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Our vision: a manifesto for a new community arena

Our campaign 'A Future for Brentford FC in Your Community' is borne out of the frustration felt by many supporters of the club, and the wider population, at the lack of political momentum towards a new Community Arena in the Borough, one to replace the outdated Griffin Park as the new home for Brentford FC, as well as offering much needed facilities for a wide range of sports, and a centre for community activity. We will lobby for the development of such an arena; we are not asking for public money, merely political will.

Our pledge: a fresh start

The A-Bee-C campaign consists of a wide range of individuals from all political and social backgrounds. We will offer a fresh approach to local concerns, and respond to the needs of Hounslow, rather than the whim of a spin-doctor or a financier. The strength of our campaign comes from the positive programme we advocate – our style of community-led development will highlight issues of sport for all, community-based health and fitness, and recreational facilities for all ages, as well as energising local business activity. Voters want something tangible from their council, and our proposals represent something everyone in the community can have a stake in.

We do not pretend that this 'single-issue' can be considered in isolation, but we refuse to accept that it can be ignored completely. We will raise questions on the issues mentioned above, and press for them to be considered in a 'joined-up' way. Most of all we want to re-invigorate the democratic process in Hounslow and in doing so encourage people to participate and vote.

Our concerns: a history of neglect

For many years Brentford FC have pursued the possibility of redeveloping their Griffin Park home, or of finding a local site for a new stadium, but time and again their efforts have been in vain. Schemes have come and gone, commitments, such as one at the 1998 Local Elections, for the council to deliver a new community stadium at a site within the Borough, have been made, and one by one these promising developments have come to nothing. Each change within the Council seems to bring more caution and inactivity from those in power.

Before Christmas the A-Bee-C campaign sent out questionnaires to all sitting councillors, seeking their views on a broad range of issues related to Brentford FC, and to sport and leisure provision in Hounslow. We received a disappointing SIX responses. Of these, only three included completed questionnaires (the other three were letters either commenting on or supporting our campaign). In January, after we sent out questionnaires for the second time, we were informed through the local media that the Council leader John Connelly, had 'advised' his colleagues in the Labour Group not to fill out the questionnaire.

We believe that this restrictive political 'closed-shop' has stifled proper democratic involvement for the people of Hounslow, and this has prompted us to take the radical step of fielding candidates this May.

Our belief: a power to change

We believe Brentford FC and Hounslow Council can work together. Developments recently announced, but a long time in planning, mean that the club will very soon be controlled by a 'not-for-profit' Trust made up of supporters, as well as business and community groups. Hounslow people will then have a real stake in the running of the borough's professional football club, and it seems inevitable that the Council should see the benefits this will bring.

We believe Brentford FC is a vital part of the local heritage. A huge number of people recognise with fondness its place in the history of the area, and today, as professional sport can seem ever more distant from the communities that first encouraged it, Brentford FC offer a chance for the local community to watch and identify with a team. They can do this in a welcoming atmosphere, and at a price that is not out of most people's reach.

We believe Brentford FC already plays a valuable role in Hounslow and that this is under threat. It is not a question of Brentford FC receiving special 'favours', it is about recognition of its value to the community, and the opportunities available to increase this value.

We believe Hounslow needs more community, sporting and recreation facilities, and that a new community arena could provide for many of these needs. Much the same conclusion has been reached by other local authorities, who appreciate the role that sport can play in their community. As former Sports Minister Kate Hoey put it recently: "It would be possible for sport to make a vital contribution not only to the health service but to prevent crime and engage those who are alienated from education".

We believe that whatever our share of the vote, how ever many councillors we can get elected, our biggest contribution will have been to raise the level of debate, and to bring a bit of democracy back to local government.

Our campaign is not about 'special treatment' for Brentford FC; it is not about any ONE stadium proposal. Instead it is about making a positive change, to give proper consideration to a valuable institution and to explore the benefits this could bring.

Your community: a unique opportunity

Up and down the country local authorities are recognising the economic, employment, recreational and civic benefits that come with having a professional football club in their area. Hull, Northampton, Plymouth, Bournemouth, Gillingham, Reading, Derby, Bolton: all are examples of football clubs who have been able to develop their stadia through a partnership with local government. A new Community Arena means just that - people who live locally will have access and involvement. We will represent you and your aspirations for our community!

Every ward at the May's elections will return three councillors, and every voter will get three votes. We will be asking for only ONE of your three votes. We are NOT therefore campaigning *AGAINST* any other political party, but instead we are working *FOR* the idea of a community arena with Brentford F.C. at its heart.

Let's work together for a new Community Arena

Let's use and enjoy a Community Arena together

The A-Bee-C Campaign - *A future for Brentford FC in your community*