



## LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL  
held on Monday 23 January 2012 at 7.00 pm

### PRESENT:

**The Worshipful the Mayor**  
Councillor M Aslam Choudry

**The Deputy Mayor**  
Councillor Michael Adeyeye

### COUNCILLORS:

Singh	Aden
Al-Ebadi	Allie
Arnold	Mrs Bacchus
Baker	Beck
Beswick	Brown
Butt	Cheese
Chohan	S Choudhary
Clues	Colwill
Crane	Cummins
Daly	Denselow
Gladbaum	Green
Harrison	Hashmi
Hector	Hirani
Hossain	Hunter
John	Jones
Kabir	Kansagra
Kataria	Long
Lorber	Mashari
Matthews	McLennan
Mitchell Murray	J Moher
R Moher	Moloney
Naheerathan	Ogunro
Oladapo	RS Patel
Powney	Ketan Sheth
Krupa Sheth	Sneddon
Thomas	Van Kalwala

### Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Councillors Ashraf, Beckman, Castle, Leaman, BM Patel, CJ Patel, HB Patel, HM Patel and Ms Shaw

1. **Minutes of the previous meetings**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meetings both held on 21 November 2011 be approved as accurate records of the meetings.

2. **Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests**

Councillor Lorber declared an interest in those items that dealt with the library service by virtue of being a director of the Friends of Barham Library.

3. **Mayor's announcements (including any petitions received)**

The Mayor wished everyone present a Happy New Year and welcomed everyone to the first Council Meeting in 2012.

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Krupa Sheth to her first council meeting since being elected and congratulated her on becoming the youngest ever councillor in Brent as well as, with Councillor Ketan Sheth, becoming the first ever uncle and niece team to sit as Brent councillors.

The Mayor announced with great sadness that former Councillor Noel Martin died in April 2011 and on behalf of the Council offered his condolences. He was a Liberal Democrat councillor for Queen's Park Ward from 1991 to 1994 and after moving away from Brent continued to make a special effort to return for the annual Queen's Park Day.

The Mayor informed members that former long serving councillor and Mayor of the borough Gwen Tookey had had a serious fall at home and a prolonged stay in Northwick Park Hospital. She was now recovering at home and on behalf of the council wished her well for a speedy recovery.

The Mayor announced that Brent had been awarded 3<sup>rd</sup> place at the New Year's Day parade raising £5,000 for his charity appeal. He expressed his gratitude to everyone who organised and participated in the event.

The Mayor announced that he was hosting a charity lunch at Wembley Tandoori on 31 January 2012. Tickets were available for purchase from his office.

In accordance with Standing Orders a list of current petitions showing progress on dealing with them had been circulated around the chamber.

4. **Appointments to committees and outside bodies and appointment of chairs/vice chairs**

RESOLVED:-

That with regard to the membership of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Councillor Krupa Sheth be appointed as second alternate to Councillor Aden in place of Councillor Oladapo,
- Councillor Cheese in place of Councillor Green, and
- Councillor Lorber be appointed as second alternate to Councillor Matthews in place of Councillor Allie.

## 5. Debate

The Mayor welcomed to the meeting Rachel Evans from Fountain Studios who was also chair of the Brent Sport and Culture Forum, Nick Kent, the soon to retire Artistic Director of the Tricycle Theatre and Indhu Rubasingham the Artistic Director designate of the Tricycle Theatre.

A pack containing a presentation, a copy of the Cultural Strategy for Brent 2010 to 2015 and other material had been circulated around the chamber. Rachel Evans opened the debate by reading the strap line to the Cultural Strategy 'It's yours...Join in'. She added that the cultural provision within the borough belonged to everyone and this made it very important. She felt the borough should celebrate the cultural activity that took place in the borough and referred to the Tricycle Theatre as one of the cultural gems in the borough. She asked members to write down what they thought culture was to demonstrate how widely it could apply. Rachel Evans referred to the circulated strategy as a vision for culture, whilst recognising that the vision needed to be flexible as circumstances changed. The Brent Sport and Culture Forum brought together representatives of local businesses, arts providers, education providers and the Council to be a conduit for ideas on promoting all the cultural activity going on in the borough. It encouraged young people to get involved and promoted the health and well-being of people. The strategy sought to achieve four main objectives - communication, engagement with young people, an increase in the amount of available space for cultural activities and maximising the wider benefits of culture.

Nick Kent spoke to the meeting referring to having worked in the borough since 1984. He expressed his love of Brent and his passion for the Tricycle Theatre. The theatre was housed in a relatively small building but undertook many activities. He stated that since 1984, 4.5 million people had visited the theatre as audiences, most of which were from the local area and over 36 million people from around the world had seen productions that had begun at the Tricycle Theatre. This translated into audiences of around 185,000 a year with many dignitaries also visiting the theatre. Nick Kent stated that the theatre employed 19 full time staff and 57 part time staff and 50% of the front of house staff came from Brent. The work of the theatre was designed to promote community spirit and it was proud to represent the borough. He felt the most important work the theatre undertook was with children and young people. The Council grant last year of £218,000 was wholly spent on activities for young people and amounted to half the total cost of the programme. The activities carried out each year involved about 40,000 children, with many being helped to learn English through drama and art. Nick Kent stated that the theatre attracted £3.3 million into the area and given his role he had been asked by Brent and Camden Councils to get involved in the regeneration of the area and it had been a role he was proud to take on. Nick Kent introduced Indhu Rubasingham who would soon be taking over from him at the theatre.

Indhu Rubasingham referred to the exciting opportunity she had to build on the legacy that would be left by Nick Kent. She referred to the diverse community within Brent and stated that she wanted to develop a programme of work that reflected this. This required people from all backgrounds to visit the theatre and so ways needed to be developed to attract them into the theatre.

Rachel Evans urged members to recognise all the activities going on in the borough and to look at the 'visitwembleyvisitbrent.com' web site and encourage others to do so. She referred to the huge footfall into the Wembley area every time an event took place at the stadium and how some of these visitors could be encouraged to visit the borough at other times.

The Mayor invited members to comment or ask questions. Members paid tribute to Nick Kent for his work in the borough and for the many productions they had enjoyed seeing at the Tricycle Theatre and wished him well for the future. Particular mention was made of the work undertaken at the theatre for young people and the benefit the Council reaped from the grant awarded to the theatre. Whilst appreciating the need to engage with audiences, a point was made about balancing modern works with the classics. In reply, Nick Kent explained that his theatre had put on Shakespearean plays but they posed logistical problems for the theatre with the large casts involved and faced stiff competition from the many other venues in London that put on classical productions. For this reason his theatre tended to do classic 20th century plays.

The point was made that people who attended plays exposed themselves to issues that they might not ordinarily face and it was pointed out that the theatre put on senior citizen programmes on a Thursday and Friday afternoon. A view was put that the cultural strategy had been undermined by the closure of the Charteris sports centre and six libraries and it was asked what the Council would be doing to celebrate National Library day on 4 February. It was said that the Tricycle Theatre was at one end of the borough and people from other parts of the borough would not travel to it. For this reason it was felt that outreach work was of more benefit to the wider community. In response it was pointed out that there were other venues in the borough that people could attend such as the East Lane theatre. It was also pointed out that children from all over Brent went on visits to the Tricycle Theatre.

A plea was made for the Tricycle Theatre to follow the Council and become a Fairtrade venue. A question was asked as to how resilient the arts could be against the cuts being made in public spending. Rachel Evans stated that the borough still had many libraries and it was important to celebrate them and promote their use. Nick Kent referred to the recent decision of the Council to redevelop the Willesden Green site which would provide a new replacement library and to the fact that as part of the regeneration of the Kilburn area, Camden Council had moved a library into the Kilburn High Road which had in turn increased the facilities available to local residents. He acknowledged the point made about Fairtrade. He felt the arts faced a very difficult future and the lack of government resources had led him to decide to resign from the theatre. He urged everyone to lobby in support of culture and the arts because of the benefits it brought. He thanked members for their kind words and comments in support of the work of the Tricycle Theatre.

In answer to a question Rachel Evans explained that Fountain Studios put on many large TV productions including X Factor and The Cube which were free to get into and attracted a large number of people.

Councillor John responded to the presentation on behalf of the Executive and the Council. She thanked Rachel Evans, Nick Kent and Indhu Rubasingham for their presentations. She stated that in the modern world, entertainment had to be of high quality. She referred to the importance of Fountain Studios and the Tricycle Theatre, both of which attracted large numbers of people into the borough. She referred to many of the productions she had enjoyed at the theatre and paid tribute to Nick Kent's work. She welcomed Indhu Rubasingham to her new role. Councillor John referred to other cultural centres in the borough such as the Lexi cinema and pointed out that the borough would also be an Olympic venue later in the year.

The Mayor thanked Rachel Evans, Nick Kent and Indhu Rubasingham for their attendance.

## **6. Report from the Leader or members of the Executive**

### *Willesden Green redevelopment project*

Councillor Crane (Lead member for Regeneration and Major Projects) reported that, following the carrying out of an appropriate consultation strategy, he was able to advise members that the Executive had agreed to award a contract to Galliford Try PLC for the construction of a new Willesden Green centre to include a library, education space, museum, exhibition space and a customer contact centre. This would be at no capital cost to the Council. A delivery strategy had also been agreed and it was hoped that building would start around September 2012 and be completed in April 2014. Councillor Crane expressed the view that this could be the catalyst for the future regeneration of the area. A detailed community engagement strategy had been drawn up. The proposal was now subject to planning permission and detailed design work.

### *Civic Centre*

Councillor Crane (Lead member for Regeneration and Major Projects) reported that the construction of the new Civic Centre remained on time and within budget with an anticipated completion date of December 2012. He added that 28.5% of the labour employed on site came from Brent. Brent schools had arranged visits to the site and all the companies employed on the site were registered with Brent in2work. Finally, Councillor Crane reported that the building was well on track for receiving full BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) status.

### *Cross borough working on sports and leisure facilities*

Councillor Powney (Lead member for Environment and Neighbourhoods) reported on the work being undertaken by the West London boroughs to jointly provide sport and leisure facilities that would produce genuine efficiency savings without cuts to the services.

### *Waste and recycling*

Councillor Powney (Lead member for Environment and Neighbourhoods) reported that the first quarter statistics showed that the recycling rate had risen to 42% from

30% the year before. He felt this showed how successful the new recycling arrangements were and expected further increases in recycling next year.

#### *School places*

Councillor Arnold (Lead member for Children and Families) reported that in order to meet the increasing demand for school places, ten additional classes had been opened since September 2011. These additional places were now being allocated and a further increase in places was planned for September 2013. There was a consultation exercise currently underway on the provision of school places and it was anticipated that demand would continue to rise. The Council was therefore continuing its lobbying efforts to attract further funds in addition to the £25M already secured.

#### *Update on Customer contact project*

Councillor Jones (Lead member for Customers and Citizens) reported that the customer contact project was a key project in the One Council programme with possible savings of £3M to be achieved over the next three years. The aim was to provide quicker service access by encouraging people to use alternatives to one to one contact and give the staff more time to deal with the borough's more vulnerable residents. The project was overseen by a project board and a new team was headed by Margaret Read. There had already been a reduction in posts of 29, 21 of which had been vacant. Another aspect of the project would be the redesign of the Council's web pages to provide for more transactions to be done on-line. An updated switchboard had also been installed. Councillor Jones stated that it was now important to convey these changes to residents and to keep members informed of developments.

#### *Harlesden Town Centre*

Councillor J Moher (Lead member for Highways and Transportation) added to the Executive report by reporting on a £4M scheme to upgrade Harlesden town centre. The core aim was to reduce the impact traffic had on the area. The scheme was out for consultation. Councillor Moher added that the Government's recent announcement on the HS2 (High Speed railway) would have an impact on the area which would need to be taken into account.

## **7. Questions from the Opposition and other Non- Executive Members**

Councillor Matthews asked on behalf of Councillor Beck what had been done to ensure that the new redevelopment proposals for Brent Cross were fully consulted on, following the Mayor of London indicating he wanted to see a scaled down regeneration project for the area. She added that local residents were again concerned that any new proposals would be rushed through without proper consultation. Councillor Crane (Lead Member for Regeneration and Major Projects) replied that it was good news for Brent that the scheme was to be scaled down and he hoped the Planning Committee would look carefully at the new proposals, taking account of any views submitted. He added that whilst welcoming the Mayor's announcement of the allocation of funding for Barnet's bid towards the Cricklewood development, he was disappointed that the Brent bids – Willesden Green Growing Success and Unlocking Ealing Road Removing barriers to economic growth – had both been rejected. Brent and Harrow's Assembly member, Navin Shah, had been asked to raise the matter with the Mayor's office. Councillor Matthews responded by pointing out that Brent had supported Barnet's bid and would therefore benefit

from it. In returning to the Brent Cross proposals, she submitted that the original plans would not have been good for the area. She felt it was imperative that any regeneration was carried out with the best interests of the existing communities in mind and so hoped for support from the Planning Committee and the Executive in ensuring a better plan for the area.

Councillor Denselow asked for an update on the increase in Brent's recycling rates and how much money this had saved the Council. Councillor Powney (Lead Member for Environment and Neighbourhoods) replied that if all the targets were met the Council would reach a breakeven point and then save £1m the following year. Future savings would increase because the cost of landfill would go up. The use of landfill was also the worst option for the environment because of the greenhouse gases it produced. He stated that everyone should welcome the introduction of the new system. Councillor Denselow thanked Councillor Powney for his reply.

Councillor Hunter asked how many schools had responded to the Council's invitation to discuss joint funding of school crossing patrols by offering to part fund a patrol in their area. Councillor J Moher (Lead Member for Highways and Transportation) replied that very few had come forward but that it was early in the process and senior council officers were engaging with headteachers and school governors. He had not expected schools to immediately respond but thought that some would do so in time. Councillor Hunter expressed her concern that the future remained unclear for seventeen sites and that this was the beginning of the gradual erosion of the service.

Councillor Harrison referred to the issue of school places and that the London Borough of Sutton had suggested raising class sizes from 30 to 35. She asked if the Executive was considering such a move. Councillor Arnold (Lead Member for Children and Families) replied that Sutton had been invited to join Brent and other boroughs to lobby government for additional funding to meet the increased demand for school places. Sutton was similar to Brent in its level of pupil achievement but was unlike Brent in that it had only 8% of children receiving free school meals. She stated that the Council was proud of the performance of its pupils and would not look to risk this by increasing class sizes. Councillor Arnold added that in a very few cases class sizes might exceed 30 at key stage 2 in order to accommodate siblings. Councillor Harrison thanked Councillor Arnold for her response.

Councillor Colwill referred to extra money coming from the Government which he felt could be spent on keeping some libraries open. He stated that the site of Preston library was to be sold to a major supermarket and asked if the Executive would consider approaching the supermarket to provide a small library within the building. Councillor Powney (Lead Member for Environment and Neighbourhoods) disputed that the Council had received extra money. He referred to the library strategy adopted by the Executive which centred on six libraries in the borough and delivering a better library service from them. The future of the old library buildings was the subject of a property review and was a separate process. Councillor Colwill asked again if efforts would be made to secure a small library by way of a S106 contribution from the developer.

Councillor Cummins felt there were problems with the street sweeping service because in his ward the bins were overflowing and the streets were strewn with

litter. He asked what was going to be done to improve the service and what areas were being targeted, as referred to in the minutes of the last Council meeting. Councillor J Moher (Lead Member for Highways and Transportation) replied that he did not accept the claim that bins were overflowing with litter. He explained that in reducing the street sweeping service, resources had been put in to dealing with known problem areas. He felt the contractor, Veolia, was doing a good job in most areas of the borough but if specific cases of litter build up were drawn to his attention he would get it looked at. Councillor Cummins responded that it was ironic that the new councillor returned at the Wembley Central by election should have campaigned on cleaning up the streets. He felt an action plan was needed that recognised the existing system was not working and needed to be put right.

Councillor Hirani stated that the issue of the Willesden Green bookshop had been raised at a recent meeting of the Willesden Area Consultative Forum and asked if it would be possible to find alternative premises for it. Councillor Crane (Lead Member for Regeneration and Major Projects) replied that the bookshop was a commercial business and a long term tenant at the existing library centre. The Council was committed to helping find alternative premises in the area. All the bidders for the Willesden Green project had been invited to include the bookshop but all had declined to make such provision. There was therefore no plan to include the bookshop within the new development but the owner would be entitled to a level of compensation and the Council was working with him to find a way forward just as it was helping the Brent Irish Advisory Service to find alternative premises. Councillor Hirani responded by saying he was glad to hear that help was being offered.

Councillor Van Kalwala asked if the Council could be informed of the conclusions contained in the Audit Commission letter in respect of value for money. Councillor John (Leader) replied that she felt the Council's auditors had made a big statement in commending the work of the Council by giving an unqualified audit opinion. There had been many challenges to overcome towards improving the Council's accounting processes and she was therefore very pleased with the report. Councillor Van Kalwala responded by saying this demonstrated that the Council was active in doing the best it could for the local area and achieve value for money.

Councillor Brown stated that the Council was allowing a lot of dumping to take place, especially in the Harlesden area and asked why this was. Councillor J Moher (Lead Member for Highways and Transportation) replied that more dumping had taken place in the borough when a £25 charge for its removal had been introduced. He stated that dumping was caused by people carrying out anti-social activities and specific cases had to be brought to the attention of the Council for action to be taken. Councillor Brown re-iterated that dumping had gone up, particularly in the Harlesden area and that this was according to the Council's own figures.

Councillor Lorber asked why the Council appeared to be keen to give away for nothing two library buildings in Cricklewood and Kensal Rise rather than re-open them as libraries while the Willesden Green development took place. Councillor Powney (Lead Member for Environment and Neighbourhoods) replied that the buildings were not free when they operated as libraries because it cost money to run them. The Executive had adopted a library strategy to improve the library service which it was following. If the buildings were no longer to be used as



libraries the Council was under a legal duty to return them to the owner of the land. Councillor Lorber responded by saying that all councillors were under a fiduciary duty to protect the resources of the Council. He stated that it was the land on which the library buildings stood that had been bequeathed to the Council, not the buildings which had been provided by public subscription. He submitted that the Executive had no authority to give away Council assets.

#### **8. Report from the Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

Councillor Gladbaum (Chair of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee) introduced the report from the chairs of overview and scrutiny. She summarised the work undertaken by each of the committees as set out in the report. Councillor Gladbaum stated that she hoped all councillors valued and appreciated the work carried out by the overview and scrutiny committees.

#### **9. By election result**

RESOLVED:-

that the result of the Wembley Central by election held on 22 December 2011 be noted.

#### **10. CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management 2011**

The report before members detailed the revised Code of Practice in Treasury Management.

RESOLVED:-

that the revised Treasury Policy Statement be approved.

#### **11. Treasury 2011/12 mid-year report**

This report provided an update for members on recent Treasury activity.

RESOLVED:-

that the 2011/12 Treasury mid-year report as also submitted the Audit Committee and Executive be noted.

#### **12. Changes to Part 3 of the Constitution: Contract Standing Orders**

Members received the report which proposed some minor amendments in relation to Contract Standing Orders concerning changes to the European public procurement thresholds, insertion of a definition of Very Low Value contracts in respect of which there would be less prescriptive procedural requirements and minor amendments.

RESOLVED:-

that amendments to the Constitution to incorporate the changes to Contract Standing Orders shown at Appendix 1 to the report be agreed.

## 13. **Motions**

### 13.1 **Library, museum and archive provision while Willesden Library Centre is closed**

Councillor Lorber moved the motion circulated in the name of the Liberal Democrat Group by claiming that many people were angry that during the consultation on the closure of six libraries no mention was made of the demolition of the Willesden Green centre. It was now not clear what temporary library facility would be provided during the construction of the new Willesden Green centre and he felt the obvious alternative was to keep open those libraries close to Willesden Green, such as the Cricklewood library, during the construction period. Councillor Lorber also made mention of how the Brent museum had begun with the Barham bequest. It was the 75th anniversary of the death of Titus Barham and he felt it would be appropriate to relocate the bequest back into the Barham library.

Councillor Crane responded by saying the motion was confused. The decision making process for the library transformation project had been vindicated by the Courts and the voters had returned a Labour candidate at the recent by election in Wembley Central ward which he suggested showed how robust the Executive's proposals were. While the Willesden Green redevelopment took place a lending library facility would be provided from the Grange Road offices which would also include sessions for children and IT provision. New study space would be provided in the Roundwood Youth Centre and at the Willesden New Testament Church of God. Options were being explored to provide a customer contact centre out of premises in Harlesden. Councillor Crane therefore urged that the motion be firmly rejected.

Councillor Kansagra supported the motion by stating that the library service should not be Wembley centred and that the results of the consultation had shown that people did not want six libraries closed. He hoped alternative provision would be found and added that Preston library could have stayed open until the new library in the Civic Centre had been built.

Following a vote the motion was declared LOST.

### 13.2 **Early bird fares**

Councillor Lorber moved the motion circulated in the name of the Liberal Democrat Group. Following a vote the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) Council notes that many people in Brent incur high transport costs when travelling to work; it recognises the valuable contribution that these workers make to London's economy and notes that a discounted early-morning fare would make a real difference to many low-income workers in the capital,
- (ii) Council believes that cheaper fares for journeys completed early in the morning would help low paid-workers such as cleaners, security and catering staff who often travel to work before peak times; early bird fares would also

help to ease congestion by encouraging more people to make their journey before rush hour,

- (iii) that the Mayor of London and Transport for London be called on to introduce 'early bird' fares because of the benefits it would bring to commuters in Brent.

### 13.3 **Stop and search**

Councillor Lorber moved the motion circulated in the name of the Liberal Democrat Group. Following a vote the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the new Metropolitan Police Commissioner's announcement that he will review the use of stop and search powers be welcomed,
- (ii) that Council believes that a more intelligence-led approach to stop and search will help to foster better relations between the police and the communities that they serve,
- (iii) that Council notes with concern that in London, young black men are typically eight times more likely to be stopped and searched by police than their white counterparts,
- (iv) that Council recognises that, if used properly, stop and search can be a useful tool in combating crime but notes that if these powers are seen to unfairly target particular sections of the community, the use of stop and search can alienate innocent people and undermine police-community relations,
- (v) that Council urges the Metropolitan Police to continue the practice of monitoring the ethnicity of individuals who have been stopped and searched along with other basic data.

### 13.4 **Parking restrictions**

Councillor Colwill moved the motion circulated in his and Councillor Kansagra's names by making reference to the mobile CCTV cars which he felt should not be parking on double yellow lines but moving around the borough. He asked if an impact study had been carried out on the effect the new parking restrictions were having on the shops in the Preston Road area. He felt such shops were the lifeblood of the borough and should be allowed to trade freely.

Councillor Lorber stated that this was an issue the Executive needed to further consider. He felt there were ways to support traders across the borough and suggested that 30 minutes free parking might be a good idea. He appreciated that this would have an impact on the parking account but felt a longer term view needed to be taken in the interests of encouraging businesses into the area.

Councillor J Moher suggested the main reason for local shops losing business was the recession the country was in. A recent report commissioned by the Prime

Minister also suggested that local shops were declining due to modern shopping developments. He felt therefore that the motion was misplaced and pointed out that the parking restrictions introduced in Preston Road were in common with the rest of the borough. Discussions had already taken place with interested parties and the use of Preston Road car park would be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of Highways Committee. Referring to the mobile CCTV units, Councillor Moher explained that they parked at certain times in order to catch those drivers breaking the law. They were an important part of the borough's approach to improving road safety.

Following a vote the motion was declared LOST.

### 13.5 Paan spitting

Councillor Colwill moved the motion circulated in his name. Following a vote the motion was declared LOST.

### 13.6 Proposed privatisation of London Fire Brigade

Councillor Long moved the motion circulated in her name by stating that in an emergency people were told to ring 999 which put them through to the control room which currently operated very efficiently in dealing with emergencies. The service had already made £1.5m savings and now the privatisation of the control room was threatened. She asked what level of training would be provided by a private company and felt that there would have to be close monitoring of the service, thereby undermining any savings made.

Councillor Kansagra acknowledged the importance of the issue and expressed concern over the limited time before the meeting that members had to consider such motions. He moved an amendment to delete the majority of the motion and express confidence in the future service delivery of the control centre.

Councillor Lorber stated that this matter had already been raised by Liberal Democrat Assembly members. He did not feel that the Council was qualified to deal with the issue and pointed out that all political parties had at some time considered privatisation of some public services. Members had justifiable concerns and it was important that adequate service standards were set.

Following a vote the amendment to the motion was declared LOST.

Following a vote the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:-

(i) that Council notes that:

- the Conservative-controlled London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA), supported by Mayor Boris Johnson, is proposing to privatise the 999 Control Room function and hand over the running of this essential component of one of London's major emergency services to a private contractor,

- a quarter of a million emergency calls are made to the London Fire Brigade Control Room each year requiring an immediate and considered response by the highly-trained professional Brigade staff,
- no consideration has been given to any other option to provide the service, including an in-house bid, or to the financial implications of taking this route,

(ii) that Council is concerned that such a privatisation will:

- put the safety of Brent's residents at risk due to the lack of any risk assessment being carried out,
- outsource a vital service to a company whose primary focus, as a private enterprise, must be profit for its shareholders,
- have a detrimental effect on the speed of response from the Control Room and the quality of advice given to those at the scene of a fire,
- mean additional cost to Londoners in monitoring and ensuring the necessary high performance of the contractor,
- further demoralise staff who have not only realised savings of £1.5m but worked extended shifts during times of need, such as the recent riots in London,

(iii) that this privatisation was typical of the Conservative-led Government's attack on cherished public services including schools, armed forces and the NHS; the outsourcing of major London Fire Brigade functions, including essential 999 services, meant that Conservative ideology was being put before the interests of ordinary Londoners; Londoners not shareholders needed to come first and Council therefore opposed the plan to privatise the London Fire Brigade's 999 Control Room function and the Chief Executive be requested to write to Mayor Boris Johnson to use his powers of direction to stop LFEPA proceeding with the proposal and to seek support from local MPs, the London Assembly and council unions.

### 13.7 **Spending cuts**

The motion in the name of Councillor Hirani was moved. Following a vote the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:-

that the £104 million cut to Brent Council's budget over the spending review period be condemned.

### 13.8 **Access to legal services**

The motion in the name of Councillor Mashari was moved. Following a vote the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the Government's legal aid reforms, which would remove access to free legal advice for an estimated 650,000 individuals a year, at a time when they most need it be noted with grave concern,
- (ii) that the impact of the proposals would be to:
  - Remove the provision of most free legal advice on employment, family, consumer contracts, welfare benefits, debt, immigration and housing currently provided by Brent Community Law Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, Brent Private Tenants Rights Group, practice solicitors and independent advice centres,
  - Cut the majority of effective advice at early intervention stages, which avoids the need for legal proceedings,
  - Disproportionately impact low income and vulnerable residents in the Borough, in particular women suffering from cases of domestic violence,
- (iii) that the right of all Brent citizens to receive equal access to legal advice and justice be strongly supported,
- (iv) that the principle of law centres and other advice agencies, which help to ensure that most vulnerable in our society are treated fairly and can be an effective form of early intervention, often saving public money be firmly supported,
- (v) that all possible steps be committed to support the local advice sector in Brent,
- (vi) that the Government's false economy to cut the legal aid budget by over £350 million, enshrined in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill; resulting in up to 70% reduction in government legal help in immigration, employment, welfare benefits, debt and housing be deplored.

### 13.9 **Welfare Reform Bill**

The motion in the name of Councillor Oladapo was moved. Following a vote the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:-

that this Council agrees with the comments of Daily Mail columnist Sonia Poulton who wrote in that newspaper on 17 January 2012 that the Welfare Reform Bill "is the singularly most reprehensible attack on our vulnerable – our disabled – that this country has witnessed in many years".

### 13.10 **Fair trade**

The motion in the name of Councillor Powney was moved. Following a vote the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:-

that the Labour administration be congratulated on achieving Fairtrade status for the London Borough of Brent.

14. **Urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm

COUNCILLOR M ASLAM CHOUDRY  
Mayor