

## **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, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2007 at 7.15 pm**

### **PRESENT:**

**The Worshipful the Mayor**  
Councillor H B Patel

**The Deputy Mayor**  
Councillor Fox

### **COUNCILLORS:**

Allie	Jones
Anwar	Joseph
Arnold	Kansagra
Mrs Bacchus	Leaman
Bessong	J Long
Beswick	Lorber
Blackman	Malik
D Brown	Matthews
V Brown	Mendoza
Butt	Mistry
Castle	J Moher
Chavda	R Moher
Clues	Moloney
Colwill	Motley
Corcoran	O'Sullivan
Coughlin	Pagnamenta
Crane	CJ Patel
Cummins	H M Patel
Dunn	Powney
Dunwell	Shah
Farrell	Steel
Mrs U Fernandes	Tancred
Gupta	Thomas
Hashmi	Van Colle
Hirani	Van Kawala
Jackson	Wharton
John	

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ahmed, Baker, Detre, Singh and Sneddon.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting of full Council held on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2007 be confirmed as a true and accurate record subject to the following amendments:

Councillor HM Patel's declaration of interest to show that he worked in a post office;

Councillor HB Patel be substituted by Councillor HM Patel as one of the members voting for the motion by Councillor Kansagra on site 117-Roe Green Park;

The voting on Councillor R Moher's motion as amended by Councillor Blackman to be recorded as follows:

FOR:	The Mayor, The Deputy Mayor, Allie, Arnold, Ahmed, Anwar, Mrs Bacchus, Baker, Bessong, Beswick, Blackman, Butt, D Brown, V Brown, Clues, Colwill, Coughlin Corcoran, Cummins, Detre, Dunn, Eniola, Farrell, Gupta, Hashmi, Hirani, Jackson, John, Jones, Joseph, J Long, Kansagra, Lorber, Malik, Matthews, Mendoza, J Moher, R Moher, Moloney, Motley, O'Sullivan, Pagnamenta, CJ Patel, H M Patel, Powney, Shah, Ms C Shaw, Singh, Sneddon, Steel, Thomas, Tullett, Van Colle, Van Kalwala and Wharton.	(55)
AGAINST:	None.	(0)
ABSTENTIONS:	Dunwell and Mistry.	(2)

The voting on Councillor Van Colle's motion on site 57 – Sainsbury superstore to be recorded as follows:

FOR:	The Mayor and Councillors Allie, Anwar, Baker, Bessong, Blackman, V Brown, Clues, Corcoran, Colwill, Cummins, Detre, Dunn, Dunwell, Gupta, Hashmi, Hirani, Jackson, Kansagra, Joseph, Malik, Mendoza, Mistry, Lorber, Matthews, Motley, O'Sullivan, Pagnamenta, CJ Patel, HM Patel,
------	---

	Shah, Ms C Shaw, Sneddon, Tullett Van Colle and Wharton.
AGAINST:	The Deputy Mayor, Arnold, Ahmed, Mrs Bacchus, Beswick, Butt, Coughlin, Eniola, Farrell, John, Jones, Long, J Moher, R Moher, Moloney, Powney, Singh, Steel, Thomas, Van Kalwala.
ABSTENTIONS:	D Brown, Dunwell.

### 3. **Declarations of Interests**

Councillor Wharton declared a personal interest in the item raised by Councillor Dunn under *Non Executive Member Items* by virtue of his membership of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

### 4. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor reported with sadness that Joan Hooper had passed away on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007 at Hillingdon Hospital. He stated that Joan was well known to members in all political groups, to scores of Council officers and to many partner organisations, especially in the voluntary and community sector, for her untiring efforts on behalf of children and young people in the borough. Joan had been the Council's Principal Youth Officer for more than 20 years and continued to be very active in many local groups after her retirement, including BrAVA (where she was the founding chair of the organisation) and the Scout movement.

The Mayor announced that the Brent Pension Fund had won the 2007 Local Government Chronicle Finance Award for Best Performance in UK equities over the 3 years to 30th September 2007. UK equities were mainly managed on an index tracking basis by an in house team, with additional returns generated by the Council's UK Small Companies manager, Gartmore.

The Mayor announced that Alperton Cemetery had won "Cemetery of the Year Award" for cemeteries up to 12 acres. There were 55 entries from across the UK and Brent's success at coming out top was a credit to the Council and the dedicated staff in the Cemeteries Service.

The Mayor stated that it had been his pleasure to welcome Their Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall to the Swaminarayan Temple on 9<sup>th</sup> November to celebrate Diwali.

The Mayor reported that the Borough's Diwali celebrations had been extremely successful this year and he thanked everyone involved in making it such a memorable occasion for those who attended. This year had seen record attendances with

thousands of residents joining in the celebrations. Additionally, the Mayor stated that he had delivered a special Diwali dinner to meals on wheels service users, which had been a very pleasurable experience.

The Mayor reminded Members that his Charity Christmas Party was taking place on 8<sup>th</sup> December in the Paul Daisley Hall and he hoped to see as many people as possible supporting his charities.

The Mayor drew Members' attention to the schedule circulated as usual showing progress of those petitions received in accordance with Standing Order 68.

## 5. **Procedural motions**

Councillor Leaman moved a procedural motion circulated in his name seeking to vary the order of business listed on the Summons and arrange how the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading Debate should be conducted.

Councillor Beswick moved a procedural motion also seeking to vary the order of business listed on the Summons and arrange how the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading Debate should be conducted.

The motion submitted by Councillor Leaman was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

The motion submitted by Councillor Beswick therefore fell.

RESOLVED:

that in respect of Summons item 11, 1<sup>st</sup> Reading Debate – 2008/9 to 20011/12 Budget:

- (i) the item be brought forward for debate immediately after the conclusion of the items included under the heading '*Business deferred from last meeting*', and
- (ii) the time allowed for the 1<sup>st</sup> reading debate be extended to up to 60 minutes, leaving it to the Mayor to exercise his discretion to extend the time further if he considers it necessary, with the three Group Leaders being given up to ten minutes each to speak on the item, and other members speaking for up to 3 minutes each in accordance with the normal rules of debate.

(At this point in the meeting Councillor John voiced her objection to the passing of the above procedural motion and all the Labour Members present, with the exception of the Deputy Mayor, left the Chamber).

## 6. **Business deferred from last meeting**

- (a) Motion selected by the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group – *Protecting our Post Offices*

Councillor Lorber moved his motion by stating that there needed to be a continued campaign waged to protect the existing Post Offices within Brent from closure.

With the agreement of the Members present, the motion submitted by Councillor Lorber was put straight to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that this Council regrets the loss of services to Brent residents as a result of the Labour Government's Post Office closure programme. 4,000 Post Offices have already closed under Labour and at least 2,500 more closures are planned in the next year. In Brent, the Labour Government have closed 10 Post Offices in recent years, in areas such as Tokyngton, Willesden, Mapesbury, Dollis Hill, Preston and Alperton. Under Labour's latest plans, another five Post Offices in Brent may close;
- (ii) that this Council reaffirms its belief that Post Offices serve a vital role in our communities and are key to providing access to services, including financial services, particularly for those without easy mobility;
- (iii) that this Council has seen too many local facilities close and calls on the Executive and any overview and scrutiny task group to forcefully make the case against **any** further Post Office closures in Brent;
- (iv) that the Council condemns the fact Post Office Ltd are already considering which branches to close in Brent but will not announce these until April 2008. That Post Office bosses be called upon to come clean on their plans, and the Labour Government be called on to keep their hands off Brent's remaining Post Office branches.

- (b) Motion selected by the Leader of the Conservative Group – *Politics in the Capital*

Councillor Blackman moved his motion by outlining what he regarded as the poor record of the Mayor of London on planning and housing issues and the failure of the congestion charge to reduce the levels of traffic within the zone. Whilst recognising the positive impact of the investment into the transport system, he also stated that the Mayor had failed to reduce the level of crime within London.

With the agreement of the Members present, the motion submitted by Councillor Blackman was put straight to the vote and declared LOST.

## **7. 1st Reading Debate – 2008- 09 to 2011-12 Budget**

The Leader, Councillor Lorber introduced the reports of the Executive and Director of Finance and Corporate Resources. The report of the Executive set out the Administration's top priorities for action and spending, and reflected on the achievements over the past year. The report from the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the best information available to the Council at the present time on the Budget position. The Comprehensive Spending Review set out the funding that local government could expect over the next three years. For 2008/09 the expected national increase in funding for local authorities was 3.8% which translated into an increase of 1% in real terms over the assumed inflation rate of 2.75%; the increases for 2009/10 and 2010/11 were 2.8% and 2.6% respectively. The Council would be clearer about its funding once the provisional local government finance settlement was announced in late November or early December. There was also expected to be significant changes in the treatment of specific grants which were expected to be announced as part of the settlement. In addition, there still remained uncertainty about PCT costs transferring to the Council. Councillor Lorber moved that the outcome of the 1<sup>st</sup> reading be referred to the Budget Panel and stated that the Administration was determined to deliver on its priorities. He outlined the progress made in achieving cleaner streets, favouring smaller cars, improving schooling, listening to residents over their concerns regarding safety and security, increasing recycling, investing in the library service, transforming the provision of social services, increasing the opportunities for physical exercise, getting 1300 people into employment through Brent in2work and realising £2M a year in efficiency gains above the Government target. Councillor Lorber then focussed on the four priority areas for the Administration. A continued effort would be made to tackle crime. Further regeneration of the borough would take place, with particular reference to the North Circular Road and the severe health issues facing people who lived in its vicinity. Attention would be given to the needs of youth and young people with specific reference to crime and young people being a victim of crime particularly on the way to and from school. There would also be action on tackling environmental issues and increasing sustainability. He finished by saying that it was the Administration's ambition to deliver on its priorities despite the poor financial settlement from the Government.

Councillor Blackman stated that this was the opportunity for members to give their opinions on what they saw as the priorities for inclusion in the budget but he gave a word of warning that, despite the Council last year agreeing a balanced budget, it soon faced mounting pressures on it as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the Director of Finance and Corporate

Resource's report. He felt that the anticipated grant settlement was an outrage which would mean the Council facing the choice of either increasing Council Tax or cutting services. The Council had previously undertaken not to increase the Council Tax only for the PCT to pass on costs to the Council and now the Council was faced with having to find £9.4M in savings if there was not to be an increase in the Council Tax. He urged members to consider the Council's financial position when contributing to the debate. Councillor Blackman stated his intention to ensure a balanced budget was agreed with as low a level of increase in the Council Tax as possible and a resolution of the PCT position.

Having earlier left the Chamber there was no contribution from the Leader of the Labour Group.

Other members of the Executive added their views on the achievements of the Administration over the last year and outlined their portfolio priorities for the next year and beyond. In addition, Councillor Colwill outlined the efforts he was making to provide a borough wide increase in facilities for young people, especially those newly arrived in the borough and asked for support on this. He also asked that consideration be given to providing £58,000 for the provision of a playground in Woodcock Park for use by children with disabilities. Councillor Van Colle stated that it would be necessary to get people to recognise that being a good citizen would mean recycling as much as possible and that increasing recycling was a major a major challenge for the Council.

Councillor Joseph referred to the level of crime in Kensal Green and stated that many residents had said they would feel safer if there were more CCTV cameras in the area. She also felt the Council should provide more facilities for young people in partnership with other agencies. Councillor Joseph added that the Kensal Green area needed extra money spent on it and stated that there was a lot of broken paving and many roads in the area that needed resurfacing. Whilst acknowledging that the Council had a priority programme for resurfacing works she felt there needed to be an extra pot of money which could be used in an area that might be felt to missing out on the programme. She also asked for increased spending on drainage in the area to avoid a repeat of the floods and for more alleygating.

Councillor Kansagra felt that the youth in the Barnhill area had little to do and few places to play. He asked for the reinstatement of the tennis courts, provision of a multi use games area and football posts within Barn Hill playing fields. He felt this would have the effect of reducing the incidence of crime and child obesity.

Councillor Dunwell felt there was more opportunity for the Council to generate income by using the expertise within the Council's workforce more fully. He also referred to the loss of employment areas within the Borough despite substantial housing development bringing young

people in to the Borough. He referred to the threat to the units at Alpine House and felt investment in such buildings was needed.

Councillor Bessong referred to local services facing closure because of the PCT cuts despite them meeting the needs identified as priorities by the Government such as support to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies. He supported the calls for greater investment in services for young people.

Councillor Mistry stated that she wanted to see the Eaton Grove area in Queensbury turned into a safer area from the current position where young people tended to congregate in the area. She asked that the area of Queensbury be included in the programme for the regeneration of the borough's parks by investing in Eaton Grove Park.

Councillor Dunn felt there was an opportunity to save money by properly locating street signs and lampposts rather than at present when it was frequently necessary to get them relocated. He felt better management of the process was needed.

**RESOLVED:-**

that the reports from the Executive and the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources on the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading of the 2008/09 Budget be noted and that the views submitted by Members during the course of the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading Debate be referred to the Budget Panel for consideration.

#### **8. Review of Statement of Licensing Policy**

The report before Members outlined the proposed changes to the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003 following on from a review and consultation. The Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Committee had recommended that the action at number 19 in the table of responses be amended to read "expect and encourage" rather than "expect".

**RESOLVED:**

that the proposed changes to the Statement of Licensing Policy as presented in the report submitted and recommended by the Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Committee be adopted.

#### **9. 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. Those Members present who had put the questions were invited to ask their supplementary questions.



The following three questions had been selected by the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group.

#### *Population figures*

The question from Councillor Jackson had asked what difference it would make to the level of grant received by the Council if the calculation was based on a population figure that was regarded as closer to reality. Councillor Jackson referred to the answer he had received from the Lead Member and felt it was outrageous that the Council was being deprived of millions of pounds as a result of under-estimating the level of population in the borough. As a supplementary question he asked if it was the case that if the Council was properly funded to reflect its true population it would be possible to freeze the Council Tax and deliver notable improvements in services. He expressed the view that the dire funding situation was one reason why the Labour Opposition had failed to present an alternative budget the previous year.

Councillor Blackman stated that, along with Newham, Brent had the highest level of undercounting in London. He agreed that if the proper population figures were used it would be possible for the Council not to raise the Council Tax and to deliver on most of the requests made during the 1<sup>st</sup> reading debate. However the reality was that the Government could not get the figures right and this had a negative effect not only on the Council but on the other public services. He felt it was a disgrace that the Government did not recognise its responsibilities in this area.

#### *Terms of agreement between Wembley Stadium and Brent Council*

The question from Councillor Corcoran had asked for confirmation of what the terms were of the agreement entered into pursuant to the planning permission granted for Wembley Stadium and what progress had been made in securing some payback for the local community. In response to the answer he had received he expressed dismay that local residents would not benefit from a share of the 1% turnover of the stadium. This he felt showed how little the previous Administration had cared for local residents in the Wembley area. He asked as a supplementary question if the Lead Member would commit to doing better for local residents on similar strategic issues and fight for the best possible deal for residents around the stadium.

Councillor Van Colle agreed that it was a great shame that no agreement had been included that would benefit the local area and hoped that the Council would be able to learn from this.

### *Taylor report into Brent tPCT's finances*

The question from Councillor Leaman had asked when the Council expected publication of the Taylor report and what sort of issues the Lead Member expected the report would be looking into. He asked if the Lead Member agreed that the report would be vital in understanding how the Trust had got into such financial problems. As a supplementary question he asked if the Lead Member would agree that it was scandalous that Brent's health services were being decimated as a result of the Government top-slicing money from Brent when the NHS at the same time was reaching a £1.8 billion surplus.

Councillor Colwill agreed that it was a disgrace and the more information that came out the greater the understanding was of just what was occurring.

The following two questions had been selected by the Leader of the Conservative Group.

### *Wembley Stadium event day parking scheme*

The question from Councillor Mendoza had asked what arrangements were proposed to allow residents to be consulted on changes to the Wembley Stadium event day parking scheme and what proposals there were to increase the flexibility of the scheme. As a supplementary question he asked the Lead Member if he would ensure that local residents were put first.

Councillor D Brown referred to his written answer which explained that a full and proper review of the scheme would take place and he stated that he would welcome input into the review from Councillor Mendoza. He reassured the Council that he would listen to what local people had to say and take account of their views.

### *Backland development*

The question from Councillor Kansagra had asked what proposals there were to incorporate into Brent's Local Development Framework a proposal reportedly agreed by the Mayor of London for a presumption against building on back gardens and demolishing houses to make way for flats. As a supplementary question, Councillor Kansagra re-iterated his understanding that the Mayor of London had agreed such a presumption and asked that London Councils and London Assembly members be urged to agree this approach. He felt developments of this nature needed to be kept on a reasonable scale.

Councillor Van Colle replied that planning officers were not aware of the Mayor's change of view on this matter. However he urged that this be kept in the widest possible context. He reminded members that the Council was currently out on consultation on its LDF. He agreed that

backland development was undesirable unless it was very well designed. He felt it would be helpful if the Mayor remained a bit more consistent on planning policy.

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

### *(i) Town Hall lettings*

Councillor Dunn introduced the item he had raised which expressed concern at perceived shortfalls in policy and procedure for the letting of Council venues. He added that there did not appear to be clear guidelines on accepting or declining bookings for Council accommodation and questioned whether the Council would accept a booking from any person or organisation. On the particular case he had raised regarding the use of Brent Town Hall for an Israel property exhibition he stated that in the information handed out by the organisers no mention was made that some properties were in Palestinian occupied territory. Whilst it was not illegal to offer for sale property in this way, Councillor Dunn asked whether it was ethical.

A view was put that officers could not have known what was in the exhibition, especially as advertisements for it did not make this clear. This would have meant that detailed questions would have to be asked of the organisers before the let was granted. Councillor Wharton stated that Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank were a breach of international law and he felt it was important that the Council took a lead in promoting an ethical lettings policy.

Councillor Blackman (Lead Member for Corporate Resources) responded by expressing hope that the current Middle East peace talks would be successful. He stated that the Council did have a policy on the hire of its accommodation and any hirer had to provide a full list of particulars. In return a full list of terms and conditions had to be adhered to. The organisation running the Israel Property exhibition had previously hired the Town Hall for similar events. No complaints had previously been made about the hire. Councillor Blackman stated that whilst he would agree to a debate on an ethical lettings policy it had to be borne in mind that people had different views on what they considered to be ethical. His view was that any organisation that accepted the Council's terms and conditions should be permitted Council lets in the future but if it was so desired the Executive would discuss it further.

(Councillor Wharton declared a personal interest in the above item by virtue of his membership of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign).

### *(ii) Street sweeping*

Councillor Tancred introduced the item she had raised asking that the Executive report regularly on how satisfied local people were with the

level of street sweeping. She explained that during Ramadam she had received many representations from people saying no provision had been made for the high number of people attending the mosque and creating litter despite this being an annual event. This had been resolved in discussions with the local Streetcare officer who had been very helpful but she felt it should not have been a problem in the first place.

Councillor D Brown (Lead Member for Transport and Highways) responded by saying he was pleased to hear that residents were delighted with the decision to invest in new street sweeping arrangements. He pointed out that 20 tons of leaves had been cleared from the streets of Brent for recycling.

*(iii) Reporting of housing repairs*

Councillor Gupta introduced the item he had raised concerning the performance of some Housing Associations and asking for the Executive to monitor them more closely. He urged that Housing Associations be made more accountable with one suggestion being an on-line feedback facility for tenants to report on levels of service they had received. He referred to a particular case that highlighted the poor service some tenants received and urged the Executive to encourage Housing Associations to provide opportunities to feedback.

Councillor Allie (Lead Member for Housing and Customer Services) acknowledged the case referred to by Councillor Gupta and another case raised by Councillor Jackson and these had been investigated. He explained that the Council had joint commissioning arrangements with eleven housing associations within which a set of performance indicators had been agreed. Unfortunately sometimes things went wrong in the level of service provided. He suggested that further investigation of this matter might be more usefully carried out by Overview and Scrutiny which, he suggested, could receive regular reports on this issue.

RESOLVED:

that the responses provided by the lead members be accepted and that Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked to look further into the performance of the Housing Associations with which the Council works.

**11. Report from the Executive**

*(i) Harlesden Library*

The Leader reported on the funding allocated for improving Harlesden Library.

### *Willesden Sports Centre*

The Leader congratulated the staff at Willesden Sports Centre on the levels of attendance at the centre.

#### *(ii) Complaints and the Ombudsman*

The Leader reported with concern that the level of complaints about the Council made to the Local Government Ombudsman were on the increase. He stressed the importance of complaints being dealt with quickly and stated that this was a whole Council issue that needed to be addressed.

#### *(iii) Post Offices*

The Leader reported briefly on the local campaign to prevent further post office closures in the borough.

#### *(iv) Local Health Service cuts*

The Leader expressed his great concern over cuts being made to local health service provision at a time when the National Health Service was achieving a financial surplus.

#### *(v) Fair Funding for schools*

The Leader reported that the local government settlement had brought some good news with the recognition that in the past the Council had received below average funding for its schools and had now received an extra £4m.

#### *(vi) Bus services to local hospitals*

The Leader stated that given both hospitals within the borough were at the borough boundary any debate on reconfiguring health service provision would need to take into account and review the bus services to them.

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

In the absence of the Chair there was no report.

## **13. Cyclone in Bangladesh**

Councillor Blackman referred to the circulation earlier in the meeting of a motion in the name of Councillor Beswick calling for the Council to support fund raising activities for the victims of the cyclone in Bangladesh. He moved that the motion as circulated should be amended to ask the Executive to consider the financial implications of such support.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that this Council notes with sadness the devastating cyclone in Bangladesh, which has claimed thousands of lives;
- (ii) that this Council would encourage fund raising across the borough for the victims of the cyclone. The Executive is asked to consider the costs involved in the Council providing free facilities for any fund raising events being organised by recognised charities and relief organisations and how the Council can best assist such events.

The meeting ended at 9:20pm

HB PATEL  
Mayor