



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

**Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
held on Monday 26 February 2018 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Bhagwanji Chohan

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor Arshad Mahmood

COUNCILLORS:

Aden	Agha
Ahmed	Bradley
Butt	Carr
Chan	S Choudhary
A Choudry	Colacicco
Colwill	Conneely
Daly	Dixon
Duffy	Ezeajughi
Farah	Harrison
Hector	Hirani
Kabir	Kansagra
Kelcher	Long
Marquis	Maurice
McLeish	McLennan
Miller	Moher
W Mitchell Murray	Naheerathan
Nerva	M Patel
RS Patel	Perrin
Pitruzzella	Shahzad
Ketan Sheth	Krupa Sheth
Stopp	Tatler
Thomas	Van Kalwala
Warren	

1. Procedural Motion - Conduct of Business

Before consideration of the formal agenda, the Mayor advised that as this had been scheduled as the budget setting meeting he would be inviting Councillor Kabir (as Majority Group Chief Whip) to move a procedural motion, in accordance with Standing Orders, relating to the conduct of the debate on the budget report and also on a petition where the request for a Council debate had been received.

RESOLVED that the following procedural motion moved by Councillor Kabir, be agreed:

(1) Debate on the Budget and Council Tax 2018-19

- 1.1 That the Leader of the Council be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes in presenting the report on the 2018-19 Budget and Council Tax to the meeting, setting out the Cabinet's proposals for the Budget, after which, the following arrangements be confirmed for the purpose of debating and voting upon the Budget and Council Tax 2018-19:
- (a) The Leader of the Brent Conservative Group be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes.
 - (b) The Deputy Leader of the Council be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes.
 - (c) The Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes.
 - (d) A general debate follow during which the usual rules for debate would apply as set out in Standing Orders save as set out in this procedural motion.
- 1.2 At the end of the general debate, the Leader of the Council be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes to submit his closing remarks.
- 1.3 Following the close of the debate, voting on each Group's budget proposals be taken en bloc.

(2) Petition: College Green Open Space

- 2.1 The lead petitioner be allowed to address full Council for a maximum of 5 minutes.
- 2.2 A maximum of one speaker from each Group be allowed to speak on the petition for up to three minutes before the relevant Lead Member responded, also with a maximum of three minutes.

2. Apologies for Absence

The Mayor advised that direct apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Allie, Crane, Davidson, Denselow, Hoda-Benn, Hossain, Jones, Mashari, Joshua Mitchell Murray, Pavey, Shaw and Southwood.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

3.1 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 22 January 2018 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3.2 Matters Arising

(a) Min.1: Mayor Statement – Order of Business (Asbestos Paddington Old Cemetery)

The Mayor advised that as a matter arising (Min. 1 – Mayor Statement: Order of Business) he wished to make a statement regarding the concerns raised about asbestos in Paddington Old Cemetery and action which had been taken since the last Council meeting. Members were advised of the following actions:

- The holding of a public meeting; and
- Further tests having been undertaken which the Mayor informed Members had shown the amount of asbestos to be below the scientific detection level and at the same level that may be found in any garden across London.

The Mayor relayed that experts had therefore confirmed there was no risk to anyone visiting the cemetery and the Council had also committed to undertake tests on the grounds of the neighbouring school. By way of assurance, Members were advised that the levels of asbestos recorded were 0.001% and were therefore no cause for concern.

In response to the statement provided, Councillor Duffy advised he had also written to officers seeking a response on a number of associated questions in relation to compensation. The Mayor advised that the issues raised would be responded to outside of the Council meeting.

(b) Motion from Brent Conservative Group – London Taxicard Scheme

Councillor Hirani updated Members on the recent confirmation received from the Mayor for London that he would not be seeking a reduction in the funding for the Taxi Card scheme, which he felt highlighted the premature nature of the original motion submitted by the Brent Conservative Group.

4. Declarations of Interest

The Mayor invited Members to declare any personal, prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests in relation to matters due to be considered at the meeting, in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.

- (a) Councillor Nerva declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 6 (Budget and Council Tax 2018/19) as a leaseholder within the borough.
- (b) Councillor Kabir declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 6 (Budget & Council Tax 2018/19) as a Trustee of CVS Brent.

5. Mayor's Announcements (including any petitions received)

The Mayor made the following announcements:

(i) Teachers Award

The Mayor was delighted to announce that Andria Zafirakou, an arts and textiles teacher from Alperton Community School, had been shortlisted as a top 10 finalist in the Varkey Foundation's Global Teacher Prize competition the winner of which would receive a prize of \$1million.

He reported that Andria had joined nine teachers from around the world in making the final list, which recognised teachers for their work in helping those from disadvantaged backgrounds succeed against the odds. He wished her every success in the final awards.

(ii) 100th Year Birthday Celebration

The Mayor advised he was pleased to be able to announce that a Brent resident, Mary Brennan, had recently celebrated her 100th birthday. Mary currently lived in a residential care home in Kingsbury and as well as her family had been joined by the Deputy Mayor to celebrate this milestone.

(iii) Mayors Fundraising Event

Whilst highlighting how quickly the Civic year appeared to have passed, the Mayor reminded Members that his final fundraising event would be taking place on Friday 13 April 2018. The event would be taking place at Sattavis Padtidar Centre, Forty Lane and he hoped as many Members as possible would be able to attend.

(iv) Royal Visit

The Mayor took the opportunity to highlight a recent royal visit to the Roundwood Youth Centre by HRH Prince Harry. The prince had undertaken a tour of the centre and had been able to participate in its Fit and Fed half-term programme. He had witnessed how the scheme was able to provide children and young people with free activities and a nutritious lunch during school holidays.

In addition the prince had met young volunteers and coaches from Sport at the Heart, a community sport and wellbeing charity who were also part of the campaign and had taken part in an exercise session with the children, as well a game of hockey.

(v) Brent School Achievements

The Mayor advised he was delighted to be able to announce that the latest school performance table's figures, released by the Department for Education, had shown that Brent was the second highest performing local authority for the government's Progress 8 measure.

Within the figures provided, he was also extremely pleased to be able to report that Wembley High Technology College's progress measure had rated them the second highest performing school in the country.

Members joined the Mayor in congratulating all pupils, staff, parents and carers involved in these achievements.

(vi) Rabbi Herman Martyn

It was with sadness that the Mayor referred to the recent passing of Rabbi Herman Martyn, aged 86.

The Mayor advised Members that Rabbi Martyn had given a great deal of time and energy to support pupils in Brent and had been a long standing member of the School Forum. He reported that Rabbi Martyn had received a Brent Community Champions Award from Brent Council in 2008 in recognition of his contribution to education in the Borough. In 2014 he was made an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. He had been involved with Jewish schools for over 30 years and had been a Governor at Michael Sobell Sinai School since 2002

The Mayor felt that Rabbi Martyn's commitment to public service, honesty, integrity, sharp mind, charisma, presence and generosity would be sorely missed and advised that the Council's thoughts and prayers were with his family.

(vii) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) History Month

The Mayor reminded Members that Brent would be celebrating Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History Month with a flag-raising ceremony that would be taking place at 3pm on Wednesday 28 February 18 in the Paul Daisley Garden at the Civic Centre.

The ceremony would provide an excellent opportunity to recognise the Authority's continued dedication to diversity and inclusion and all Members were invited to attend.

(viii) International Women's Day

The Mayor advised Members that Brent would also be celebrating International Women's Day on Thursday 8 March, with the theme "Pressing for Progress". To mark the day, the Council would be hosting an event in the Grand Hall from 10am – 12 noon that would include a range of workshops.

The event would also be used to mark the centenary of the first women in the UK securing the right to vote and would provide a great opportunity to learn more about services being provided by the Council and other local organisations. Again the event would be open for all Members to attend.

(ix) Emergency cold weather Plan

Given the recent cold temperatures experienced the Mayor was keen to recognise how this may affect some of the more vulnerable people sleeping rough at this time.

In order to ensure those in the most need were protected and cared for at such a critical time, he was pleased to report that the Council had agreed to provide a nurse and an outreach worker twice daily at Christ Church, Willesden Lane who were currently welcoming the homeless and those sleeping rough. In terms of other action taken, he advised Members that the Council had also been able to provide the church with an additional 30 sleeping bags and 30 camp beds for use as needed and that Council officers were continuing to monitor the weather forecast 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and had been doing so since the Winter Service commenced on 1 November.

The Mayor was assured that with all five of the Council's gritting vehicles fully serviced, more than 326 grit bins on the streets and filled with salt, and over 773 tonnes of salt in stock, the council was ready for any further cold snaps forecast. He took the opportunity to thank all those involved in providing such important services for their efforts.

(x) Thanks to retiring Members

As this was the last planned full council meeting of the municipal year and current Administration, the Mayor took the opportunity to pay tribute to those Members who had advised they would not be standing in the local borough elections in May 2018.

He highlighted how being a councillor could be one of the most thankless, but also rewarding tasks and thanked those not standing for their many years of public service, recognising the dedication in serving their communities and their commitment to the people of Brent.

The Mayor felt that those Members concerned should all be proud of their achievements whether having served for one term or several and he took the opportunity to wish them, on behalf of all their colleagues, well for the future.

(xi) Petitions

Members noted that in accordance with Standing Order 66(f) a list of current petitions had been tabled which also detailed the progress made in dealing with them.

6. Petition – College Green Open Space

Following on from his announcements, the Mayor referred Members to the list of petitions received which included details of a petition objecting to the erection of a fence across College Green Open Space, which at the time of publication had gathered 277 signatures. He advised Members that under the Council's Petition Scheme the lead petitioner (Mr Jim Hogan) had requested that his petition be referred on to Council for debate, which the Mayor informed Members he was proposing to deal with at this stage in the meeting.

The Mayor therefore welcomed Mr Hogan to the meeting and invited him to present his petition.

Mr Hogan began by thanking Members for allowing him to address the meeting and advised that the current number of signatures his petition now contained was above 300. By way of background, he informed Members that College Green which was located in Kensal Rise, had been established as an open space for over 100 years and was well used by local residents and a local scout group. As a means of further protecting the area from residential development local residents had established the College Green Preservation Society in 1988 and had also supported the location of a Nursery School within the boundary of the open space although the open space was not part of the nursery site.

Despite objections from local residents, a fence had recently been erected across the open space as part of the Nursery School site and he advised residents were now concerned that their access and view across the open space would be further limited as a result of any wider perimeter screen being planned. Members were advised that attempts had previously been made to erect screening around the Nursery site in November 2017 which had subsequently been removed as a result of objections raised by local residents and the scouts group.

Mr Hogan felt it was important to highlight the importance of the open space to the character of the area and well-being of local residents as well as in terms of the limited number of similar sites across the borough and was therefore seeking the support of the Council in terms of maintaining access and preventing the erection of any further perimeter fencing relating to the Nursery School site. Reference was made to the covenant established at the time the land was handed over by All Souls College Oxford as an open space, recognising the rights of neighbouring properties and stating that the land could not be used in any way to cause nuisance or grievance to those properties. In addition concerns had been raised regarding the impact that any additional perimeter fencing may have from a planning perspective in relation to sightlines, traffic safety, loss of outlook and character and on the site in terms of its protected open space status and in terms of nature conservation.

Members were advised that the representatives from the Nursery had not been willing to meet local residents in order to discuss their concerns, so the petitioners were now seeking Council support in their attempts to secure a written agreement preventing any further screening of the open space.

The Mayor thanked Mr Hogan for presenting the petition and then invited a representative from both the Labour and Brent Conservative Group to contribute to the debate.

Councillor Nerva, speaking on behalf of the Labour Group, thanked Mr Hogan for requesting the debate and felt it was important for Members to focus on the key issues. These included:

- that the open space referred to was not common land with unreserved access;
- the erection of the fence had been in response to safeguarding advice around the creation of a protected safe space for young people using the nursery. It had not been designed to deny local residents or the scouts group access to the open space;

In terms of a way forward he had noted the accompanying social media campaign but hoped local residents and the Preservation Society would also be willing to engage outside of the petition in any meetings facilitated by the Council in an attempt to address the issues raised.

Councillor Warren, speaking on behalf of the Brent Conservative Group and as a ward councillor for the area in which the open space was located, felt that the support being sought from the Council by the petitioners was a responsible and reasonable way forward. Whilst recognising the safeguarding issues raised in relation to the Nursery he felt the erection of the fence also raised safeguarding issues about use of the space by a beaver cub group given the restricted sightlines. In terms of a way forward, he urged the Cabinet Member, to take account of what he felt to be the conciliatory representations made and arrange a meeting between local residents, the Preservation Society, scout group and Nursery in order to facilitate further constructive discussion and address the concerns raised about future access to the open space, which he pointed out had been the main objective of local residents all along.

The Mayor thanked Councillors Nerva and Warren for their comments and then invited Councillor Mili Patel, as Cabinet Member for Children & Young People to close the debate and respond to the petition.

Councillor Patel thanked Mr Hogan for his presentation and advised that whilst the focus appeared to have now moved from concerns regarding the erection of the fence to potential perimeter screening, it was important to recognise the reason for the fence having originally been installed. This had been to address safeguarding and security concerns relating to use of the Nursery site by young children. She informed Members that the Council had liaised with both the Scout Group and Preservation Society regarding the specification and location of the fence prior to it being erected and felt it would have been helpful if local residents and the Preservation Society had attended the final liaison meeting before it had been installed.

In terms of safeguarding, Councillor Patel took the opportunity to highlight how seriously the Council treated these issues. Whilst willing to facilitate a meeting to bring all sides together in order to try and find a way forward she also felt there was a need to be clear, in order to address the concerns being raised, on the reasons for the fence having been installed from a safeguarding perspective.

7. Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies and Appointment of Chairs/Vice Chairs (if any)

The Mayor advised that there had been no changes in appointments notified for consideration at the meeting.

8. Budget and Council Tax 2018/19

The Council received a report from the Chief Finance Officer setting out the Council's budget proposals for 2018/19 along with an update on the medium term budget outlook.

In accordance with the procedural motion agreed at the start of the meeting, the Mayor invited Councillor Butt to present the report setting out the budget and Council Tax proposals for 2018-19.

Councillor Butt began by taking the opportunity to thank the following councillors from his group not standing in the May 2018 local election for their hard work and dedication in serving their local residents and the borough during their time as councillors:

Councillors Bradley, Harrison, Hossain, Hoda-Benn, Stopp, Khan, Thomas, Eniola, Pitruzella, Collier and Moher

The Council joined him in thanking and wishing all retiring councillors best wishes.

Moving on to then focus on the budget proposals, the Leader advised that this represented the final budget of the current Administration and had been delivered against a period of ongoing austerity. The Council had once again, with prudent management of its limited resources been able to recommend a balanced budget which offered the maximum protection to those most in need of support. He pointed out, however, that this had not been easy to achieve, with the Council and public sector in general continuing to be hit hard by reductions in Government funding and the accompanying need to manage resulting deficits. For some the pressure had been too great, with the recent examples of Northampton and Surrey County Council referred to. Whilst it may have been possible for these pressures to have been dealt with differently, the Leader felt the underlying problem had been caused by the Government's austerity programme and way in which they had chosen to fund public services.

He hoped that the difficulties being experienced in Conservative as well as other local authorities would now force the Government to reconsider their approach towards the funding of public services given the impact from their ongoing programme of austerity.

Within Brent the Council would continue its balanced approach towards the management of its finances but Councillor Butt pointed out this would be with £177m less to invest in essential services than in 2010 and with serious funding challenges also being faced by other partners in Brent, with the following examples highlighted:

- Schools having lost £600 funding per pupil which equated to an entire academic years funding;
- Police having to manage with 80 less front line officers;
- NHS services in Brent being some of the most unfunded in London due to the current level of deficit

Looking forward, Councillor Butt highlighted that the position was not expected to get any easier with the Council facing an additional £50m worth of Government imposed austerity budget reductions over the next four years. Whilst not a barrier to the Council's ongoing efforts to deliver services he felt it was important to recognise the impact given the serious nature of ongoing challenges faced by the Council and other public service partners in relation to - in-work poverty and the increasing level of household debt; low quality housing, homelessness, poor mental

health and emotional wellbeing; more children being increasingly at risk from harm and an increasing ageing and isolated population.

These were all complex and interconnected issues that would require a serious and co-ordinated approach, with the Council continuing to prioritise the needs of the borough and its residents above political ideals. Councillor Butt highlighted what he felt was a need for clear leadership, recognising the need for a realistic approach towards the way in which the Council was governed and the continuation of hard advocacy in terms of standing up for and representing local residents, which would be the aim of any Labour Administration over the next 4 years.

As well as looking forward, Councillor Butt also felt it was important to reflect on the achievements of the Administration over the past 8 years against the background of austerity, with the following examples highlighted:

- Delivery of an eight consecutive balanced budget by a solvent council with a bold future vision;
- 97% of schools in the borough being judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding with some of the best performance in the country;
- changes delivered to the private rental housing market from the inside;
- provision of good quality affordable housing for local residents;
- elderly residents receiving assistance to live independently for as long as possible;
- support for the police and upgrade of the borough CCTV system;
- building partnerships with developers such as Quintain for significant investment in the local economy which has also lead to the delivery of new jobs, skills training and a stronger council tax base;
- developing and building on Brent's strong sense of community leading to the successful award of London Borough of Culture status for 2020;

Councillor Butt felt this was a record to be proud of despite what he felt to be the limited contribution from the Opposition. Rather than seeking to blame the current Administration for the ongoing financial pressures he urged the Brent Conservative Group to stand up for and champion the needs of the Council and local residents by highlighting the difficulties being caused with their colleagues in central Government rather than expecting the Council to continue being able to cope on the basis it had managed so far. There was little more the Council could do given the complex and increasing level of demand being experienced by local services, which he felt was now reaching unsustainable and in some cases dangerous levels. Councillor Butt felt there was a need for the Government to recognise that local authorities could not take anymore and highlighted that this was the reason the Council had needed to reluctantly recommend an increase in Council Tax. Despite providing some of the most lean and efficient levels of service the demands faced and lack of sufficient funding meant there was a need for the Council to consider every available option to protect services and reduce the impact of the Governments ongoing programme of austerity which had resulted in the overall level of funding provided to the authority being reduced by half. These ongoing demands were having an impact in a number of areas including Looked After Children, education (with schools increasing looking towards Academisation as an option) and investment in social housing (with the recent example of the Governments lack of financial support for fire safety works).

In summary Councillor Butt felt that this highlighted how the Government's austerity programme had failed, meaning it had never been more important for the Council and its elected representatives to be engaged in and committed towards the protection of public services. This was something, he pointed out that a Labour Administration would be committed to continue in terms of not only managing the ongoing financial pressure but also in recognising Brent as a fantastic place to live and work given their track record of achievements. On this basis, Councillor Butt formally commended and moved the recommendations within the report in relation to the Council's 2018/19 budget.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Warren to respond and formally move the Conservative Groups amendments to the budget proposals which Members were advised had been circulated as part of the first supplementary agenda pack for the meeting.

Councillor Warren began by highlighting what he felt was the misleading nature of the budget proposals which had been recommended for consideration by the Leader on the basis of the Council having no funding and therefore needing to seek an increase in Council Tax, which was also above the original level identified. He felt there was no need for such an increase and highlighted, as an example of a Labour controlled administration Hammersmith and Fulham who were again proposing a freeze in Council Tax.

The alternative budget proposed by the Brent Conservative Group would, he pointed out also result in a freeze in Council Tax and thanked the Chief Finance Officer and his team for the support and information they had provided in its preparation.

Looking back over the previous four years of the Labour Administration he highlighted a number of areas of concern regarding any potential legacy. These included:

- planning - given the number of reversed decisions and what he felt to be the unhealthy relationship developed between the leadership and certain developers including Quintain;
- the outcome of the Employment Tribunal case involving the former Director of HR and her subsequent financial settlement;
- the sale of Bridge Park to an offshore company;
- the asbestos concerns in Paddington Old Cemetery;
- the increase in Council Tax over the previous four years; and
- the establishment of the I4B company as a means of purchasing property on behalf of the Council;
- the constant increase in parking charges which had now placed Brent at 7th place across all London Boroughs for parking income received.

Moving on to consider the budget, Councillor Warren highlighted a need to consider this against the current economic context with unemployment rates at a 40 year low within Brent and strong levels of employment. He felt the Labour leadership had failed to recognise this, instead choosing to focus on the impact of austerity and need for prudence when the Council, he pointed out, had increased its share of

revenue achieved through Council Tax from £83.9m to £115m, held £12m in reserves and £43m in its Community Infrastructure Level (CIL) fund.

Councillor Warren then moved on to outline the amended budget proposals recommended by the Brent Conservative Group, which included:

- inclusion of £6m contribution from the New Homes Bonus received from central government for 2018/19 towards the Revenue as opposed to the underspent Capital budget;
- the addition of a £3m contribution from Brent's inclusion within the London Wide Business Rates pilot scheme as part of the Revenue budget, for which no provision had been made within the budget proposals moved by the Leader despite it being estimated that Brent could gain as much as £6.4m from the scheme in 2018/19;
- a reduction in level of contingency funding proposed by £600k. Councillor Warren highlighted that the Brent Conservative Group would be supporting the use of contingency funding for Special Needs Transport and a Council Tax exemption for care leavers contained within the main budget proposals;

In terms of growth and being able to strike what he felt was a balance in terms of the key spending priorities for local residents, Councillor Warren advised that his Group were recommending the following approach:

- maintaining the additional funding identified in the main budget proposals for Adult Social Care at £2.2m but not increasing the Council Tax to fund the increase, recognising that additional funding already being provided by central government;
- providing an additional £1m to fund repairs to pavements and roads across the borough;
- removing the Green Bin Tax;
- Retaining the free bulky waste collection service;
- Cancelling the proposed increase in burial and library charges included within the main budget proposals;
- Providing an additional £200k to support community libraries across the borough; and
- Introducing a 5% Council Tax discount for those residents on Universal Credit

In summing up Councillor Warren felt there was a need to challenge the view of the Labour Administration that they had had no option but to blame the government for their current financial position, highlighting that the proposals he was putting forward on behalf of the Brent Conservative Group were felt to represent a more balanced approach taking account of the priorities expressed by local residents. He felt there was a choice to be made and as a result advised he was proud to recommend and formally move the alternative budget proposals on behalf of Brent Conservative Group, as circulated in the first supplementary agenda pack.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Warren for his comments and then moved on to invite Councillor McLennan (Deputy Leader) to speak, as the next stage in the budget debate.

Councillor McLennan began by thanking the Council's Chief Executive and Management Team along with all the officers involved for their hard work, support and effort in preparing the budget report and proposals. She also took the opportunity to thank all Members involved in the work of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group established by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee for their efforts in reviewing and monitoring development and delivery of the budget proposals and also all residents and stakeholders who had contributed to the budget consultation process.

Councillor McLennan felt it was clear that local residents recognised the difficulties and challenges faced by the Council. Despite the comments made by Councillor Warren, she felt it was clear that the current difficulties had been caused as a result of austerity with many local residents suffering as a direct result of reductions in government funding for public services and roll out of welfare reforms such as Universal Credit.

In relation to the alternative budget proposals which had been moved by the Brent Conservative Group, Councillor McLennan felt they lacked real substance looking instead to decimate the limited reserves retained by the Council which she felt was an unsustainable approach. This compared to the budget proposals, moved by the Leader, which she pointed out had been based on a more sustainable approach involving a detailed and critical analysis of the Council's financial position.

Councillor McLennan also highlighted the difficulties and pressures being faced by many of the Council's partners, especially in the health sector and need for the Council to continue working jointly with these key stakeholders in order to address the financial challenges faced especially given the increased demand on services.

In terms of moving forward, Councillor McLennan felt that many local authorities were now at a critical point. It was no longer possible for local government to go on delivering the level of efficiencies it had to date without relief from the Government given the ongoing challenges needing to be addressed. In summing up she felt the budget proposals moved by the Leader represented a balanced approach with residents able to take confidence that the Labour Administration would continue to stand up for public services and the needs of local residents. She therefore endorsed and asked Members to formally accept the budget proposal before them and concluded by thanking all Members and the Cabinet for their support in preparing the budget and also the Chief Executive for her hard work and leadership.

The Mayor thanked Councillor McLennan and prior to opening the budget up to general debate, invited Councillor Kelcher, as Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee to speak in order to present the findings of the scrutiny budget review undertaken by a cross scrutiny Task Group lead by his Committee.

Councillor Kelcher began by outlining the approach taken towards the scrutiny review which was different than in previous years given the current budget had been set to cover a two year period. As the current budget was therefore at mid-point and no further savings proposals had been introduced the Task Group had taken a more strategic focus, divided between:

- looking at specific spending plans rather than undertaking a whole scale review; and
- looking at the impact which the plan to devolve and pool business rates across London Boroughs would have, given its potential significance in terms of Local Authority funding moving forward;

In terms of business rates the Task Group had examined the pilot arrangements due to be introduced across London in April 2018. As a result of its review the Task Group had identified four key criteria it was recommended should be adopted in terms of any strategic capital investment activity from the funds generated and alongside the establishment of a sub-regional investment process for managing any more strategic investment pot of funding. In addition it was recommended that as much focus as possible should be placed on supporting growth of the local private business sector.

In terms of the savings and spending plan review the Task Group had focussed on a small number of areas, although remained satisfied that the budget remained balanced and costed. Key areas looked at included:

- Bulky Waste – with the need identified to monitor requests and also give maximum exposure to alternative and more sustainable options in order to reduce the level of materials being disposed of in landfill and also costs;
- A review of advertising space in the borough and pavement licensing in order to consider any potential increase in income generation achievable from these sources;

Looking back over the last four years, Councillor Kelcher felt that it was testament to the hard work of officers and Members that Brent, given the problems now being experienced in other authorities, remained solvent with a sound budget.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Kelcher and advised that as the opening statements had now concluded he would open up the budget and amendments that had been put forward by the Brent Conservative Group for general debate by other Members.

Councillor S.Choudhury opened the debate by highlighting the importance in recognising the scale of the savings already delivered by the Council since 2010. Despite these savings, and the difficulties faced elsewhere, he congratulated all involved for their efforts in delivering a balanced budget which also protected local residents. Concern was, however expressed at the scale of the ongoing budget reductions faced over the next four years given the limited options left to deliver these whilst also protecting essential services. He was, however, confident in the current Administrations ability to continue delivering.

As this was her last Council meeting, Councillor Carr took the opportunity to thank all officers and local residents for their support during her time on the Council. She advised she would not be supporting the budget moved by the Majority Group and suggested that the Council might wish to review the number of elected ward Members and increase in Members Allowance budget as a means of achieving additional savings given the 25% increase in this budget over the previous 4 years.

Councillor Stopp advised this was also his final meeting as a councillor in Brent commenting on the gained experience in the role. He felt it was important to

recognise the impact of the social cost of austerity, with the Council as the first line of defence in terms of representing local people. Whilst recognising the challenging financial position, he also highlighted the importance of strong political leadership in continuing to drive the authority forward and in continuing to stand up for the rights of local people in what was an iconic borough.

Councillor Kabir advised that she was proud to support to budget proposals moved by the Leader, highlighting the additional support being provided for Looked After Children and exemption to Council Tax for Care Leavers living in the borough up to the age of 25.

Councillor Naheerathan also took the opportunity to thanks officers and the Cabinet for their efforts in delivering the budget and in working for the residents of the borough. He felt the lack of sufficient funding being provided by central government was the key reason for having to seek an increase in Council Tax and urged members of the Brent Conservative Group to highlight this as an issue with their colleagues in central Government.

Councillor Choudhry felt that the Leader & Deputy Leader has provided an excellent analysis of the core issues and current financial difficulties faced by the Council, which had driven the need for a prudent budget approach. He was therefore pleased to see the delivery of a balanced budget, which despite the challenges faced by the cuts in government funding was designed to enable the Council to continue delivering services and meeting their commitments, something other local authorities were struggling to achieve. He expressed disappointment at the alternative budget put forward by the Brent Conservative Group for its lack of detail and ended by expressing concern at the ongoing budget pressures faced by the Council, highlighting what he felt was the excellent support provided by finance officers in preparing the budget given the unhelpful nature of the government's last minute settlement figures.

Councillor R. Patel expressed support for the budget proposals moved by the Leader also highlighting the difficult financial circumstances created by the government's ongoing reduction in funding, particularly in relation to social care. He remained concerned that the government had decided not to address these issues which had left the Council struggling to provide essential services and the NHS in crisis. He congratulated the Leader and Cabinet for remaining positive in such challenging circumstances and for delivering what he felt was a fair, balanced and humane budget.

Focussing on the alternative budget proposes put forward, Councillor Miller queried how the Brent Conservative Group were intending to fund the list of commitments identified given the scale of cuts in funding that had been imposed on the Council by the government. He highlighted concerns being expressed by local residents at cuts in police funding and at the approach of the Government in passing the blame for budget cuts onto budget holders, despite them being responsible for funding provision. Concern was expressed at the focus of the alternative budget proposals and basis on which it was proposed to use future business rates to fund the proposals. Councillor Miller felt there was a clear choice for those concerned at the ongoing scale and impact of austerity in Brent which was to continue supporting a Labour lead Administration.

Councillor Duffy advised he would be supporting the budget moved by the Leader, although he felt there was a need to recognise the error made at the start of the current Administration by not considering any increase in Council Tax at an earlier stage. He supported the retention of reserves and despite the national crisis in adult social care and housing felt the Council was currently doing well in providing these services. He did, however, also highlight what he regarded as a problem in managing certain other services and contracts in order to ensure value for money. Specific concerns were highlighted in respect of management of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the Kingdom Securities contract, along with charging policy for bulky waste, green bins and burials with, he felt, the Council needing to consider alternative ways of managing these services.

Councillor Thomas advised that this would also be his last meeting as a councillor in Brent and thanked all Members and officers for their support during his time serving on the Council. He felt he was leaving the Borough in a better place than when he was first elected and specifically highlighted the improvements and real difference he had witnessed in terms of the life chances and opportunities available for children and young people praising both the Chief Executive and Strategic Director for Children and Young People for their dedication and support.

Councillor Nerva questioned the approach adopted by the Brent Conservative Group in terms of their alternative budget proposals, highlighting that almost 95% of Councils across the country were considering an increase in Council Tax as a result of government imposed funding reductions. This, he felt, had left Council Tax payers having to meet the gap with particular pressures identified in relation to social care. He remained proud that the Labour Administration were continuing to defend Brent residents with, for example, the funding of additional police officers and took the opportunity to thank front line staff for the services being delivered with more limited resources due to the Government's ongoing austerity measures.

Councillor Tatler, in commenting on the budget, felt it was important to highlight the difficult choices having to be considered due to the financial pressures being placed on local services by central government. She pointed out that many residents in the borough impacted as a result, did not have the necessary family or financial support available to assist them which was why the Labour Administration remained committed to supporting and providing opportunities for local residents and businesses to prosper. Initiatives highlighted included the support for growth of local businesses and Business Rates devolution pilot; establishment of the Brent Business Board; employment of four Town Centre Managers, provision of procurement opportunities for local businesses and the educational support being provided through Brent Start and Brent Works in assisting young people access employment and skills training, apprenticeships and work. Councillor Tatler advised she was pleased that the Labour Administration would continue to prioritise the Council's limited resources towards empowering local residents and business to grow.

Councillor Ezeajughi felt it was important, when considering the budget, to focus on the achievement of the current Administration in protecting vital front line services for the most vulnerable residents given the significant funding reductions imposed and roll out of Universal Credit by central government. Despite having its funding cut by almost a half the Council had continued to protect and support essential children and care services for the elderly with the additional 1% increase proposed.

In Council Tax designed to offset the difficult choices now having to be made. He felt it was only the budget moved by the Leader which would continue to protect the needs of the many over the few.

Councillor Hirani began by seeking to address the issue of the additional £800k provided by central government for adult social care, referred to by Councillor Warren when presenting the Brent Conservative Group's alternative budget. He confirmed that whilst additional funding had been received this did not offset the £9m reduction in social care funding over previous years and contained a number of restrictions in terms of its use e.g. not being available to fund ongoing day care packages. If anything, he felt this added to the pressure on social care budgets taken alongside the additional financial pressures within the NHS. In terms of the Council Tax increase he pointed out that this was also a measure being considered by 95% of other local authorities, which highlighted the funding crisis being experienced within local government. He felt this demonstrated the government's lack of understanding about the impact of their austerity measures on local services such as social care, NHS and public health. Locally, despite an increase in demand, the Council had continued to provide social care support for over 4000 local residents with the Labour Administration having taken the decision to prioritise protection of these services. This has led to difficult decisions having to be made in relation to other more universal services with, he pointed out, the Administration remaining committed to protecting those most in need. In absence of national leadership from government the Council would seek to continue to provide the best services possible for its local residents but he felt, there was also a need for government to fully recognise and reflect the impact which their ongoing programme of austerity was having on the provision of public services both nationally and locally.

Councillor Mili Patel then joined the debate. Whilst also taking the opportunity to congratulate Andrea Zafirakou for being shortlisted in the world teaching award she also commended her for highlighting the challenging social conditions faced by many of her pupils. Councillor Patel felt the position was not helped by the fact that Alperton Community School had had its central funding reduced by approx. £464k which equated to £419 per pupil and was a position replicated in many other schools. Councillor Patel felt it was important to recognise the impact of these cuts especially when considered alongside the associated closure of over 500 Children's Centres nationally. She felt all children deserved an opportunity to be educated and confirmed she would therefore be supporting the budget moved by the Leader, at the same time urging the Brent Conservative Group to join with the Labour Administration in seeking to highlight the ongoing impact of the government's austerity programme on children and young people.

Councillor Farah, in also supporting the budget moved by the Leader, took the opportunity to highlight the severe impact of the government's programme of welfare reform with, he pointed out, Brent being the second highest affected Borough in terms of the Benefit Cap. Whilst Brent's Council Tax Support Scheme was able to provide some assistance he remained concerned at the impact these reforms were having on some of the most vulnerable in society and for these reasons commended the budget to all councillors.

Councillor Colwill then spoke in support of the alternative budget proposals moved by Councillor Warren on behalf of the Brent Conservative Group expressing

concern at what he felt to be the lack of focus regarding the impact of the budget on elderly residents within the borough. Of particular concern was the impact of any increase in Council Tax and the state of repair of the pavements and roads in the borough with, he felt, thought also needing to be given to the way in which affordable housing was being allocated and support made available for all groups of vulnerable residents within the borough.

In supporting the budget proposals moved by the Leader:

- Councillor Colacicco felt it was important to recognise that the achievements listed by the Leader in opening the debate had been delivered within the context of Brent being listed within the 10% of most deprived Boroughs; over a quarter of children living in child poverty and the borough being one of the most overcrowded in the country given the availability of suitably sized accommodation. Taking this all into account she felt that the borough was currently in safe hands with an Administration that cared
- Councillor Moher highlighted what she felt to be the need for a reality check by Councillor Warren and the Brent Conservative Group given the constant attack on local government funding by central government and impact this was having locally; and
- Councillor Agha, as the final contribution of the debate, stated how proud he was of the strategic leadership of the borough and hard work of officers in continuing to deliver such efficient and effective services despite the scale of austerity imposed by central government. He also highlighted the practical and balanced nature of the budget proposals aimed at minimising the impact on local residents whilst seeking to encourage and attract business investment and job creation as a means of generating income to fund services. Taken together he felt this continued to make Brent a good place to live and work.

Having concluded the debate the Mayor thanked all Members for their contributions and then invited Councillor Butt to sum and respond to the points raised.

Councillor Butt thanked all Members for their contributions and questioned the approach outlined by the Brent Conservative Group in their alternative budget proposals, by highlighting that the recommended freeze in Council Tax would introduce an immediate additional £5m budgetary pressure. He also challenged:

- the proposed use outlined in the alternative budget proposals of non-recurrent funding for what he regarded as unsustainable giveaways which he felt would end up bankrupting the borough; and
- the fact that the Brent Conservative Group had chosen not to submit their alternative budget proposals for scrutiny in advance of the budget setting meeting or meaningfully used them to engage in the budget consultation process;

As a result, he felt that the alternative budget proposals lacked real substance with local residents deserving more from the Opposition. In contrast, he pointed out the proposals had had moved on behalf of the current Administration were serious and

designed to address the steps needing to be taken by the Council in order to continue delivering for the borough. As such he commended the budget to Council.

The Mayor advised that this now concluded the budget debate and he would therefore be moving to the vote on the recommended budget moved by Councillor Butt and also the amendments moved by Councillor Warren in the form of an alternative budget. As the recommendations to be considered related to the budget setting process he reminded Members that these would both require recorded votes to be taken.

The Mayor advised he would begin by taking a vote on the alternative budget moved by Councillor Warren as an amendment to the original budget proposals recommended in the report. On the recorded vote being taken, the alternative budget and amendments moved by Councillor Warren, was declared **LOST**.

Voting was recorded as follows:

For the Amendment (4)

Councillors Colwill, Kansagra, Maurice and Warren

Against the Amendment (40)

Councillors Aden, Agha, Ahmed, Bradley, Butt, Chan, S.Choudhary, A.Choudry, Colacicco, Conneelly, Daly, Dixon, Duffy, Ezeajughi, Farah, Harrison, Hector, Hirani, Kabir, Kelcher, Long, Marquis, McLeish, McLennan, Miller, Moher, W Mitchell-Murray, Naheerathan, Nerva, M Patel, R Patel, Perrin, Pitruzzella, Shahzad, Ketan Sheth, Krupa Sheth, Stopp, Tatler, Thomas and Van Kalwala.

Abstentions to the Amendment (3)

Councillors Carr, Chohan and Mahmood

The Mayor then moved on the substantive budget recommendations as set out in the report from the Chief Finance Officer and moved by Councillor Butt. On a recorded vote being taken the substantive budget proposals, as moved by Councillor Butt, were declared **CARRIED**.

Voting was recorded as follows:

For the Motion (40)

Councillors Aden, Agha, Ahmed, Bradley, Butt, Chan, S.Choudhary, A.Choudry, Colacicco, Conneelly, Daly, Dixon, Duffy, Ezeajughi, Farah, Harrison, Hector, Hirani, Kabir, Kelcher, Long, Marquis, McLeish, McLennan, Miller, Moher, W Mitchell-Murray, Naheerathan, Nerva, M Patel, R Patel, Perrin, Pitruzzella, Shahzad, Ketan Sheth, Krupa Sheth, Stopp, Tatler, Thomas and Van Kalwala.

Against the Motion (4)

Councillors Colwill, Kansagra, Maurice and Warren

Abstentions to the Motion (3)

Councillors Carr, Chohan and Mahmood

Accordingly, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- (1) An overall 4.99% increase in the Council's element of Council Tax for 2018/19, with 2% as a precept for Adult Social Care and a 2.99% general increase, be agreed;
- (2) The General Fund Revenue Budget for 2018/19, as summarised in Appendix A of the report, be agreed;
- (3) The cost pressures, technical adjustments and savings, as detailed in Appendix B of the report, be agreed;
- (4) The Housing Revenue Account Budget, as set out in Section 8 of the report, be agreed;
- (5) The dedicated schools' grant, as set out in Section 9 of the report be agreed;
- (6) The report from the Budget Scrutiny Panel, as set out at Appendix C of the report, be noted;
- (7) The Capital Programme, as set out at Appendix D of the report, be agreed;
- (8) The Treasury Management Strategy and the Annual Investment Strategy for 2018/19, as set out at Appendix E of the report, be agreed;
- (9) The Prudential Indicators measuring affordability, capital spending, external debt and treasury management, as set out at Appendix F of the report, be agreed;
- (10) The advice of the Director of Legal and HR Services, as set out at Appendix G of the report, be noted;
- (11) The schedules of fees and charges to be set by the Council, as set out at Appendix H, and the proposed new Fees and Charges Policy, including the officer delegated powers to which it referred, be agreed;
- (12) The results of consultation, as set out in Section 7 and detailed in Appendix I of the report, be noted;
- (13) The Pay Policy Statement for 2018/19, as set out in Appendix J of the report, be agreed;

NOTE: These recommendations only include a provisional Council Tax level for the GLA as its final budget had not been agreed when the report was dispatched. This means that the statutory calculation of the total amount of Council Tax under Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 may be amended by the final Greater London Authority precept.

(14) In relation to the Council Tax for 2018/19:

The following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2018/19, in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended:

- (a) £977,851,775 being the aggregate of the amount that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.
- (b) £862,818,362 being the aggregate of the amounts that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
- (c) £115,033,413 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year.
- (d) £1,202.31 being the amount at (c) above, divided by the amount for the tax base of 95,677, agreed by the General Purposes Committee on 8 Dec 2017, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

(e) Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
801.54	935.13	1,068.72	1,202.31	1,469.49	1,736.67	2,003.85	2,404.62

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (d) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

- (15)** It be noted that, for the year 2018/19, the proposed Greater London Authority precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, in respect of the Greater London Authority, for each of the categories of dwellings are as shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
196.15	228.85	261.54	294.23	359.61	425.00	490.38	588.46

- (16)** Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at paragraph (14)(e) and (15), the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2018/19 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
997.69	1,163.98	1,330.26	1,496.54	1,829.10	2,161.67	2,494.23	2,993.08

- (17)** It be noted that the Chief Finance Officer has determined that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2018/19 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;
- (a)** The Chief Finance Officer be and is hereby authorised to give due notice of the said Council Tax in the manner provided by Section 38(2) of the 1992 Act;
- (b)** The Chief Finance Officer be and is hereby authorised, when necessary, to apply for a summons against any council tax payer or non-domestic ratepayer on whom an account for the said tax or rate and any arrears has been duly served and who has failed to pay the amounts due to take all subsequent necessary action to recover them promptly;
- (c)** The Chief Finance Officer be and is hereby authorised to collect revenues and distribute monies from the Collection Fund and is authorised to borrow or to lend money in accordance with the regulations to the maximum benefit of each fund;
- (18)** In the event that the GLA sets a different Council Tax precept to that set out in this report (which was the published provisional amount at the date of despatch) that authority be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer to vary the amounts at (15), but only insofar as to reflect the GLA decision, and to make consequential, but no other, amendments to the amounts at (16).

9. **Members' Allowances Scheme 2018/19**

Councillor Butt introduced the report from the Director of Legal and HR Services which sought approval to the making of a Members' Allowance Scheme, in the proposed terms, as set out in the report, for the 2018/19 Financial Year.

Councillor Butt highlighted that the report included details of the recent review of Members Allowances undertaken by an Independent Remuneration Panel, which had been established by London Councils on behalf of London Boroughs. Whilst recommending some changes to the scheme as it currently operated, it was also being recommended that a more detailed review be undertaken following the local elections in May 2018 in order to reflect any constitutional changes to the Council's

political management arrangements with the outcome of that review to be reported back to the Annual Council meeting.

As there were no other members who indicated they wanted to speak on the report the Mayor put the recommendations to the vote by a show of hands and they were declared **CARRIED**

RESOLVED:

- (1) To make the Members' Allowances Scheme in the proposed terms set out in the report, for the 2018/19 financial year.
- (2) To authorise the Director of Legal and HR Services to comply with the statutory requirements to publicise the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme.
- (3) To note that a more detailed review of the Members' Allowance Scheme will be undertaken following the local elections in May 2018 in order to reflect any constitutional changes to the Council's political management arrangements with the outcome of the review being reported back to the Annual Council meeting in May 2018.

10. **Urgent Business**

The Mayor advised Members there were no urgent items of business for consideration.

As this was the final Council business meeting of his year in office, the Mayor ended by thanking all Members for their support and co-operation over the last year and advised that the next meeting would be the Annual Council and Mayor Making ceremony on Monday 14 May 2018.

The meeting then ended at 9.18pm