



## SUMMONS ITEM 7

### LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

COUNCIL MEETING – 23 NOVEMBER 2009

#### MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME

**1) Question in the name of Councillor Butt, as follows:**

How many agency/ temporary staff/ consultants are paid in the following bands:

- 1 up to £250 per day
- 2 £251 to £500 per day
- 3 £501 to 750 per day
- 4 £751 to £1000 per day
- 5 Over £1000 per day

How many of them are former Brent Council employees?

**Response from Lead Member for Human Resources, Diversity and Local Democracy and Consultation**

*Answer to follow*

**2) Question in the name of Councillor Powney, as follows:**

How much has Brent council spent in total on communications in each year since 2005/06 and how many communications staff have been employed in each year since 2005/06?

**Response from the Leader of the Council**

Brent council spent in total on communications in each year since 2005/06:

	Expenditure	Salaries	
2005/06	£162,979	£299,469	
2006/07	£65,696	£358,565	Expenditure includes 21K recruitment costs, 43K agency cover
2007/08	£95,570	£408,222	
2008/09	£126,657	£372,703	Expenditure includes 62K

The difference in figures is due to the Council's requirement to pay members of staff when on maternity leave, as well as paying the people covering for them. The costs of maternity cover were approximately:

2006/07      £72,400  
2007/08      £117,500  
2008/09      £75,900

Number of communications staff employed in each year since 2005/06:

	No. of staff	Vacancies	Maternity Leave
2005/06	12	2	0
2006/07	10	2	1.5
2007/08	10	0	2.5
2008/09	10	0	1.5

In addition the council has saved more than £300k on producing publications since the administration was formed. This has been achieved through reducing some of the council's publications and making some efficiency savings on others.

**3) Question in the name of Councillor Arnold, as follows:**

Following the resignation of the Head Teacher at Copland School and the dismissal of the Deputy Head Teacher at that school, what action is the Council taking to tackle illegal bonuses in schools given that the Council has recently made its schools' Finance and Audit staff redundant?

**Response from Lead Member for Children and Families**

The answer to this question has already been given in a debate at a previous Council meeting.

Following the allegations of misconduct at Copland all schools were asked to report on any bonuses paid and the responses were checked with payroll records. No school reported paying irregular bonuses. Community schools are audited by the Council's Internal Audit function. In future Foundation schools will also be audited by Internal Audit, regardless of whether they have other auditors.

There have been some redundancies in C&F Finance but this has been possible because C&F have standardised systems and has no bearing on the checks and balances undertaken by the Council's finance teams. Audits of schools are not carried out by C&F finance.

**4) Question in the name of Councillor Beswick, MBE, as follows:**

Given the substantial number of Brent residents currently serving in the armed services and the massive contribution of Brent residents in two world wars and subsequent conflicts why did Brent Council fail to commemorate Armed Forces Day 2009 and what are the plans to commemorate it in future years?

## **Response from the Leader of the Council**

Thank you for your question. Brent Council commemorated the first UK Armed Forces Day in June 2009, by flying one of the specially made 'Armed Forces Day' flags outside the Town Hall, as requested by the Armed Forces Day campaign. Brent Council also organises an annual borough Remembrance Service at Barham Park where members of the public, elected representatives and members of the armed forces can pay their respects to the many brave Armed Forces personnel who have tragically lost their lives or been injured in service of this country. Members of the Council also attend other services in the area, including services in Queens Park and Kilburn, as well as the AJAX service at the Kanton Synagogue. I would be happy to meet with the elected Member though to hear his thoughts on future commemorations.

### **5) Question in the name of Councillor Jones, as follows:**

On 1st April 2010, local government will take over responsibility for commissioning 16-19 education and training from the Learning and Skills Council. How has Brent prepared for this new responsibility and how will it be delivered?

## **Response from the Lead Member for Children and Families**

The Children and Families Department established the 16-19 Funding and Commissioning Steering Group in March 2009 to oversee the transfer of responsibilities from the LSC and to plan Brent's commissioning of 16-19 education provision. The Assistant Director for Strategy and Partnerships is leading this work and chairs the group which includes the Assistant Director for Achievement and Inclusion. The delivery will be through Joint Strategy and Commissioning and managed by the Strategic Co-ordinator for 14-19 Education and Training. The LA will be funded for five posts from April including a Contracts Support Officer who will be transferring from the LSC. The Steering Group has representation from Connexions; Planning, Information and Performance; Corporate Finance; Human Resources; Regeneration; Joint Strategy and Commissioning; 14-19.

The Council will be responsible for commissioning provision that starts from September 2011. The Steering Group has collected data on the current provision within Brent and the provision for Brent residents in other boroughs. It has analysed this data to identify trends that will inform commissioning. The commissioning planning includes provision that meets the LA's statutory obligations to:

- Provide all 16-18 year olds with access to the 14-19 qualifications suite of: Foundation Learning; Functional Skills; GCSEs and A Levels; Diplomas; Apprenticeships.
- Engage all 17 year olds in education or training by 2013 and all 18 year olds by 2015.

The LA will commission provision from school sixth forms, academies, the College of North West London, and independent and third sector providers. However, the contracting, funding and monitoring of academies will be the responsibility of the

national Young People's Learning Agency, and apprenticeship placements will be commissioned by the national Skills Funding Agency.

The LA will be responsible for monitoring the success of all provision commissioned by the LSC that finishes after April 2010. Officers are planning to use the national Framework for Excellence. This framework includes: the success rates of all course programmes ie the proportion of young people starting courses that achieve the qualifications; learner destinations; Ofsted grades; learner views; resource efficiency; financial health. All education and training providers have been informed about the framework through Brent's 14-19 Partnership. The College of North West London is part of the national pilot and the 14-19 co-ordinator is conducting a local pilot with a school sixth form. Officers have analysed outcomes data for individual providers to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Where concerns have been identified, the LA's School Improvement Partners and 14-19 co-ordinator are meeting with headteachers to explore the issues and to develop sixth form improvement plans.

Brent is a member of two inter-borough commissioning groups. Membership is based upon travel to learn patterns. The groups are with:

- Barnet and Harrow (and may include Hertfordshire)
- Hammersmith and Fulham, Camden, Kensington and Chelsea, Ealing and Westminster

Officers will use these groups to monitor the quality of outcomes for Brent residents studying at out of borough provision and to challenge where outcomes are unsatisfactory. The LAs' officers will work together to ensure provision meets the needs of local young people. This could involve joint commissioning.

Brent officers are actively participating in all shadow London Regional Planning Group's activities. To date the work has been on: establishing regional protocols; the staff transfer; sharing progress planning for the transfer; agreeing timeframes.

**6) Question in the name of Councillor Dunn, as follows:**

Could the Lead Member for Transportation please provide an update on the success of the Kingsbury Road safety scheme.

**Response from Lead Member for Highways and Transportation**

An update report of the Kingsbury Road Local Safety Scheme is being presented to Highways Committee 18th Nov 2009.

The following summary of the update report indicates the success of the scheme in question.

*Monitoring of the scheme indicates that it has not had any noticeable impact on the volume or movement of traffic along this section of Kingsbury Road. The scheme has however significantly reduced vehicular speeds and enhanced pedestrian facilities. It is too early to confirm as this stage the final impact of the scheme ( 3 years standard monitoring period ) on the level of personal injury accidents ( PIAs ). However, we can report no PIA's have occurred since the introduction of the scheme. The situation will continue to be monitored. However, it is expected that*

*the achieved speed reduction will lead to an ongoing decrease in the level and severity of PIAs .*

I am happy to confirm that Brent's Liberal Democrat Councillors remain committed to making Brent cleaner, greener and safer. This scheme achieves those objectives.

**7) Question in the name of Councillor Tancred, as follows:**

One of the things Councils must be mindful of in their corporate parenting is the educational achievement attained by Looked After Children – where the challenges faced by children can sometimes affect their future chances. What measures has Brent taken to ensure our Looked After Children achieve to their best potential?

**Response from the Lead Member for Children and Families**

There is an education team with six staff which maintains liaison with the schools and colleges that Looked After Children attend and also maintains liaison with their carers.

Each pupil has a Personal Education Plan. The education team organises GCSE booster classes, homework clubs and out-of-school vocational activities. One-to-one tuition is provided where needed; this is provided from the personal educational allowance which is funded from the Care Matters Grant or from the extended schools grant.

At exam time the team checks with foster carers to make sure the pupils know when they have to attend for exams and help with transport if needed. Reward incentives were provided to young people based on their results and grades. Greatly improved placement stability has assisted with the improvement in educational results which have been achieved.

All looked after children have access to a computer to assist them with their studies.

There are targets for achievement of GCSE results by Looked After Children.

**First stretch target – 80% of cohort to achieve at least one GCSE A\*-G**

Brent results have been:

2007 – 14 achieved  
2008 – 23 achieved  
2009 – 30 achieved (75% of the cohort)

**Second stretch target – 31% of the cohort to achieve at least five GCSE A\* - G**

Brent results have been:

2007 – 9 achieved  
2008 – 15 achieved  
2009 – 22 achieved (55% of the cohort)

**National target -17% of cohort to achieve at least 5 A\* - C (including English and Maths)**

Brent results have been:

2007 – 2 pupils achieved

2008 – 5 pupils achieved

2009 – 10 achieved (25% of the 2009 cohort)

We are currently looking at how we can achieve even better results as there is still a significant gap to be narrowed. Discussions are underway as to Looked After Children being an integral part of the developments at the new Roundwood Centre and this being an educational centre for them.

We are also particularly focussing on further developing educational and vocational services for 16+ LAC, particularly for those who may not progress to higher education.

**8) Question in the name of Councillor Leaman, as follows:**

Can the Council Leader say what he and his Executive have done to make Brent cleaner, greener and safer?

**Response from the Leader of the Council**

Since 2006, the Liberal Democrat-led Council has done much to make this borough cleaner, greener and safer. Allow me to explain just a few of the excellent things we have achieved.

In 2007 Brent made recycling compulsory. This included the deployment of additional collection vehicles and more investment in communication and education. This decision has seen the recycling rate rise from 20% to 28% in 2008/09 and to 32% currently.

Recycling participation has risen from 40% to over 80% in most areas. 2000 more tonnes of organic waste were composted in 2008/09 than in 2006/07 and over 4000 more tonnes of waste were recycled – an increase of 6000 tonnes overall.

The amount of waste sent to landfill annually has reduced by 12,000 tonnes since 2006/07. This has saved Brent's residents thousands of pounds in landfill tax.

Also our decision to invest in the street cleansing operation means Brent's streets are cleaner than ever before. Last year, independent surveys showed that only 16% of streets failed to meet an acceptable standard. In 2006/07 that figure was 32% - a 16 percentage point improvement.

We reinvested the £500k spent each year on the Too Big for the Bin service into keeping our streets clean. Elderly and disabled residents and those on benefits can still get the service for free, but the money is now spent much more efficiently. As a result dumping is down – there has been a 65% drop in incidents of fly tipping since

2006 – from around 1800 in June 2006 to 600 in September 2009 and we removed fly-tips within an average of 1.5 days.

Additional investment has seen 5,762 trees planted since 2006, with 1521 of these on public streets and 3861 in our parks.

The Green Zones initiative has been introduced, designed to encourage residents to take responsibility for sustainability in their neighbourhoods. The Green Zones scheme is a community project which was started by a Brent resident. They aim to make a difference to the community and environment through local action. Volunteer residents talk to their neighbours about waste and recycling, energy efficiency, water efficiency and transport to raise awareness about positive environmental actions. Currently, 8 Green Zones are in place with a further 13 in development.

We have successfully campaigned to improve public transport within the borough. More trains now stop at Wembley Central, allowing greater flexibility to commuters. Most recently we, in partnership with Liberal Democrat MP Sarah Teather, successfully persuaded Transport for London to begin stopping Metropolitan Line trains at Willesden Green station when the Jubilee Line was closed for works over the weekend. That will enable a significant number of people to use public transport, journeys which may well otherwise have taken place by car.

We are very pleased that our hard work with partners has seen the fear of crime reduce to 38% from 66% in 2005. Overall crime in Brent has reduced by 21%. Satisfaction levels with how anti-social behaviour is addressed currently stands at 97%, a testament to the excellent working relationship we have with the police.

The Council's "alley-gating" schemes were introduced for some 662 properties; ensuring residents did not have to suffer anti-social behaviour or littering near their homes. We now remove reported abandoned cars within an average of 2 days and 85% of graffiti is removed within target timescales, this has ensured the physical environment our residents live in is clean, green and safe.

Brent is a community of which people are rightly proud, with 72% of residents believing that Brent is a place where people from different backgrounds get along well. We believe it is a reflection of our commitment to making this Borough cleaner, greener and safer that 83% of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live, an increase from 59% when Labour ran the Council in 2005.

Brent Liberal Democrats made a commitment to make this Brent Cleaner, Greener and Safer; as you can see, we're delivering on that promise.

#### **9) Question in the name of Councillor Joseph**

CCTV has been used to gather vital evidence in the Hazel Road Area in Kensal Green following ongoing, serious anti social behaviour which has had devastating effects on the lives of residents in that area. Would the Lead Member now consider my repeated requests to have permanent CCTV in Hazel Road?

#### **Response from Lead Member for Crime and Community Safety**



As the councillor is aware the borough has a CCTV strategy that is endorsed by this Council. This indicates where resources can best be used and where CCTV would be effective.

I am however delighted to be able to highlight the excellent multi -agency work being undertaken in the Councillor's ward. This includes the identification, not via CCTV, of eleven people who are being considered for further action.

All six local social housing providers are now engaged in effective youth work, funded by the three Councillors through their Neighbourhood Working Fund, I am happily informed that complaints from residents have reduced.

These well planned and coordinated efforts, combined with robust ongoing Policing, should yield sustained improvements for residents.

Residents have been kept informed via two newsletters and will have the opportunity to talk to the agencies involved on the 25th of November at the planned public meeting.

#### **10) Question in the name of Councillor Mendoza**

Can the Lead Member confirm the number of staff and visitors who are anticipated to use the new civic centre daily and the number of parking places planned?

#### **Response from the Leader of the Council**

The number of visitors to the Civic Centre will vary. The facility will accommodate around 2,000 staff and in addition to this we will have members of the community who will visit the Civic Centre to access services such as the: Library, registrars and events.

At peak we expect this number to be around 1,000 people, particularly when a major function is taking place.

We are providing 158 car parking spaces, which will include 12 disabled, parent and child bays within the basement. In addition following the Executives decision on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009, we are seeking to negotiate a commercial deal to provide up to 200 car parking spaces within close vicinity of the Civic Centre. There will also be around 200 cycle bays and some motor cycle bays.

There will also be 2900 spaces in privately owned car parks, with a further 2000 planned as part of the Masterplan in the surrounding area. The details of this are contained within the Executive report of the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

The new Civic Centre will allow us to lead on and promote sustainability in Brent. By achieving BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) for offices status, the new Civic Centre will be the single greatest contributor to reducing our CO2 emissions. I want this Council to lead by example in its use of energy efficient and sustainable construction technologies and materials. One of the major ways we can do this is making the best use of Wembley being a public transport destination