

**FULL COUNCIL – 29<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2007****MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME****1. QUESTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR BUTT:**

The Administration has doubled the cost of visitor parking scratch card booklets from £5.00 to £10.00. Can the Lead Member identify which report generated this increase and can he justify a staggering increase, which is causing particular difficulty for low-income families and pensioners?

Response received from Councillor D Brown, Lead Member for Highways and Transportation:

The report that generated the increase in the cost of visitor parking scratch card booklets was tabled at the meeting of the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2006 Executive Committee (ref: E & C 06/07 019), report titled "Review of Parking Charges".

Supporting Rationale:

The Council operates a system whereby visitor parking permits (scratch cards) are available to enable residents' visitors to park all day in a resident permit holder bay within a Controlled Parking Zone. Visitors parking permits are validated by scratching out the date and entering the motor vehicle registration number on the permit.

To prevent loss or theft visitors' permits are only available to be purchased in person from the Parking Shop. Details of the terms and conditions of use of the permits are shown on the permit.

Prior to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 they were supplied in books of 10 permits at £5 per book, meaning that a visitor could park all day for 50p. A maximum of 15 books per year per household are supplied at this price; thereafter the cost per book is £10.

The proposal to increase the price was made as it was agreed that the pre-April 2007 charge was extremely low for all day parking in a London Borough. This had resulted in the Scratchcards becoming increasingly popular and the Council was receiving high numbers of complaints that resident's bays were

increasingly occupied by scratch card users, and on many occasions, residents were unable to obtain a parking space.

Prior to this increase, there had been no increase for ten years (since 1997). It was considered that £1 to park in a busy London Borough still merited reasonable value. Meanwhile, an annual 'Visitor Parking Permit' was increased in cost from £75 to £100.

The anticipated increase in income relating to the doubling of the visitor scratch cards made at the time was projected at approximately £165,000/annum. It was stated that this would improve the ability of the Council to maintain the Controlled Parking Zone schemes and carry out further transportation schemes in light of the anticipated £1.5m projected loss of income as a result of the "Moses Vs Barnet" High Court case, details of which were provided in section 4.1 of the aforementioned report.

## **2. QUESTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR R MOHER:**

How many members of staff at Carlyon Print have been offered redundancy?

Response received from Councillor Colwill, Lead Member Adults for Health and Social Care:

The Carlyon centre closed on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2007.

22 Workstep employees were made redundant, of whom 12 were given early retirement as they were over 50.

4 management staff were made redundant of whom 3 were given early retirement as they were over 50.

1 workstep employee and 1 management employee were redeployed into other posts in the Council.

## **3. QUESTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR FARRELL:**

Spitting is a bad habit which can be viewed as a health hazard. The police cannot take action until the Council passes a bye-law. What progress is there on introducing this bye-law?

Response received from Councillor Van Colle, Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture:

Research has been undertaken by the StreetCare Enforcement Manager and a report submitted to the Borough Solicitor with a view to establishing an appropriate bye-law. This work is still pending.

In the meantime, three joint operations have been undertaken with the Wembley Safer Neighbourhoods Team, during which people found spitting have been instructed to clean up and provided with equipment to do so.

#### **4. QUESTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR ARNOLD:**

What is the reduction in staffing levels at the South Kilburn Housing office and is it an efficiency saving for Brent Housing Partnership. If so, what is the value of the saving?

Response received from Councillor Allie, Lead member for Housing and Customer Services:

Overall there has been a reduction of 18 staff throughout BHP as part of a voluntary redundancy exercise.

Within South Kilburn there has been a reduction of 2 staff - 1 Tenancy Services Manager and 1 Tenancy Services Officer.

Savings from voluntary redundancy at South Kilburn specifically will start to accrue from May 2008 and will produce £3,277 per month until October 2008 from which time onwards the savings will be £7,572 per month.

The reduction in staffing levels occurred as part of BHP's strategy in preparation for the loss of income resulting from the transfer of stock in South Kilburn as well as other financial pressures within the HRA.

BHP expects efficiency savings of around £533k per year from May 2009. This only represents about half of what BHP will need to save to deal with the loss of income to the HRA resulting from the transfer of South Kilburn.

#### **5. QUESTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR POWNEY:**

The Library Strategy proposes keeping open all of Brent's libraries and extending opening times with the intention of increasing library usage. How does this square with the Council's financial strategy?

Response received from Councillor Van Colle, Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture:

The draft Library Strategy recommendations state that opening hours should be reconfigured to meet community needs. This does not mean an increase, only changing the existing hours after public consultation. Increasing the opening hours obviously has cost implications and the service is not in a position to fund an extension at this stage. Public consultation on the strategy, including the opening hours, will take place in November.

The strategy also recommends an increase in the libraries' revenue budget of £300,000. This is to meet the current deficit and maintain spending on stock and current opening hours.

## **6. QUESTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR V BROWN:**

What are the positive impacts of the Lib Dem led Administration's decision to provide an extra 16 PCSO's in Brent?

### Response received from Councillor Matthews, Lead Member for Crime Prevention and Public Safety:

The 16 additional PCSO's have been added to the complement of Safer Neighbourhood Teams in the wards that cover our town centres, which are also our crime hot spots. They are now working in Kilburn, Willesden Green, Dudden Hill (to cover Neasden), Harlesden, Kensal Green and Wembley Central.

Under the terms of our agreement with the Metropolitan Police their role is to "provide a visible and reassuring street patrol presence which will address community concerns about the reduction of crime and disorder and anti social behaviour within the street environment". Their duties include

- Providing reassurance to victims of crime, local businesses, residents and young people by engaging in appropriate community activities and attending meetings with them.
- Confiscating alcohol in Controlled Drinking Zones which, subject to a decision at Full Council on 29<sup>th</sup> October, will be in place across the Borough by Christmas 2007.
- Assist in the dispersal of groups causing harassment, alarm and distress in dispersal areas.
- Ensuring that all envirocrime issues are referred to LBB for action via the dedicated Street Care number.
- Issuing Local Authority Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling, offences under dog control orders, littering and graffiti. The income from these FPNs will come to the Council

These duties will be monitored through monthly reports from Brent police to the Council's Community Safety Team

## **7. QUESTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR SNEDDON:**

What steps have the Council taken to increase the provision of plastic recycling available to flats?

Response received from Councillor Van Colle, Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture:

Plans are already underway to enable residents who do not have access to the 'Green Box' service (mainly people living in flatted or high rise properties) to recycle plastic bottles.

This will be done by converting a number of existing containers for cans into containers for cans and plastic bottles. This will be both for individual estates based systems and the 120 or so Bring Bank Sites.

Orders have been placed for additional containers and new labelling and the expansion has been planned in conjunction with Veolia who will undertake the collections.

**8. QUESTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR SHAH:**

What progress has the Lib Dem led administration made on Academies?

Response received from Councillor Wharton, Lead member for Children and Families:

The Council is working with ARK and DCSF to develop a feasibility study ("Outline Business Case" ) for the Wembley Park Academy. Consultants have been appointed for the Outline Business Case (OBC) which will develop an outline design that conforms to the Council's planning policies and which will be the basis of a cost estimate. The Council and ARK plan to carry out a consultation in November and December. Subject to the outcomes of the OBC and the consultation, the aim is to deliver the new building for September 2010 whilst exploring options for opening some classes earlier (September 09) in temporary buildings.

This administration has endorsed the approach from John Kelly schools for them to be expanded and rebuilt as an Academy. The governing bodies of the John Kelly schools have identified an education charity, Edutrust, as potential sponsor and are seeking the agreement of DCSF to this.

Forecasts of pupil numbers indicate that Brent will need an additional 16 forms of entry in secondary schools by 2018. The Wembley Park Academy, together with the approved expansions of Preston Manor and Claremont, will provide half that total. The Council will be consulting of its strategy for the further expansions of capacity which could be achieved by a combination of expanding existing schools and through new schools (which might be through the academies programme).

The Council has set up a member-level Strategy Board to oversee the development of school places. The Board has all party representation and is intended to make the outcomes of its deliberation public. The Board will keep

the role of academies in the Council's Strategy for Developing School Places under review.

#### **9. QUESTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR BAKER:**

In conservation areas the policy is that replacement windows must be made of timber. This is very expensive and also needs to be maintained.

Can the Lead Member inform me whether the policy can be changed to include UPVC windows which match the originals?

Response received from Councillor Van Colle, Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture:

The Council's window replacement policies were put in place because the Council has a duty through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to 'preserve or enhance' the character and appearance of its Conservation Areas. The London Borough of Brent along with other boroughs such as Barnet and Harrow amongst others all adhere to the above Act. These policies have significantly helped protect the character of Brent's Conservation Areas.

#### **10. QUESTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR JOSEPH:**

The Rucklidge Avenue Social Club sold their building years ago and for years residents have suffered from the eyesore of a boarded up building which attracts problems.

Can the Lead Member inform me what assistance the council will now give to assure residents that this dangerous site will be alleviated?

Response received from Councillor Van Colle, Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture:

The Council has issued a s215 notice to the owners of 10 Rucklidge Avenue. The owners have appealed against the Notice and the appeal is due to be heard on 31<sup>st</sup> October. The owners are now in discussion with RSL housing association with regards to selling the site for housing. The Council will consider a Compulsory Purchase Order to bring the site back into beneficial use should discussions between the owners and RSL breakdown.