



SUMMONS ITEM **5**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT  
COUNCIL MEETING 25 JANUARY 2010**

**MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME**

**1) QUESTION IN THE NAME OF CLLR ARNOLD, AS FOLLOWS:**

What resources will the Council make available to sustain the *Brent In2 Work* programme irrespective of whether *Brent In2 Work* and *Working Links* wins new funding under the Flexible New Deal?

**Response from the Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Development**

As reported to the Executive in December 2009, there is an outstanding commitment of £1.3m of Council funding available to Brent in2work from April 2010. This is Working Neighbourhood Fund money, and is therefore a 'one off' sum as opposed to a recurring annual contribution. The same Executive report identified that in the event that the Council was not successful in its Joint Venture bid for Flexible New Deal resources, this funding would be used to sustain the following services for a period of up to two years:

- Language To Work
- Wembley Works
- CSCS Test Centre

The rationale for the selection of services is that these are the areas of Brent in2work which either perform best, which have the widest potential impact, or which address very clear local needs that no-one else is addressing. Language To Work is a borough wide service providing innovative language provision; Wembley Works is a centrally located drop in centre; and the CSCS testing centre will allow residents from across the Borough to gain the site cards necessary to access construction employment. This latter facility is particularly important at a time when the Council is bringing forward more of its own development projects, including housing in South Kilburn, the new Civic Centre and new schools under the Building Schools for the Future programme.

## **2) QUESTION IN THE NAME OF CLLR BESWICK, AS FOLLOWS:**

Does the Council have a register of vulnerable and disabled people who may become prisoners within their own homes during adverse weather conditions and if not, why not?

### **Response from the Lead Member for Adults, Health and Social Care**

Adult & Social Care does not keep a vulnerable person's register. However when residents/ families / carers ring the one stop shop for assistance, vulnerable people (those who are identified as having need, but have no services from us) are screened and prioritised for support. If the need is urgent we respond on the same day or next day.

Our winter and pandemic plans have trigger points agreed in consultation with PCT to identify vulnerable persons in case of need to quickly target emergency services. During recent instances of inclement weather in Brent, we ensured that there was uninterrupted services of Meals on Wheels and Home Care to all our vulnerable clients.

Brent Housing Partnership keeps a register of Vulnerable Council Tenants and those with disabilities which can be used if circumstances occur which may put these residents at particular risk. That does not mean that we are able to offer general services such as help with shopping in severe weather but is utilised if there are floods or district heating failures to ensure that they a priority for assistance. This relates only to Council tenants, not leaseholders.

## **3) QUESTION IN THE NAME OF CLLR JONES, AS FOLLOWS:**

Residents have complained that grit bins in Willesden Green ward were empty even before the recent (pre Christmas) snow falls. How many grit bins are there across the borough and how does this compare with previous years and what plans does the council have to add to the number?

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

All grit bins were filled when they were returned to the streets on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November. Grit is used very quickly during this period and bins do become empty. It is the job of Veolia to refill them as soon as they become aware they are empty. Officers check this regularly and are satisfied that this was done satisfactorily until the Government directed our resupplies of salt elsewhere and advised all Councils to reduce usage, meaning we had to temporarily suspend the re-supply of grit bins in early January.

There are 320 bins across Brent. This compares to 300 in 2004. New bins are installed after an assessment has been made by Streetcare officers. This will

determine whether there is a genuine need in line with the council's policy of prioritising main routes and hilly areas.

#### **4) QUESTION IN THE NAME OF CLLR POWNEY, AS FOLLOWS:**

According to the Scrutiny Task Group report published in December, Brent's carbon emissions have increased since 2006/07. Is this so and how does the Administration plan to reverse the rise in carbon emissions to the 10:10 pledge the Council has signed up to?

#### **Response from the Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture**

The Executive Report, Carbon Management Strategy - Second Review, agreed in October 2009, shows that there had been an overall 4.6% decrease on the 2005/06 baseline up to 2007/8 (the latest year for which data is available), using like for like data and based on Council operations and schools. There was a small increase in 2007/8 from the previous year 2006/7, mainly in schools.

The Council took advice from the Carbon Trust and this led the Council to set a new baseline year of 2008/9, which is in line with National Indicator 185. The reasons for reviewing and changing the baseline were:

- Improvements in data recording has made data more reliable and accurate under NI185,
- Requirements of the NI 185 and Local Area Agreement mean that a more stringent review of the evidence and audit trail are needed.
- To prepare for the Carbon Reduction Commitment.

The Executive agreed to set new targets for the council's carbon reductions as follows:

2010 10% reduction by December 2010 (excluding schools and focused largely on targeted behavioural change)

Targets include schools and council buildings and operations.

2011 6% CO2 reduction (Local Area Agreement target, NI 185)

2016 12% CO2 reduction

2020 34% CO2 reduction

2025 43% CO2 reduction

2050 80% CO2 reduction

The agreed steps to deliver these targets include:

- Agreement in principle to the setting of departmental carbon targets.
- Support a programme containing 86 projects, as set out in the report, that are intended to achieve technical and behavioural change within both schools and the Council, with full delivery of projects subject to the necessary finance being available.
- Agree that the Council should sign up to the 10:10 climate change commitment.

A year-long behavioural change programme is currently being implemented in the Council. This includes a launch by the Leader on 4th January, a monthly roadshow with a different theme each month to save carbon e.g. energy use, transport, temperature controls, introducing and supporting a Green Champions Network, energy audits, general advice and publicity and a round-up event in December 2010.

#### **5) QUESTION IN THE NAME OF CLLR VAN KALWALA, AS FOLLOWS:**

Why did the Council inform residents on its website that Boxing Day would be treated as a bank holiday with free parking on that day only to rescind that information on 22 December and when will the Council refund those residents who received Penalty Charge Notices on Boxing Day?"

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

An error was made on the Council's website about Bank Holiday Parking restrictions applying on Boxing Day, 26 December 2009. This was subsequently corrected. In the circumstances, we have decided to cancel all parking tickets issued on the day, involving restriction that would not normally apply on a Bank Holiday. It will also refund Penalty Charge Notices already paid. We apologise to any residents who were affected.

#### **6) QUESTION IN THE NAME OF CLLR ANWAR, AS FOLLOWS:**

Does the Leader of the Council agree with the all-Party motion from London Councils which "deplores the Government's plan to halve its contribution to the London Councils to meet the cost of extending off-peak free bus travel to non-Londoners" and can he explain what the implications for Brent will be?

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

I am extremely angry on behalf of the people of Brent about this Labour Government decision. The Labour Government decision will cost Brent Council Tax Payers an extra £1 million a year from now on. That is £4 million over the 4 year council term. We will therefore have £4 million less to invest in local services.

I very much support the motion from GLA and have lobbied strongly to reverse the proposed change in funding. This represents a fundamental breach of the principle of the 3 year financial settlement. The Labour Government should abandon this u-turn on their original agreement and not heap the burden on to Brent's Council Tax Payers.

In January the Liberal Democrat, Conservative and Labour Assembly Members at the GLA passed a motion which read "This Assembly deplores the Government's plan to halve its contribution to the London Councils to meet the cost of extending off-peak free bus travel to non-Londoners. The Assembly urges the Mayor to do all he can to persuade the Government to abandon this u-turn on their original agreement and pledges to fully support this endeavour. The Assembly notes the funding for the Freedom Pass is also under pressure by the failure of the Mayor to agree with Train Operating companies how to pay for the promised extension 24 hours a day on the rail network."

The Government currently funds the concessionary fares scheme for older and disabled people in England through formula grant and a specific grant. The specific grant, which was set in 2008 for the three year period from 2008/9 to 2010/11, funds the English national bus concession, introduced in April 2008.

The national concession allows eligible English residents free travel on buses outside of the weekday morning peak period anywhere in England. The consultation, which closed on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2009, proposes reducing the grant to London Boroughs (paid through London Councils) by £28.63 million for 2010/11. The reduction means that Brent will see an increase in the budget for concessionary fares of approximately £1 million.

We remain strongly committed to the scheme and will be contributing around £10.2 million in 2010/11.

## **7) QUESTION IN THE NAME OF CLLR PERVEZ, AS FOLLOWS:**

Can the Lead Member for Highways and Transportation outline how Brent was affected by the Government's decision to centrally co-ordinate all salt supplies for the country, regardless of how much Councils had ordered from their suppliers, and when?

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

At the start of the winter season we had 1400 tonnes in stock. Two additional orders for a total of 800 tonnes each were placed in November to replenish this. The Council was ready to start gritting side roads and pavements when these orders of grit were diverted by the Government to councils with greater need, primarily in the North of England. The Salt Cell, the Government's central coordinating agency, announced a nationwide shortage of grit and took control of all grit supplies, directing fresh supplies to the national strategic road network.

The Government also advised local authorities to conserve their supplies as long as possible by reducing usage. As you can appreciate, we were unable to grit as many roads as we would have liked to as we simply did not have the supplies of grit, due to the Government's policy of diverting grit to those councils with most need.

Our stocks held locally were not replenished in line with our orders, however we eventually received 500 tonnes as our supplies began to run out. As of 18<sup>th</sup> January we had 427 tonnes in stock.

**8) QUESTION IN THE NAME OF CLLR LEAMAN, AS FOLLOWS:**

Labour MP for Brent South Dawn Butler was recently pictured holding a cheque, apparently from the Labour Party itself rather than the Government, for £80 million for Brent schools. Can the Lead Member for Children and Families say if this cheque has cleared yet?

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

The Council has received no money. Vernon Coaker, Minister of State at DCSF told the House of Commons on 5 January that Brent was among the authorities which will not have received any funding by the end of financial year 2009-10.

**9) QUESTION IN THE NAME OF CLLR MISTRY, AS FOLLOWS:**

The nearest crematorium for Brent residents are either in Golders Green or Hendon. As there are a large proportion of Hindu residents in the Brent does the Council have any plans to open such a facility in the borough and if so has a suitable site been identified?

**Response from the Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture**

There are four crematoria in the region that serve Brent residents: Golders Green, Hendon, Kensal Green and Ruislip. The Council undertook a major review of the cemetery service during 2005/06. As the option of building a crematorium in the borough at Birchen Grove had been considered by a private company in 1998, the review considered the option again, linked to the significant Hindu population in the Brent. The review looked at two possible sites for a crematorium in Brent. However, the recommendation was not to proceed due to the significant capital costs and planning implications associated with such a development. Given this decision, the review did recommend the Service should examine the possibility of meeting some need of this community by improving facilities for the memorisation of cremated remains. This has subsequently been provided at Alperton Cemetery.

**10) QUESTION IN THE NAME OF CLLR KANSAGRA, AS FOLLOWS:**

Please can the lead member provide a report on the levels of grit and salt currently held, what was ordered by Brent Council and confirm if any of the orders placed by Brent were diverted at Government instruction?

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

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