

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT
COUNCIL MEETING 8th SEPTEMBER 2008
MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME

1. IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR POWNEY:

In April 2007, Cllr D Brown conceded the previous year showed “a net reduction in tree stock” of the Borough. What are the figures for proposed planting of street trees for each year between 2007 and 2010 and does this represent a net gain or a loss across the Borough?

Response received from the Lead Member for Highways and Transportation:

The increase in the number of street trees is directly related to the budget allocated for planting new trees.

The Council has £50,000 revenue budget funding each year for its Phased Removal and Replacement Programme. Using an average cost of £250 per tree (including footway reinstatements and tree pits), this funds approximately 200 trees.

This Administration has also allocated £50,000 capital funding for each year from 2007/8 to 2010/11 and this, on average will fund a further 200 trees, making 400 new trees planted per annum.

This is offset by around 150 trees per annum that have to be removed due to being dead, dying or dangerous and around 50 trees that are removed as part of the Phased Removal and Replacement Programme.

However, added to this are new trees planted through other funding streams such as Section 106, TfL, and some Transportation capital schemes. In the coming years, Brent will also as a result of our programme be well placed to benefit from the GLA Mayor's commitment to fund the planting of hundreds of new trees across London.

From these various funding streams, there was a net increase in 2007-08 of 420 new trees.

Tree planting is just one more area where our administration is turning around the legacy of neglect under Labour, and delivering on our promise to make Brent cleaner, greener and safer.

2. IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR LONG:

Does the Administration support the proposed light railway system that would run on the existing railway line that runs through Brent Cross and would provide an orbital transport line for many parts of Brent?

Response received from the Lead Member for Highways and Transportation:

The Council will, in principle, support the provision of public transport services to reduce the effects of the private car. In particular, the Council has recognised and lobbied for improvement of orbital routes to supplement the good radial routes into London. The proposal for a passenger service linking parts of Brent to Brent Cross and Park Royal has been proposed by an independent campaign group. At the present time it is not clear that there is a business case for the proposal, or that there is the availability of track possession from freight movement.

The Council is currently promoting the introduction of a Fastbus service between Wembley and Park Royal, two of its major regeneration areas. This would not prevent the subsequent consideration of the orbital passenger railway.

3. IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR FARRELL:

What action is the administration proposing to take to deal with the unsightly display of weeds which disfigure the street scene in Welsh Harp ward and elsewhere in the borough?

Response received from the Lead Member for Highways and Transportation:

Just as the Labour administration found in 2005, residents have faced a warm, mild but wet summer period which has naturally encouraged the growth of weeds.

At our request however, Veolia are now deploying weed spraying teams (when weather permits) this year. An additional ten staff have also been deployed to deal specifically with weeds.

4. IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR BUTT:

How many miles of carriageway are scheduled for resurfacing in 2008/09 under the borough roads programme and what is the breakdown by ward?

Response received from the Lead Member for Highways and Transportation:

The report approved by Executive on 18th March 2008 titled 'Environment & Culture Capital Spend 2008/9: Highways Major Works Programme' details the methodology used for determining the borough roads resurfacing programme, lists of streets are included in appendices 2 & 4. Appendix 6A is a map identifying scheme locations.

The findings of an independent condition survey are used to determine which carriageways are recommended for inclusion. In previous years the roads which are included in the survey are chosen as a result of referrals from the following sources:

- a) Engineering staff (undertaking responsive and routine safety inspections)
- b) Councillors (including nominations via annual questionnaire)
- c) Residents / users of the Brent network (where supported by engineering staff)
- d) Senior highways engineer dealing with accident claims

In 2006, to ascertain the overall condition of the highway network a 100% survey was carried out. In 2007 another condition survey was commissioned based on recommendations from the above sources. The results of the last condition survey and the upper tier of streets identified in the 100% survey carried out in 2006, but not included in our 2007/8 programme were used to determine our 2008/9 programme.

Each carriageway surveyed is given a defectiveness rating score, which reflects the incidence of defects noted during the survey. In consideration of the results of the last survey and the 100% survey the previous year, senior engineering officers then carried out a final survey of the roads within the top tier of the defectiveness rating lists to determine the most cost effective and sustainable engineering solutions. Streets are then prioritised for inclusion in our major works programme. Reserve schemes are completed if sufficient funding remains once schemes of a higher priority have been completed.

This process allows us to target the streets in most need throughout the borough and maximise the improvement to the condition of the network with the funding available, and therefore also our BVPI scores.

The capital funded borough road resurfacing programme consists of;

- Non-principal classified (B&C) roads
- Unclassified (borough) roads
- Unclassified concrete roads
- Background

The tables below list the roads that have been included in our 2008/9 programme providing a length in kilometres and identifying the ward. A number of reserve schemes that are likely to be carried out have also been included.

CARRIAGEWAY SURFACING BOROUGH ROADS PROGRAMME 2008/09		
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	<u>Ward</u>	<u>Kms</u>
Rossdale Drive, Wembley	BAR	0.19
Tylers Gate, Kenton	BAR	0.21
West Hill	BAR	0.39
Windsor Road, NW2	WGN	0.19
Astley Avenue, NW2	MAP	0.07
Beverly Drive	QBY	1.25
Langdon Drive, Wembley	BAR	0.19

Meadow Way NW9	FRY	0.19
Sudbury Croft, Wembley	NPK	0.1
Lushington Road, NW10	KGN	0.21
Sunnydene Gardens, Wembley	ALP	0.1
Tracey Avenue, NW2	MAP	0.11
Brookside Close, Kenton	KEN	0.1
Page Close, Wembley	BAR	0.08
Sunningdale Gardens, NW9	FRY	0.09
Chadwick Road	HAR	1.1
Morland Gardens	STN	0.15
Linden Ave (Dagmar – Station Terrace)	QPK	0.2
Sandy Lane	KEN	0.21
Newlands Court (Barn Rise – Corringham)	BAR	0.22
Queensbury Road	ALP	0.81
Old Church Lane	WHP	0.53
Oakington Avenue	PRE	0.54
Paddock Road	DOL	0.36
Tiverton Road	QPK	0.25
Fairway Avenue	NPK	0.2
Princes Avenue (126 – School)	QBY	0.1
Preston Road (Woodcock – The Avenue)	PRE	0.45
Alder Grove	DOL	0.35
Claremont Road	QPK	0.25
Barn Hill	BAR	0.4

Reserves: Should funding be available on completion of main programme.

Crummock Gardens	FRY	0.2
Preston Road (East Ln – Carlton Ave E)	PRE	0.28
Maybury Gardens	WLG	0.1
Regal Way (45 – Preston Hill)	PRE	0.18
Brampton Grove	PRE	0.2

TOTAL		10.55
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SURFACING NON –PRINCIPAL CLASSIFIED (B&C) ROADS 2008/09

	<u>Ward</u>	<u>Kms</u>
Alperton Lane (Marsh Rd – Ealing Rd)	ALP	0.38
Crest Road (Alder Gr – Brook Rd)	DOL	0.48
Crest Road (Brook Rd – Tanfield Ave)	DOL	0.48
Carlton Vale (Cambridge Rd – Kilburn Park Rd)	KIL	0.18
Wembley Hill Road (Park Ln – East Ln)	WEM	0.58
Wembley Hill Road (Park Ln – Empire Way)	WEM	0.59

Drury Way (Tesco roundabout – Laxcon Way)	STN	0.21
TOTAL		2.9

CARRIAGEWAY SURFACING OF CONCRETE ROADS 2008/09
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	<u>Ward</u>	<u>Kms</u>
Windermere Avenue (Carlton Ave East – Ennerdale Drive)	PRE	0.74
Stapenhill Road	SUD	0.2
Rydal Gardens	QBY	0.34
Talbot Road	WEM	0.24
TOTAL		1.52

5. IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR BESWICK:

Can the Lead Member please give figures on the number of street drains cleared in 2006, 2007 and 2008, and also explain what arrangements are in place for monitoring and maintaining street drains?

Response received from the Lead Member for Highways and Transportation:

The number of road gullies cleaned by the Council's Highways Operations Service over the period concerned shows:

Jan – Dec 2006	-	11,263
Jan – Dec 2007	-	14,906
Jan – Aug 2008 (8 mths)	-	8,993

Gullies are cleaned on a scheduled basis, with an aim of cleaning each one twice per annum. Some are unable to be cleaned due to parked vehicles and other obstructions, and the cost of traffic management can be prohibitive. There are around 18,000 gullies in all.

In between scheduled visits, problems are sometimes identified by residents or other Council staff (e.g. StreetCare Ward Officers) and ad-hoc cleansing can then be arranged.

6. IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR BESSONG:

Can the Council Leader advise what the Council will be doing to recognise the outstanding achievement of James DeGale, Harlesden resident and Olympic Gold medallist? Also, what is the Council doing to encourage more Brent residents to get involved in sport and leisure in the run-up to London 2012?

Response received from the Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture:

I am absolutely delighted on behalf of Brent Council that someone from Brent won a gold medal at the Beijing Games; we are very proud of James's achievement. It is a clear example of what can be achieved with hard work and determination and he is an inspiration to all young people living in the borough. To celebrate his 'Olympic Gold' we are arranging a reception with the Mayor at which we will pass on our congratulations. We are also hoping he will be available to take part in the Culture8 event which we are organising at Wembley Arena at the end of the month as part of the launch of the Cultural Olympiad. This is a joint west London event which will showcase the best of this summer's festivals from around London. There will also be a chance for people to take part in Olympic sports and we are hoping that James will be present to meet and inspire local people.

Earlier this year we launched a Brent 2012 Action Plan which outlines all the areas in which we intend to ensure that local people benefit from the Games in 2012. This includes a range of sports events and activities to inspire people of all ages to be more active. We have consulted with local people, including young people, on what would make them be more active and we have built the findings into these plans. Examples of what we have done so far include:

Over the past two weeks we have worked with local sports clubs to offer free taster sessions in a range of sports, including Olympic sports. Over twenty clubs have worked with us on this project offering a wide choice of sports ranging from athletics and football to hockey and Tai Kwon Do.

During this summer our school holiday sports programme was bigger and better than ever before using Olympic and paralympic sports as a way to encourage young people to take part. Nearly all the activities were full and we will look to repeat this in future holidays. In addition, we held an event for young people at Willesden Sports Centre (called 'Countdown to 2012') where international sports people coached them in Olympic sports. We have promised to repeat this every year to allow young people to tell us what inspires them about the Olympics coming to London.

We have used the Olympics to further build up our hugely successful walks programme where this year we challenged people to 'walk to Beijing'. We have also secured funding to organise a family fun run which will be taking place in Fryent Country Park as part of Countryside day later this month. Training sessions are underway to help families and individuals get fit for the run.

Background Information

The Council is keen to help local people take part in sport and ultimately the 2012 Olympics. We have signposts to local clubs on our internet and are helping to train coaches. Clubs have links to their governing bodies to ensure local Olympic hopefuls can be identified and if needed supported by the Sports Aid Foundation.

Sport will also feature at the Culture8 event at Wembley arena which I have already mentioned. Local sports clubs will be present to provide demonstrations and opportunity to have a go.

These are just a few examples of the ways in which we have used the recent Olympics and Paralympics to encourage Brent residents to get more active. Working with a range of partners we shall continue to provide similar opportunities over the next four years leading up to London 2012 as a way of encouraging even more people to get active.

A 10 week programme of Olympic sports is being offered to young people in Brent from September in a bid to encourage more young people to take part in sports that they have not tried before. Sports offered include archery, basketball, fencing, judo and water sports.

A celebration of the Paralympic handover event is being held at many Brent schools and at Willesden sports centre on 17th September offering taster sessions to disabled people in a number of sports and linking up with Brent's day centres and Brent MIND.

Brent and West London has developed an on-line virtual marathon route to celebrate the 1908 and 1948 Olympic marathons that followed routes within West London. Runners, cyclists, walkers, swimmers in fact anyone who is doing a physical activity and can measure the distance they have travelled can input this information onto the website and watch as over time they complete the marathon route which highlights sites of interest and local events and festival that are taking place along the route of the virtual marathon.

It's a bit too soon after the holidays to get numbers that attended the summer holiday programme and sports club fortnight.

7. IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR JACKSON:

Could the Lead Member for Housing please outline the effect on residents and tenants of recent changes in the Housing Benefit rules in respect of backdating benefits. What other benefits are similarly affected by these changes, and how? How many Brent people or households claim each of these benefits?

Response received from the Lead Member for Resources:

Changes to the Housing Benefit Regulations regarding backdating were consulted upon with Local Authority representatives and other stakeholders earlier in the year. The intention of the proposals was to bring Housing Benefit into line with other state benefits e.g. Pension Credit and Jobseeker's Allowance and reduce the maximum period allowed for backdating to 3 months from the date of request from the current 12 months. These arrangements have been in place for other state benefits for a number of years. The proposed changes did not affect any other benefits.

However, following the consultation, the proposed changes have not been included, as was originally timetabled, with other changes which will take effect from October 2008. It may be that the proposed changes are still implemented, although that would appear unlikely to be the case at this late stage.

During 2007/8, we awarded £1.4 million in backdated Housing and Council Tax Benefit. If the changes were implemented as proposed, we would expect the amount of backdated benefit to be reduced but the number of awards to remain at a similar number.

The majority of backdated awards are currently made for less than 3 months and therefore the impact of the proposed changes would not be as significant as might first be assumed. A detailed analysis regarding the number of awards made and their duration will be undertaken by the Benefits Service.

Housing and Council Tax Benefit is currently claimed by 34,374 households in Brent. Benefits expenditure in 2007/8 was over £228 million.

8. IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR GREEN:

Throughout the Notting Hill Carnival, Brent allocated 9 public conveniences, and sufficient Council officers to rigorously enforce against illegal street trading in the Kensal Triangle area, a traditional exit route for revellers. Key roads also had extensive cleansing measures applied. Can residents in this area expect the same next year?

Response received from the Lead Member for Highways and Transportation:

This year, under our Administration, public convenience provision was indeed increased in this area, and I am pleased to be able to say that this will be repeated in future years.

With regards to enforcement against illegal street trading and the cleansing regime, these are also expected to be deployed in future years.

Where Labour constantly ignored the wishes of residents in the Queens Park and Kensal Rise areas, it is once again the Liberal Democrat led Council that is working to protect their interests, respond to their concerns and take effective action.

9. IN THE NAME OF CLLR H B PATEL:

From the beginning of this year until now, how many parking tickets have been issued on event days and how many have been paid within the time limit? Can the Lead Member please provide an analysis of these on a zone by zone basis?

Response received from the Lead Member for Highways and Transportation:

Since the start of the year, 3,582 penalty charge notices (PCN) have been issued on Event Days across the Borough. 301 of these were issued for parking offences on main roads around the Stadium and a further 57 in the Event Day Zone itself.

It is not possible to say how many Event Day PCNs were paid 'within time' as each one would have to be analysed separately.

However, for the time period concerned and for the total number of PCNs issues on any day, the provisional payment rate within the discount period was 48% and the overall provisional payment rate was 58.9%.

Overall payment rates are currently around 61% and this compares favourably with most London Boroughs.

10. IN THE NAME OF CLLR MRS FERNANDES:

Please can the Lead Member clarify why the Executive was not informed about the potential for an alternative sponsor for the unpopular Academy on Wembley Park Playing Fields and if the original application for a City Academy was ever withdrawn?

Response received from the Lead Member for Children and Families:

The withdrawal or amendment of the original Expression of Interest would have required a decision of the Executive. The Executive did not withdraw the original Expression of Interest. The Executive approved the modification of the Expression of Interest to include ARK as sponsor and incorporate the limited changes that were consequent on that.

Brent has always been in a race against time to provide sufficient school places. The Church of England proposal would have involved fundamental changes to the Expression of Interest to reflect the school becoming denominational in character. This would have involved extra time and uncertainty. The proposal was therefore never a serious alternative.

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