone for the support she had received at Council meetings during her year as Mayor.

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

At this meeting there were none.

6. **Local Development Framework – Joint Waste Development Plan Document**

The report before Members presented a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and sought authority to sign it. The MOU would commit the Council to joint working with other West London Boroughs (Harrow, Hillingdon, Richmond, Hounslow and Ealing) on the preparation of a Development Plan Document for Waste. The Executive had previously considered the report at its meeting on 12th March 2007.

Some concern was expressed with regard to signing up to the arrangements but in response the Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture advised that it was in the Council's best interests and that it was essential for the six West London boroughs to work together in dealing with the disposal of waste.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the Memorandum of Understanding, appended to the report from the Director of Environment and Culture, be signed on behalf of the Council;
- (ii) that any further minor alterations to the MOU be agreed by the Borough Solicitor before it is signed.

7. **Question time**

The selected questions submitted under the provisions of standing order 39 had been circulated together with written responses from the respective Lead Members. The Members who had put the questions were invited to ask their supplementary questions.

The following five questions had been selected by the Leader of the Labour Group.

Town Centre Wardens/Police Community Support Officers

The question from Councillor Arnold asked if attention had been paid to the effects of 'converting' Town Centre Wardens to Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). Councillor Arnold added that town centres were hotspots for street crime and enviro-crime and the warden's job was an additional resource to support the local community. As a

supplementary question, Councillor Arnold asked if the low profile preventative approach of wardens could be replicated by uniformed police officers already allocated to the areas or was the decision simply a financial one designed to rationalise the service.

Councillor V Brown replied that PCSOs were able to take on all the tasks of wardens and were able to reassure local people more successfully.

Meetings with the Borough Commander

Councillor Beswick had asked how many meetings the Lead Member for Crime Prevention and Public Safety had held with the Metropolitan Police Borough Commander for Brent since she had taken up her office. Councillor Beswick was pleased to hear that the Lead Member was regularly briefed by the Borough Commander but as a supplementary question asked when she last met him, when the next scheduled meeting was, how often these meetings took place, what the community impact of the shooting in Harlesden the previous evening had been and what action she was taking to re-assure the local community.

Councillor V Brown replied that she had last met the Borough Commander on 18th April. As to the shooting she added that she would be looking into what could be done to re-assure the local community in Harlesden but that in the past serious action had been taken to address such incidents and she expected similar action this time.

Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation

Councillor J Long had asked how many Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) had been licensed in Brent and how it was checked that they met the health and safety rating system. She added that most HMOs in Brent were not three storeys high and therefore did not fall under the mandatory scheme. Councillors received many complaints about overcrowding and such tenants often lived in unsatisfactory conditions. Councillor Long asked as a supplementary question why the Council had not applied for a discretionary licence so that all HMOs in Brent could be registered and decent standards enforced.

In the absence of Councillor Allie, Councillor Castle stated that he would ensure Councillor Allie received written notice of the supplementary question with the request that he reply to Councillor Long within 7 days.

Charging for the collection of bulky items of rubbish

Councillor J Moher had asked if it was intended to increase in future years the recently introduced charge for the collection of bulky items of rubbish. As a supplementary question he asked if, given that it was acknowledged that waste disposal costs were escalating, would the charge for collection of bulky items of rubbish also escalate. He asked this in light of the increases made in the Council Tax and other charges and given that the service used to be free.

Councillor Van Colle replied that he could not be specific about the level of charge in the future and that this would be a matter to be considered as part of next year's budget discussions. He added that the Council was charged for the service by a contractor and in turn had to recover its costs. He referred to the charges levied by neighbouring boroughs for a similar service and gave the reason for the Council increasing the Council Tax as due to the Primary Care Trust cost shunting.

Cost of Dudden Hill by election

Councillor Powney had asked what the cost of administering the Dudden Hill by election would be. He added that the estimated cost was almost three times the amount claimed to have been saved by changing the venue of the Council's 'awaydays' and stated that the Commissioner had blamed the Liberal Democrats for putting forward a candidate not qualified to stand. As a supplementary question, Councillor Powney asked if the Council would be approaching Brent Liberal Democrats for all or part of the cost of the Dudden Hill by election.

Councillor Castle stated that the simple answer was no. He argued that if the verdict of the electorate could not be accepted without challenging it on a legal point then if anyone was to blame for the cost of the by election it was the Brent Labour Party.

Wembley Stadium Event Day Protective Parking Zone

Councillor Dunwell had asked for an update on the operation of the Wembley Stadium event day protective parking zone, specifically asking how many penalty charge notices had been issued and how many cars towed away during the two test events for Wembley. Councillor Dunwell submitted that the scheme was a controlled parking zone by any other name. Councillor Dunwell asked, as a supplementary question, for full details, including present state and future plans and procedures, relating to any change/enlargement of the present stadium CPZ, how the present and future CPZ schemes were to be funded and maintained once the 'once and for all' payment of £2.5M had been used up, how much of this money had been spent or

accounted for and for confirmation of whether the present maximum 37 days of CPZ operation was to be the maximum allowed.

Councillor D Brown replied that the scheme was not a CPZ but a protective parking zone for event days. There were no plans for enlargement and the £2.5M was nearly spent. When in force the scheme would generate revenue which in turn would pay for its operation. Whenever the stadium was being used the scheme would be operated in accordance with the 37 days referred to.

City Academy sponsors

Councillor Mendoza had asked for details of the proposed new sponsors for the new City Academy. He added that local people felt the project was ill-fated and pointed to the withdrawal of the original sponsor, public opposition to the Bridge Road site and the desperate need for school places in the south of the borough. In light of this he asked as a supplementary question if it was now accepted that the Gwenneth Rickus site was a more suitable location to meet the needs of Brent's school children.

In reply, Councillor Wharton stated he did not accept that the Gwenneth Rickus site was more suitable because it was too small and already had a Council installation operating from it which would take time and money to relocate. He added that the Bridge Road site would not only offer a secondary school but provide a primary school as well, which would relieve pressure on the supply of primary places in this part of the borough. He was confident the new sponsors would have robust arrangements in place and felt the City Academy was now in a much stronger position.

Cost of Awaydays

Councillor Jackson had asked how much Brent's Council Tax payers had been saved by holding the budget and other 'awaydays' at Bridge Park rather than at hotels outside the borough. He asked if the Leader agreed with him that the use of hotels outside Brent was a waste of money, whereas the use of Bridge Park supported the centre and provided better value to residents. In his supplementary question, Councillor Jackson asked if strategic decision making had been made any worse as a result of not staying in hotels or perhaps better if decisions such as seeking a super casino for Wembley were less likely to be made if they were not considered after a complimentary glass of wine.

Councillor Lorber stated that he could vouch for all members of the Executive in replying that the quality of decision making and leadership was now better. He added that staying at hotels and the provision of drinks was a waste of money when there were venues within Brent that could be used. He was proud to use local facilities and the waste of

money under the previous administration was why a new administration was now in power.

Financial impact of PCT cuts

Councillor Motley had asked how much Brent PCT was demanding from the Council and the impact this would have in the future if the Government continued to allow Council Tax payers to be forced to pay for services previously funded by the NHS. Councillor Motley was not convinced by the reply he had received and referred to the Secretary of State's assertion that the NHS had enjoyed its best year ever which was now clearly not the case. He stated it had adversely affected partnership working and posed a danger to the running of many schemes. He referred to a meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee at which the PCT had informed Members that it proposed to cut physiotherapy for children with special needs but had agreed to review specific cases. It was also reported that the PCT intended to cut speech and language therapy for children over 7. In his supplementary question Councillor Motley asked if it was agreed that such cuts would have a devastating effect and that to even consider making such cuts without assessing needs was an appalling approach.

Councillor Blackman replied that the Council was in a difficult position in dealing with the cuts referred to because it could either allow the cuts to deprive vulnerable children which it was not prepared to do or be faced with picking up the costs of the service that rightly lay with the PCT. He felt the decision was to the shame of the PCT board members and the Council was trying to clarify what the PCT proposals were. It had already been shown that it was trying to shunt costs on to the Council for caring for people who were not the responsibility of the Council. He added that £4.3M had been included in the Council's budget to deal with the situation which he hoped would be sufficient but could not say for certain if it would be.

Neasden Lane Waste site – Pollution

Councillor Clues had asked for reassurance that the Council would continue the good work undertaken by the local MP and ward councillors in getting the Environment Agency to enforce the decision to stop the highly polluting business in Neasden Lane from operating and causing a nuisance to local residents. Councillor Clues added that from reading the London air quality website information taken at 4pm that day showed pollution levels in the area to be 3 times above the European limit. The company continued to operate, particularly at weekends and on bank holidays in an effort to avoid detection. As a supplementary question he asked what pressure would be put on the Environment Agency to meet local residents' demands to enforce effectively against the ongoing illegal operation from the site.

Councillor Van Colle replied that he was not aware of the current air quality readings and it was not in the Council's interests to go into any further detail about the action that was being taken than that set out in his written reply. He hoped the Council's actions would be self evident in the future.

8. **Items Selected by Non-Executive Members**

(i) The Mayoral Car

Councillor Cummins raised his item suggesting replacing the mayoral car and added that additional advantages of running a fuel hybrid vehicle would be exemption from the congestion charge and reduced noise as well as emissions.

Councillor Lorber (Leader) responded that he thought the suggestion an excellent idea and was happy for the Executive to consider it further.

(ii) Wembley Stadium event planning

Councillor Bessong introduced the item he had raised by referring to the successful community day event held to open the stadium and asked that the Executive consider ways in which this could be a regular event and how safety issues identified from the operation of the stadium could be formally addressed so that local residents could be assured that the stadium could be enjoyed in a safe way.

Councillor Van Colle (Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture) responded that he would be pleased to take up the idea of a regular community event. He had missed a recent meeting of the Wembley Advisory Group otherwise he would have put the idea forward at that meeting. Nevertheless he agreed it was a matter that could be pursued. Councillor Van Colle added that the stadium would not have received its safety certificate if it was not a safe venue so local residents should be assured of that.

(iii) South Kilburn Regeneration

Councillor Moloney introduced his item by stating that over the last 10 months the work associated with the regeneration of South Kilburn had come to a standstill. It did not appear that the new administration was concerned to maximise the benefits of previous investment. He had witnessed the whole project winding down with no new jobs created and few new homes being built. He stated that money available from the Government was not being spent for the benefit of local people and that residents wanted to see the area regenerated.

Councillor Moloney's view was supported by Councillor Arnold who felt that money available to the area was not being spent and previous

investment was being wasted. She specifically mentioned the failure to resolve faults and carry out repairs in the show homes and the NDC (New Deal for Communities) was being left unsupported. Local people were feeling let down and were losing confidence in the future of the area. A contrasting view was put by Councillor Dunn who suggested that the local councillors were not engaged with what was happening in the area. He felt the South Kilburn NDC operated for its own benefit and was not representative of the local area.

Councillor O'Sullivan (Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Development) responded by saying that the area was now represented by two new councillors and that people did have confidence in the NDC delivering results. He would do all he could to ensure this and felt the NDC was delivering successfully in a number of areas and working with the community. He referred to a number of successful projects. He stated that any delays in delivering the housing aspect were not entirely down to the Council and he expressed the hope that all Members would want to see the maximum amount of resources available going into the area to provide housing and community facilities. He undertook to give the matter all the attention it needed to deal with the issues.

RESOLVED

that the responses from the Executive on the above items be accepted.

9. **Procedural Motion**

The Council considered a procedural motion that was circulated in the name of and moved by Councillor Sneddon.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that, following presentation of the report from the Executive under item 9(a), a period of 20 minutes be introduced to allow discussion of the following two items included in the Executive's report and referred to Council following call-in:-

Authority to invite tenders for meals service contract

The future of customer services

- (ii) that for each of the above items one speaker from each party speaking for up to 3 minutes be permitted before moving to the vote on any alternative proposals put forward for recommendation to the Executive.

10. **Report from the Executive**

- (i) *Local Development Framework – Joint Waste Development Plan*

The decisions of the Executive were noted. See minute 7 above for a decision of Full Council on this item.

(ii) *Wembley Community Day*

Councillor Lorber thanked the local people who had taken part in the Wembley stadium community event on 17th March 2007. He expressed the hope that more such community events would be held.

(iii) *New Library for Kingsbury*

Councillor Lorber reported on the proposals for a new library in Kingsbury.

(iv) *Harlesden Library bid*

Councillor Lorber stated that a number of projects would be undertaken to improve the library service, including bidding for £1.5m to renew Harlesden library. He also mentioned plans to improve Neasden library.

(v) *Street Cleaning and Recycling Update*

Councillor Lorber thanked local residents for supporting the Council's initiative to recycle plastic bottles. He informed Members that the new street cleaning contract had started and stated that, having put additional resources into the contract, the improvements could already be seen after years of neglect.

(vi) *Annual Audit Inspection Letter*

Councillor Lorber stated that the annual audit inspection letter had been presented to the meeting of the Executive on 16th April 2007 following a recent inspection which had found the Council to be performing well and improving. He thanked officers and councillors for their efforts in supporting the improvement of services.

(vii) *Wembley Academy – Change of Sponsor*

Members noted that a final decision on this would be taken by the Executive on 3rd May 2007.

(viii) *Launch of Car Club in Queen's Park*

Councillor Lorber referred to the launch of the car club in Queens Park and praised the people involved for helping to improve the local environment.

(ix) *Extra Police Community Support Officers for Brent*

Councillor Lorber reported that the Executive had decided to increase the number of PCSOs in order to improve the service provided to local residents.

RESOLVED:

that the report from the Executive on the above items be noted.

(x) *Decisions taken by the Executive under the Council's urgency provisions*

NOTED

(Councillor Van Colle declared a personal interest in the item on the report from the Executive detailing the decisions taken by the Executive under the Council's urgency provisions)

(xi) *Authority to Invite Tenders for Meals Service Contract*

This item was reported to Full Council by the Executive in pursuance of standing order 22, following receipt by the Democratic Services Manager of a notice signed by more than 10 Members referring it to Council.

It was submitted that a pilot study of the cook on route method had shown that meals often arrived either too hot or too cold, that spills were not properly cleaned up and that the vans got dirty. Despite this the report to the Executive had not mentioned this and it had only come to light when scrutinised by the Forward Plan Select Committee. It was further stated that a proper survey of the experiences of other boroughs had not been undertaken, the estimated cost had not been taken into account and that a supplementary report put to the Executive to address these concerns proposed only partial solutions. It was put that the customers of this service should not be treated as second class citizens in this way.

In response it was stated that the objections to the proposals showed a misunderstanding of the need for the Council to modernise the way it delivered services. The Council was required to meet efficiency targets and the challenge was to deliver good quality services at a price the Council could afford. The Executive had decided to seek competitive tenders which would be evaluated for quality and value for money. The evidence from other Councils was that the Council would be able to deliver a good service and achieve savings. It was acknowledged that the original report put to the Executive had contained a few issues that needed explaining and these had

been cleared up subsequently. When the contract was delivered the Council would continue to monitor it for standard of service. The Forward Plan Select Committee had made a number of recommendations and the Executive had re-considered the matter but had decided not to change its decisions.

Councillor Fox moved that the item be referred back to the Executive with the request that the tendering process be stopped and a thorough and proper investigation of the right way forward be undertaken, considering the service provided by other boroughs and the financial implications for the whole of the Council and not just to the community care service area.

The motion was put to the vote and declared LOST.

RESOLVED:

that no further action be taken on the decisions of the Executive.

(Councillor Farrell declared a personal interest in the above item by virtue of being on the board of governors of Wykeham Primary School which is included in the contract).

(xii) The Future of Customer Services

This item was reported to Full Council by the Executive in pursuance of standing order 22, following receipt by the Democratic Services Manager of a notice signed by more than 10 Members referring it to Council.

It was put to Members that there had been no discussion at the Executive on the recommendations from Forward Plan Select Committee, which had been unanimously agreed at the Select Committee and Members had been denied the opportunity to present a petition from residents of Kilburn. It was stated that the decisions of the Executive were financially driven with little consultation and planning involved. The Council had invested heavily in its one stop shop operation and it was a well regarded service. The Kilburn shop was the third busiest of the Council's shops and its closure would particularly hit disadvantaged groups. The Executive was asked to accept the recommendations of the Forward Plan Select Committee.

In response, it was pointed out that whilst the service had long been efficient and successful it nevertheless needed to move with the times. People now wanted to access services in different ways. It was not accepted that this amounted to decimating the service provision to residents of South Kilburn. Whilst it was unfortunate that the existing building had to be

vacated it was pointed out that this did not amount to closure as it was hoped to find an alternative location. The Council had faced a major budget problem that had to be addressed. The need to review the way the service was delivered and the cost to the Council if the building had been left empty was stressed. Local residents would continue to receive a service either on-line or by visiting Willesden Green Library or the Tricycle Theatre.

Councillor Arnold moved that the item be referred back to the Executive with the request that the recommendations of the Forward Plan Select Committee be accepted.

The motion was put to the vote and declared LOST.

RESOLVED:

that no further action be taken on the decisions of the Executive.

11. Report from the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

In the absence of Councillor D Long, the vice chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Clues presented the report circulated with the Summons. He asked all Members to join him in wishing Councillor Dorman Long well following his admission to hospital.

12. Motions Selected by the Group Leaders

(i) Parking fines

Councillor John introduced her motion by stating that in May 2006 local residents had been promised a fair deal for motorists and since that time the Council had gone back on its word. She referred to the fourfold increase in the number of parking fines issued over the Christmas period and the fiasco of the Wembley event day parking which was supposed to protect local residents but had instead penalised many of them. She asked why the problems had not been predicted and that those residents that had been fined should be reimbursed. In addition, following an incident in Nicoll Road the previous evening, police had cordoned off the road forcing residents to park in adjoining roads where they then received a parking fine. She asked that these fines also be reimbursed.

In response the point was made that the Wembley event day parking scheme was largely a result of the actions of the previous administration. It was also suggested that the suffering caused by restricting parking was as a result of not ensuring there was sufficient parking provision made as part of the stadium redevelopment. It was recognised that on the Wembley community event day many cars

parked in local roads were not displaying a permit and this showed how the impact of the stadium was now upon local residents. Religious venues in the area were also affected by people not being able to park. The car exclusion zone around the stadium would be reviewed to see if it operated in a fair and reasonable way. It was also recognised that outlying areas around train stations where people parked to catch a train to the stadium were also affected by the operation of the stadium. The accusation that the actions of the Council amounted to a war against motorists was refuted. As a demonstration of this it was pointed out that the number of parking fines issued over the same Christmas period as last year had dropped by 10%. It was put that the motion sought to support those people that parked illegally. It was stated that rather than being a failure the event day parking scheme had been a success. It was emphasised that the event day parking scheme had emanated from the previous administration which was accused of ignoring the views of residents and it was now for the Council to look at ways it could be improved. In many cases residents were left a warning letter and not fined. Some of the areas affected by the parking restrictions received no benefit from the operation of the stadium. The imposition of controlled parking zones across the borough had started many years ago and it was suggested that the real reason behind this was to deter car usage.

The question was put as to what the Council intended to do for those residents that had been penalised for parking within the exclusion zone because they did not know what they had to do to get a permit. If the Council was responsible for enforcing the scheme it could also look to alter it as necessary. An example was referred to when on New Year's Day wardens were deployed in Kensal Green and yet on any Saturday in Harlesden shopping area there was not a warden to be seen. It was stated that the Council needed to get its priorities right and ensure tickets were issued to those people who deliberately parked illegally.

The motion in the name of Councillor John was put to the vote and declared LOST.

(ii) Tackling Crime and the Fear of Crime

On behalf of the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor V Brown introduced the motion by stating that for too long now the borough had not had the number of police it needed, despite it suffering disproportionately from violent crime. The Government could afford more police if it scrapped the proposed identity card scheme. It was clear that in many cases prison sentences were not a sufficient deterrent. The Licensing Act contained too few powers for local authorities to shut down those premises that consistently caused a nuisance. It was submitted that the Council would continue to play its part in tackling crime but it needed more effective support from the Government.

It was stated that there was now a lack of respect shown between people and during the last decade the Government had disregarded this aspect of life.

In opposition to the motion as presented it was submitted that after taking control of the Council it had taken the majority group nearly a year to raise the issue of crime and community safety. Past major incidents happening in the borough had been allowed to pass without comment. Drug abuse was a major contributory factor and yet the Liberal Democrat party had voted to decriminalise some drug use. In addition a recent election court had ruled that a Liberal Democrat candidate elected at the 2006 local elections had been ineligible to stand. It was submitted that it was time that the community was supported and criminals condemned. Councillor Beswick moved an amendment to the motion seeking to recognise the greater presence of police on the streets as a result of Safer Neighbourhood Policing, calling on the Administration to be more pro-active in the fight against crime and recognising that drug abuse was a major factor in criminal activity.

The amendment to the motion moved by Councillor Beswick was put to the vote and declared LOST.

The substantive motion was put to the vote and it was

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the Council recognises that:
 - crime and the fear of crime, remain a major concern for Brent residents, fuelled in particular by persistent low level crime and anti-social behaviour, high-profile violent incidents in the Borough, a shortage of police officers on the beat, and difficulty in getting adequate response times from an overstretched police force;
 - the public's confidence in safely visiting all parts of Brent by day or night must be reinforced, particularly by tackling at source known centres of disorder;
 - partnership working between the Police and Council has led to better co-ordination on law enforcement and a greater Police presence in parts of Brent, but this has been hampered by lack of resources overall, and misdirected government policies.
- (ii) that the Council welcomes:
 - the Administration's substantial capital investment in CCTV cameras and decision to provide extra money in this year's budget to keep cameras working effectively;

- the Executive decision to recruit 16 Police Community Support Officers, over and above those provided in Safer Neighbourhood Teams, as an effective contribution to local community safety

(iii) that the Council believes that:

- more Officers on patrol are urgently needed, and these could be provided by switching billions of pounds wasted on the Government's ineffective national Identity card scheme into Police budgets;
- local communities should have more power to close local pubs and clubs that are frequent trouble spots;
- current sentencing policy, with sentences that do not mean what they say, is confused and does not provide an adequate deterrent;
- with over 60% of released prisoners re-offending within 2 years, a new approach is needed.

(iv) that the relevant Secretaries of State, the Mayor of London and Brent MPs be lobbied for action to:

- strengthen licensing enforcement powers against pubs and clubs that are a source of trouble;
- raise the level of visible police presence on the streets, and provide officer numbers that reflect the level of crime in Brent ;
- develop existing arrangements for victim support to identify the scope for compensation and reparations to be paid by offenders;
- bring honesty to sentencing – for example, Life should mean Life;
- examine the scope for introducing Community Justice Panels and other community engagement in the administration of justice.

(iii) *Council Tax Revaluation Means Higher Taxes*

Councillor Blackman introduced his motion by drawing attention to the implications of revaluation for Brent where it would result in nearly every property going up a band or two with the average level above band D. This would see an increase in Council Tax for everybody at this level of more than 22%. It was submitted that the Government was still planning to adjust the Council Tax base and distribute grant

accordingly. Councillor Blackman pointed out that at the time of the last revaluation in 1991/92 property prices in Brent were low but the Borough now had some of the fastest rising property prices in the country and so would suffer disproportionately from any revaluation.

In support of the motion it was stated that one way a redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor was achieved was through the levy of taxes. However, by reference to statistics, it was pointed out that a greater proportion of income was spent on Council Tax in the poorer areas of the borough. In opposing the motion it was pointed out that the Government had made it clear that it would not be carrying out a revaluation and so it was argued the motion was misguided. What the motion did not make reference to was the idea being promoted by the Liberal Democrat party of a local income tax and how that would affect residents of the Borough.

Following a vote it was,

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the Council expresses its deep concern at the Government's threat to conduct a complete revaluation of all domestic properties for council tax, with the further threat that regular and subsequent revaluations will take place automatically every five years and notes that despite the Government's claim to have postponed council tax revaluation in England, Labour Ministers have given explicit authorisation for the council tax revaluation database to go ahead, even after the announcement of the postponement;
- (ii) that the Council records its concern that taxpayers' money is being spent on refining technology costing £6 million and believes that this database will allow for the imposition of a house price tax, now being piloted in Northern Ireland from April;
- (iii) that the Council notes the scope of possible revaluations; homes would be photographed to record architectural style, brick, thatch, or stone facia, sash windows, age periods and house dimensions. In addition 'Value Significant' property features would be coded by tax inspectors to calculate tax bills including:- living in a quiet road, or cul-de-sac, proximity to convenient public transport , garden, patio, roof terrace, balcony, water or hill views, near a field or golf course, conservatory, double glazing and number of bedrooms, bathrooms, garage spaces and parking spaces;
- (iv) that the Council believes that the proposed process of revaluation will be intrusive and an invasion of householders privacy;

- (v) that the Council further believes that the combined process of revaluation, increased number of Council Tax bands and threatened house price tax will lead to higher bills for all.

The meeting ended at 9:48pm

B JOSEPH
Mayor