



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

**Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
held on Wednesday 19 February 2020 at 6.00 pm**

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Ernest Ezeajughi

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor Lia Colacicco

COUNCILLORS:

Abdi	Aden
Afzal	Agha
Ahmed	Akram
M Butt	S Butt
Chan	Chappell
Chohan	S Choudhary
A Choudry	Colwill
Conneely	Crane
Daly	Dar
Denselow	Dixon
Donnelly-Jackson	Ethapemi
Farah	Gbajumo
Georgiou	Gill
Hassan	Hirani
Hylton	Johnson
Kabir	Kansagra
Kelcher	Kennelly
Knight	Lo
Long	Mahmood
Mashari	Maurice
McLeish	McLennan
Miller	J Mitchell Murray
W Mitchell Murray	Naheerathan
Nerva	M Patel
RS Patel	Sangani
Shah	Shahzad
Ketan Sheth	Krupa Sheth
Southwood	Stephens
Tatler	Thakkar

1. **Apologies for Absence**

The Mayor advised that direct apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Hector, Lloyd and Perrin.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Hassan and Murray.

2. **Mayors Statement Order of Business**

Before consideration of the formal agenda, the Mayor informed members of a change to the order of business set out on the original summons. Given the need to consider the Appointments to Committees and Other Bodies in conjunction with the review of political proportionality, the Mayor advised that in accordance with Standing Order 30, he intended to move that item so it followed the report on the Representation of Political Groups on Committees.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

- (1) The business to be considered at the meeting be re-arranged in the following order:

- Agenda Item 9 – Appointments to Committees and Other Bodies

- (2) The remaining items of business follow in the same order as listed on the agenda

3. **Procedural Motion - Conduct of Business**

The Mayor advised that as this was the Council's formal budget and Council Tax 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.

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

Debate on the Budget and Council Tax 2020-21 & 2021-22

The debate on the budget be structured as follows:

- (1) The Leader of the Council be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes in presenting the 2020/2021 and 2021/22 Budget and Council Tax report to the meeting, after which the following arrangements would apply:
 - (a) The Leader of the Conservative Group (or their nominated representative) be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes.
 - (b) The Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Resources 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.
- (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 prior to a recorded vote being taken on each Groups budget proposals (to be moved en bloc).

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 25 November 2019 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to the following amendment:

Inclusion within the Mayors Announcements of reference made to the Ochanja-Onitsha fire disaster, on which the Mayor had offered his condolences, thoughts and prayers to the Government and people affected by the tragedy in his home state of Anambra in Nigeria.

5. Declarations of Interest

The Mayor invited Members to declare any personal 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 Crane declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 6 (Budget and Council Tax 2020/2021 and 2021/22) as a Council appointed Board Member on i4B and First Wave Housing.

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

The Mayor made the following announcements:

(i) Royal Visit

The Mayor began by taking the opportunity to thank Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cornwall for her visit to Brent earlier that day. He informed members that the Duchess had joined the Borough's Deputy Lieutenant, Chief Executive, councillors and representatives from the Borough of Culture team to tour the Granville Centre and Kiln Theatre.

The visit had provided an opportunity to showcase the Borough of Culture programme and also the young talent taking part in each event, with the Duchess hugely impressed by the Borough's commitment to culture and the contribution of young people.

The Mayor thanked all those who had made the visit such a success and also everyone who had contributed towards the Borough of Culture RISE opening ceremony, which had taken place in January.

(ii) Formal welcome of newly elected Councillors & Assistant Chief Executive

Following the by-elections held in January 2020, the Mayor moved on to formally welcome Councillors Akram, Georgiou, Lloyd and Shah as the four newly elected ward councillors for Alperton, Barnhill and Wembley Central. He wished them well, highlighting the rewarding nature of the role.

In addition, a welcome was also extended to the Council's newly appointed Assistant Chief Executive – Shazia Hussain.

(iii) Mayors Christmas Charity Event

The Mayor advised members that he was grateful for their continued support in his fundraising activities and thanked everyone who had attended his Christmas Gala Dinner on 6th December. This had been an extremely enjoyable evening and raised a substantial amount of money for his chosen charities.

(iv) New Year's Day Parade

The Mayor advised he had been pleased to attend the London New Year's Day parade where he had been proud to support Mahogany in Harlesden, who had taken part on behalf of the Mayor's office. The Mayor was delighted to announce that Brent had won first place in the competition, resulting in a £1,000 prize donation to his charities. Despite the cold, it had been a wonderful day and he congratulated all those who had taken part.

(v) Bangladesh Victory Day Flag raising

The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor for standing in on his behalf at the flag raising ceremony for Bangladesh Victory Day on Monday 16th December in the Paul Daisley Gardens.

(vi) Pride of Brent

The Mayor was pleased to advise that he and the Chief Executive had been able to invite many long serving staff, unable to attend the Pride of Brent awards, to tea in the Mayor's Parlour. This had been an enjoyable morning providing a further opportunity to recognise the hard work and dedication of staff across the Council, some of whom had completed 50 years service.

(vii) Holocaust Memorial Day

The Mayor informed Members that he was honoured to have attended two memorial ceremonies to mark the Holocaust Memorial Day, one of which had taken place at the Civic Centre and the other hosted by the Greater London Assembly.

Providing a time for reflection, he felt the memorials had highlighted the importance in continuing to challenge hatred and prejudice at every level.

(viii) LGBT+ Flag raising & Rainbow Pedestrian crossing

The Mayor advised he had been delighted to join staff, councillors and residents to celebrate diversity, inclusion and tolerance at the recent ribbon-cutting event for the

rainbow crossing outside the civic centre and also at the rainbow flag-raising ceremony hosted at the Civic Centre to celebrate LGBT+ History Month.

The Mayor felt that the crossing and flag-raising event were important in signaling the Council's support for inclusion and LGBT+ communities in Brent and beyond, many of whom he pointed out were unfortunately still experiencing discrimination and violence.

(ix) Brent International Women's Day 2020

The Mayor was pleased to announce that Brent would be celebrating international women's day, with an event on Tuesday 10 March. This would feature a range of key note speakers including Baroness Lola Young and Nabila Mallick who had high-profile experience in the areas of law, immigration, politics, campaigning, ethics, leadership and education. All members were encouraged to attend the event.

(x) Chinese New Year & Coronavirus

Along with the Deputy Lieutenant, The Mayor announced that he had been pleased to host an event at the Civic Centre on 2 February to celebrate the Chinese New Year. The event involved a show by the Chinese lions and provided an opportunity to bring together members of the Chinese community in Brent.

The Mayor also advised members that he had been following the recent outbreak of Coronavirus in Wuhan province and its spread across mainland China, which he pointed out had sadly led to significant loss of life. Offering his thoughts and prayers to all those affected, the Mayor had written, on behalf of the London Borough of Brent, to offer his solidarity with the people of China and the Sichuan province in the fight against the spread of the virus. The Mayor also paid tribute to the courage and bravery of those involved in tackling the spread of this virus across the world, including the health care professionals who are working so tirelessly to protect and treat their fellow citizens.

(xi) Gala Fundraising Dinner and other announcements

The Mayor reminded Members that his final Gala Fundraising dinner would be taking place towards the end of April 2019, with arrangements in the process of being finalised and confirmed.

The Mayor also informed members that due to adverse weather conditions, his charity abseiling event on 14 February had unfortunately had to be postponed. Attempts were being made to reschedule the event for early March so members were advised they could still donate if they had not already done so.

(xii) Petitions

Finally, the Mayor drew members' attention to the list of current petitions along with action being taken to deal with them, which had been tabled at the meeting, in accordance with Standing Order 66.

Having finished his announcements the Mayor advised that given the change agreed to the order of the agenda, he would now move straight on to Agenda Item 6 – the Budget and Council Tax setting report 2020/21 – 2021/22 setting report 2020/21 – 2021/22.

7. Budget and Council Tax 2020/21

The Council received a report from the Director of Finance setting out the Council's budget proposals for 2020/21 and business plans for 2021/22 and 2022/23. Included within the report were the results of the budget consultation, scrutiny and equalities processes along with a summary of the overall financial position, risks, issues and uncertainties facing the Council over the medium term.

In accordance with the procedural motion agreed at the start of the meeting, the Mayor invited Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) to introduce and move the report setting out the budget and Council Tax proposals for 2020/21 – 2021/22.

Councillor Muhammed Butt began by welcoming the newly elected councillors to their debut Council meeting for one of most strategically important meetings of the year, given the difficult financial position faced by Council and need to consider setting yet another austerity constrained budget. This was, he felt it important to highlight, despite the Conservative Government claiming the period of austerity was over.

Outlining what he felt had been the damage to public services inflicted over the last decade as a result of the current Conservative and previous coalition Government's policies in respect of Welfare Reform, ending of the Decent Homes and Building Schools for the Future Programmes and introduction of tuition fees, he felt now more than ever there was a need to ensure councilors (whatever their political allegiance) continued to stand up for the local communities they represented. Residents, he felt, had the right to expect maximum effort and the highest professional standards from their elected representatives and officers at all levels across the Council.

Whilst recognising the difficult choices faced, Councillor Muhammed Butt began by focusing on the positives, with Brent being London's official Borough of Culture for 2020. This would provide a real opportunity for the Council to reacquaint itself with the true wealth and real value that existed within its borders. He pointed out that whilst Brent might not be the most affluent of boroughs in which to live, it was blessed with an unrivaled abundance of diversity, with this cumulative cultural wealth far exceeding the already considerable sum of the boroughs many and varied parts contributing to Brent truly being the Borough of Cultures.

Whilst the previous years had been draining, Councillor Muhammed Butt felt there was a need now more than ever, for everyone as residents, citizens and representatives, to continue playing their part as advocates and remain active as opposed to indifferent in terms of championing, defending and protecting public services and in standing up for a fair and just society.

Turning to the budget proposals, Councillor Butt highlighted the ongoing pressures faced by the Council and efforts required to be able to recommend yet another

balanced budget. This had, however, been achieved under increasingly difficult circumstances, with the aim being to minimise the negative impact on residents across the borough and to those more vulnerable members of society relying on public services for support. In these cases, he felt a compassionate and rational government should be looking to lighten loads and invest in necessary interventions in order to prevent more wide scale and longer lasting impact. He did not, however, feel this had been the approach adopted by the Government who had instead chosen to impose further cuts across the public sector and pursue their fair funding review. As a result, the latest spending review could mean Brent losing the equivalent of another £14m on top of the £187m already lost as a result of Government austerity. On top of this, it was pointed out that schools in Brent could lose at least another £16m of funding, which was in addition to the full academic year's worth of funding lost as a result of the successive funding reductions backed by the current and previous coalition Government's. These also came at a time when other education reforms and funding reductions had forced many schools across the country into structural deficits which, he felt, it would be difficult to address without significant financial support or cuts to the quality of children's and young people's academic experience and would not only undermine such a vital infrastructure but also create real and lasting damage.

Highlighting what he felt to be the lack of compassion and impunity of the current Government and Prime Minister, Councillor Butt then moved on to focus on the challenge faced by the Local Authority in terms of explaining its predicament and in seeking to lobby for more resource whilst having to cope with less. The Council was a collector of taxes, a receiver of fees and charges, and a beneficiary of grants and in return commissioned, managed, and provided a wide range of services and facilities. In this role, it was important they were able to anticipate and react, acknowledge and respond working on the basis of collective experience, robust evidence and best practice. However, he pointed out, this was not always enough with the Council needing to constantly review its use of resources and look beyond the balance sheet in order to focus not only on its income and expenditure but also on social values, including empathy, humility and humanity. In these circumstances, Councillor Butt felt there was a need to maintain an open and honest approach and to recognise it would not always be possible to come up with all the solutions.

In terms of the budget to be presented to Council, Councillor Butt pointed out this was supposed to have been based on a three-year financial strategy, however a lack of clarity from the Government had meant this was not possible with the Council having to operate instead on a 12 month cycle. Whilst not entirely negative, this was less beneficial than being able to plan with higher degrees of certainty over the longer term and was not a cost free approach given the lack of resources required to meet the challenges faced, including issues such as climate change. To address these issues would require not only sustainable resources but also support and buy-in from all residents for the compromises that would need to be made in establishing the strongest possible foundations for what would need to be a comprehensive and holistic response. The Council, he pointed out, were re-evaluating their capacity to ensure they could deliver on the response required, in the same way they had over the last 10 years to meet the challenge presented by government austerity.

In summing up, Councillor Butt advised that the Administration, in presenting its budget proposals, had recognised the difficult need to strike a balance between the delivery of longer term more strategic aims and more immediate priorities/demand. Whilst not an easy budget to develop and set, he remained confident of the approach outlined given the resilient, cooperative and robust nature of local communities across the borough and way in which he felt the proposals would guarantee safe passage through the storm that was still raging over the year ahead. On this basis, he formally commended and moved the recommendations within the report.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Kansagra to respond to the budget proposals on behalf of the Conservative Group.

Councillor Kansagra began by highlighting what he felt to be the misleading nature of the context to the budget setting process outlined by Councillor Butt in relation to austerity, given the economic collapse presided over by Labour when in power. He felt the position locally was more positive than presented by the Leader, referring to the way in which the necessary budget reductions had been achieved in order to ensure Brent was now a lean and efficient authority.

With the permission of the Mayor, he then handed over to Councillor Maurice to present the alternative budget proposals being moved by the Conservative Group. Highlighting the need to address and recognise the long term impact of the economic collapse presided over by the previous Labour Government he outlined the rate of economic growth subsequently presided over by the Conservative Government with the national debt shrinking, businesses growing and rates of employment as their highest since the 1970s. Turning to the Council's budget proposals, whilst not seeking to challenge the 2% ring-fence in Council Tax relating to Adult Social Care, he felt it important to recognise that the Government had set a limit and not target for the overall permitted increase in Council Tax, capped at 4.99%. For this reason, the Conservative Group were only proposing a 2.5% Council Tax increase. Councillor Kansagra then outlined the other key proposals within the Conservative Groups alternative budget, which included:

- Removing the proposed growth to support the London Living Wag, which they believed could be mitigated through the National Minimum Wage;
- Removal of the proposed landlord incentive scheme and allocation of a proportion of the New Homes Bonus to the Council's Revenue budget;
- Abolition of the Green Bin Tax in order to support the Council's green policies;

In concluding, Councillor Kansagra advised that whilst the Conservative Group had recognised officer advice provided in relation to the potential financial risks associated with their alternative budget proposals they had provided mitigations and the basis for a balanced budget, whilst allowing support to continue being provided for young people, the vulnerable and elderly and measures to improve highway infrastructure. On this basis, the alternative budget proposals were formally moved and commended to Council.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Kansagra 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 officers involved for their hard work, innovation, support and effort in preparing the budget report and proposals. She also took the opportunity to thank the Cabinet and all Members involved in the work of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group 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. Given the detailed nature of the budget proposals that had been presented to Council she was disappointed that the alternative budget proposals provided by the Conservative Group had been so limited in terms their length and overall detail.

Despite being told it had ended, Councillor McLennan felt it was clear that the Government's austerity programme was far from over. With reference to the comments made by members of the Conservative Group, she highlighted the current pressures being caused as a direct result of the ongoing reduction in government funding for public services and resulting impact on local residents. In addition, she highlighted significant concerns relating to the impact of the delay and potential outcome of the Government's current Local Government Fair Funding review along with the delay in the outcome of the current spending review.

Whilst recognising the challenging nature of the budget proposals and extent of further reductions members were being asked to consider, Councillor McLennan felt it was important to recognise the difficult choices that had already been made in order to protect essential services for those most in need. Given the prudent approach adopted by the Council, it may, she pointed out, be possible to limit to extent to which the proposed budget reductions would need to be implemented with the robust nature of the assumptions on which the budget proposals had been based also commended.

Commenting on the divisive nature of Council Tax, Councillor McLennan felt it important to highlight that there would unfortunately still be a need to recommend an increase as the process for identifying further savings and service transformation became increasingly difficult. In summing up, she felt the budget proposals moved by the Leader whilst challenging would enable residents to take confidence that the Council would continue to stand up for public services and the needs of local residents. She therefore endorsed and commended the budget to Members for approval.

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, although impacted by the General Election being called mid-way through, had still managed to maintain a strategic and policy led focus on the proposals. Whilst disappointed at the lack of opportunity to review the alternative budget proposals from the Conservative Group, he took the opportunity to thank all members, officers and other stakeholders for their engagement in the scrutiny process, which he pointed out, had been designed to ensure a "critical friend" approach. The outcome from the Budget Scrutiny Task Group review had been presented to Cabinet, with the key recommendations identified as follows:

- Further monitoring be undertaken by Audit Committee in order to analyse the council's recent capital investments to discover the extent to which they had achieved their goal of reducing Brent's ongoing revenue costs;
- The Council should explore all possible avenues to support businesses in Brent, particular by looking at how local public sector organisations procured services;
- The Council should explore the opportunity to extend 'spend to save' opportunities, for example by employing trading standards officers to rigorously pursue money under proceeds of crime legislation;
- Use of Brent's Infrastructure Delivery Plan to assist in directing how Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) spending was prioritised in order to boost the economy alongside a review of the opportunities to drive efficiency by aggregating use of NCIL funds;
- In year mitigations considered in relation to the budget and delivery of savings targets needed to involve a clear member led sign off process, especially if they involved any change in policy, with bespoke local government finance training also being made available for councillors;
- Recognising the ongoing financial challenges and pressures being placed on the Council as a result of the Governments approach to public sector funding, the Council should look at what alternative methods of service provision or providers may be available and develop a strategy to ensure residents were signposted to these alternatives, including the voluntary and community sector wherever possible;
- The Council should step up its campaign for the powers to levy a tourist tax in Brent;
- In terms of the response on the climate emergency, it had been recommended that the Council consider ring-fencing money generated by the one-off sale of additional burial plots to support a programme of street tree planting and maintenance. As a result of this recommendation, Councillor Kelcher was pleased to confirm that Cabinet had agreed as a starting point, to any overall underspend across the General Fund accrued at the end of March 2020 being ring fenced and bought forward as proposals for spending on the climate change emergency. Given the significant nature of the challenges faced it was anticipated that the measures to tackle climate change would form an increasing element of the Council's budget proposals over future years.

Councillor Kelcher ended by acknowledging the difficult financial context within which the budget had needed to be set, but felt that the Task Group had sought to undertake a fair assessment of the proposals offering what he hoped were helpful comments and suggestions for further consideration. As the next step, he looked forward to receiving a formal response from the Cabinet on the recommendations made, and to continue working constructively with the Executive in relation to future development and ongoing delivery of the budget.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Kelcher and advised that as the opening statements had now concluded he would open up the budget proposals for general debate by other Members.

Cllr S Choudhary opened the debate by thanking all those involved for their efforts in preparing the budget proposals, which once again had been a challenging

process given the £174m of savings already achieved and further reductions of £7.4m identified in order to continue delivering a balanced budget. Whilst this had resulted in difficult choices having to be made, it was felt the proposals would ensure the Council was able to maintain and strengthen its overall financial position in a way that would also ensure support continued to be provided for local residents and tenants. Whilst concern was highlighted in relation to the overspend on Community & Wellbeing it was recognised that this had been created as a result of the increasing demand on services and insufficient level of funding provided by the Government to support public services for the most vulnerable.

Other members who spoke in support of the budget proposals were as follows:

Cllr Mahmood also took the opportunity to thank and congratulate members and officers for their efforts in producing a balanced budget for 2020/21, highlighting the challenging circumstances in which this had needed to be delivered given the Conservative Governments continued austerity and its ongoing impact on the most vulnerable in society. Whilst keen to provide more there was, he felt, a need to recognise the extent of the challenges faced and efforts being made to set a legal, fair and realistic budget that remained focussed on the provision of vital services to all residents including support for children, adults, vulnerable, elderly and the homeless. He ended by also taking the chance to thank the Mayor for his service to the people of Brent and in support of his local charities over the mayoral year to date.

Cllr Georgiou then made his inaugural address as newly elected ward councillor for Alperton Ward. Thanking local residents for having elected him as their new Liberal Democrat councillor he also thanked officers for the support provided since his election onto the Council and the Leader for his welcome at the start of the meeting. Referring to his ward, he felt local residents in Alperton had provided a simple message to the Labour Administration in terms of “stop neglecting us”. Highlighting the concerns raised during his campaign in relation to the state of his ward, he expressed concern at the level of reserves currently held in relation to the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) and felt these needed to be invested in the local areas from which they had been generated in order to assist in unblocking the backlog of urgent works required across not only Alperton but the rest of the borough. Given this lack of investment he advised that he would not be supporting the budget proposals or amendments moved by the Conservative Group. Concern was also expressed at the proposed increase in level of Council Tax, which he felt would mean residents in his ward having to pay more for less, whilst NCIL reserves still remained to be invested.

Councillor Choudhry expressed disappointment at the alternative budget proposals moved by the Conservative Group highlighting the potential risks identified which he felt were unacceptable and made them unviable as options for consideration. In contrast, he commended the Leader and Deputy Leader for the difficult choices they had needed to take over the current and previous years in order to maintain a prudent budget approach and enable the Council to continue delivering services and meeting their commitments, which he pointed out many other local authorities were now struggling to achieve.

Councillor Nerva, whilst aware of the difficult choices having to be considered, felt it was important to also focus on the socially just nature of the budget as highlighted

through the proposed roll out of the London Living Wage in relation to social care procurement and its impact in terms of supporting care workers, the ethical care charter and mitigating reliance on other welfare benefits. He also highlighted concerns being expressed across a number of local authorities in London regarding the process through which the Government were seeking to address and review local government finance. In seeking to address the comments from Councillor Georgiou, he also felt it important to outline the way in which NCIL was funded and allocated along with the fact this had already been identified for further review over the coming year. In concluding, Councillor Nerva also felt it important to reflect on the holistic approach being developed in relation to addressing the climate emergency across the borough, which he looked forward to seeing continued as part of future budgets.

Councillor M.Patel who, focussing on children and young people, outlined the positive progress being made by the current Labour Administration. Whilst recognising the challenging circumstances in which the Council was having to operate given the impact of the Conservative Government's 70% funding reduction on youth services since 2010, she highlighted how the Council's budget proposals had been focussed on prioritising the most vulnerable. This had resulted in the authorities highest ever OFSTED rating for Children's Services of good and outstanding for experience and progress of care leavers with praise identified by the Inspectors for the leadership and approach adopted in Brent and she thanked staff for all their efforts. In terms of innovation, she highlighted the proposals supported within the budget to establish family hubs focusing on the local delivery of services and wrap around care for those up to 18 (and 25 with special education needs) in key neighbourhoods across the borough. As well as these measures, she also highlighted the support within the budget to continue the delivery of youth service provision at Roundwood Youth Centre, demonstrating the aim to protect the most vulnerable and ongoing delivery of children's and youth services within Brent. This focus had also been maintained, on a London wide basis, through the Mayor for London, with the example provided of the Young Londoners Fund. Councillor M.Patel felt this was in contrast to the approach adopted by the Conservative Government who, in addition to the impact arising from their cuts in spending on children and youth services had now, she pointed out, also announced a further reduction in funding for the Troubled Families programme. Despite assurances, she felt it was clear that austerity had not ended and support was sought from the Conservative Group in actively lobbying against these reductions and in seeking to positively influence the outcomes for young people across Brent recognising the difference that could be achieved given investment in services for young people.

Councillor Miller who began by highlighting concern at the impact of the proposals identified in the Conservative Group alternative budget proposals, given the extent of the budget savings and funding restrictions already imposed by the Government across public services. Of specific concern was the impact which the significant cuts imposed had had within community safety, including funding for the Metropolitan Police. Despite the extent of these cuts, the innovative partnership work undertaken in Brent had seen one of the most significant recent reductions in crime levels across London, particularly in relation to knife crime, which he felt was testament to the ongoing work on the Safer Brent Strategy. Whilst also recognising the challenging position faced by the Council, Councillor Miller welcomed the continued support for community safety priorities within the current budget proposals, which included provision for further outreach and mental health support

work. He also welcomed the support identified for the Voluntary and Community Sector in their process of transitioning to a new model of delivery and support and on this basis also commended the budget to Council.

Cllr Hirani, who despite recognising the impact which cuts being imposed on local authorities and across the public sector in general were having on local communities, felt it was also important to highlight the opportunities provided as a result of Brent's status as London Borough of Culture in 2020. Notwithstanding the challenges faced, he felt this provided a unique opportunity to provide a long lasting cultural legacy for the borough. He also expressed concern regarding the Conservative Groups alternative budget proposals in relation to removal of provision for the London Living Wage, given the impact on local residents. The need was also identified to recognise the hard work undertaken in developing the budget proposals that were designed to minimise, as far as possible, the impact on local residents and on this basis, also commended the budget to all members.

Councillor Tatler, who also 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 as a result of austerity. Referring to the earlier comments made by Councillor Georgiou regarding NCIL she felt it was important to recognise the criteria established for its use and the difference between capital and revenue spend on schemes, with specific examples provided of its use to support local community schemes including, as an example, Morland Gardens. Whilst the Council's approach had been to protect local residents from the worst impact of the Government's austerity programme she felt the Government's approach could best be summarised in their newly launched immigration policy which appeared to define the skill and social value of a person by what they were able to contribute financially. In contrast, the Council had sought to take difficult decisions in order to continue supporting the most vulnerable and providing opportunities for local communities to prosper, which had been directly supported by the ambitious yet realistic nature of both the Revenue and Capital Programme included for consideration within the budget proposals. Taking a more targeted yet creative approach, schemes highlighted included the investment in new homes and community facilities in South Kilburn; the provision of new community library facilities; support for small businesses and town centres; use of CIL funding (of which over £6m had already been allocated to support 200 local community projects across the borough) and purchase of the Picture Place building in Harlesden to provide a multi-functional community facility. In addition, she was pleased to highlight the that delivery of the Council's Facility Management service had also been bought back in-house which also demonstrated the commitment to staff through access to the London Living Wage. This represented what she felt was another good example of what could be achieved despite the divisive austerity measures being pursued by the Conservative Government.

Councillor Afzal who took the opportunity to highlight the lasting legacy on Brent created by the Government's ongoing programme of austerity demonstrated, through the reduction in funding for schools, programme of welfare reforms and increased levels of child poverty and use of foodbanks across the borough. In contrast, he felt, the legacy created by the Labour Administration in Brent had been a focus on protecting local residents and those most vulnerable or at risk and in seeking to the make the borough a safe and welcoming place to live . Despite the

restrictions placed on the Council by the Conservative Government, he was pleased these were the values, which the budget proposals sought to build upon.

Councillor Krupa Sheth, who also highlighted the efforts being made to protect local residents and her pride in the environmental initiatives it had been possible to deliver and for which provision had been included within the current budget proposals. These included the success of the Bee corridors, wild flower meadows and other bio-diversity measures introduced across the borough, the borough wide clean-up programme being led by Neighbourhood Managers, work of the Environmental Enforcement Team in tackling fly-tipping, introduction of LED street lighting, tree planting programme, parking enforcement and awards gained by the Highways Team for their work in promoting active travel. Additional measures highlighted included progress on delivering the £20m programme of highway and footway maintenance and repairs and the progress being made in addressing the Climate Emergency. Whilst the challenge in delivering these measures against the background of severe financial restrictions imposed by the Conservative Government remained, Councillor Krupa Sheth was confident progress would continue to be made and in commending the budget to Council thanked staff and residents for their ongoing support.

Councillor Kennelly highlighted what he felt to be the Conservative Groups lack of vision when compared to the ambition within the budget proposals moved by the Leader in seeking to set a balanced budget. Highlighting the impact of cuts made to public services including the police and NHS, he also felt there was a need to recognise the growing crisis in social care with further details on the measures proposed to tackle this awaited from the Government in the form of a Health & Social Care Green Paper. In concluding, Councillor Kennelly highlighted the need to be careful of unfunded promises and commended the budget proposals, which he felt presented a balanced and fair approach designed to maintain support for those most in need.

Councillor Daly who took the opportunity to highlight the reality of the cuts and suffering being caused within Brent as a result of the Governments programme of austerity, especially in relation to vulnerable children and young people and the voluntary and community sector. In commending the budget she felt it was important to recognise and thank the voluntary and community sector for their support and assistance in providing many essential services, which had helped to ensure a balanced budget and enabled the Council to focus its stretched resources on other priority areas.

Councillor Long outlined her support for the approach adopted by the Council in relation to the London Living Wage and also took the opportunity to highlight the associated benefits of Fair Trade and steps she was keen to see made to promote Brent as a Fair Trade Borough.

Councillor Agha also took the opportunity to highlight the creative and innovative efforts being made to ensure the continued provision of essential local services in relation to not only Education but also Employment and Skills opportunities. Included amongst the initiatives identified were the success of Brent Start, the approval of a new Adult Education Centre at Moorland Gardens, the increase in provision of Affordable Workspace, the Living Room, Moving on Up and Bright Futures programmes and support for the establishment of an apprenticeship

scheme with Network Homes. These were in addition to the levels of educational attainment being achieved across schools in Brent, which he felt demonstrated the benefits of the Councils approach in terms of offering access to good quality education, employment skills and training opportunities and reducing poverty when compared to the funding reductions imposed by the Conservative Government.

Councillor Southwood who expressed disappointment at what she felt to be the confused response from the Conservative Group in relation to their alternative budget proposals, especially in relation to the impact in terms of housing which she urged them to reconsider. In contrast, she highlighted the reversal of the proposed savings on the Council Tax Support Scheme, given the concerns raised about its impact through the budget consultation process and modelling work undertaken. She felt this clearly demonstrated the Council's responsiveness and desire to avoid disproportionately harming those people already struggling, with the scheme now much simpler to apply for. Councillor Southwood also highlighted the important work being undertaken through the Poverty Commission established by the Council, with staff praised for their ongoing efforts in seeking to address the difficulties created as a result of the Government's programme of welfare reforms alongside the cumulative impact of the cuts resulting from the Government's reduction in public sector funding.

At the same time as welcoming the fact that the Conservative Group (had (unlike the previous year) submitted alternative budget proposals, Councillor Stephens also expressed significant concern at the position adopted within their paper on the London Living Wage and housing, given their potential impact on so many residents within Brent. In addition, concerns were highlighted at what he felt to be the lack of recognition about the impact created by the Government's austerity programme, which had resulted in a large number of local authorities having to seek increases in Council Tax. The Government's approach towards the funding of local government and public services was, he felt, unsustainable and in supporting the budget proposals moved by the Leader as the best available in such difficult circumstances, he urged members of the Conservative Group to highlight the real impact of this with their colleagues nationally.

Councillor Johnson who thanked those members and officers involved for their efforts in preparing a budget in such challenging circumstances. Whilst recognising there was no option but to set a legal and balanced budget, he took the opportunity to highlight the overall level of funding lost by the Council as a result of the Government's austerity measures since 2010 and called for its reinstatement in order to reflect the level of need and demand on services now being experienced. Commenting on the Conservative Groups alternative budget proposals he highlighted that without the funding reductions imposed there would not have been a need for many of the measures they were seeking to amend and he also defended the adoption of the London Living Wage as a means of tackling poverty and reducing the reliance on welfare benefits.

Councillor Farah who also took the opportunity to highlight the crisis in the Adult Social Care sector and urgent need for the Government to set out its plans for reform in its delayed Green Paper. He strongly supported the approach adopted by the Council in terms of its Adult Social Care commissioning arrangements, which included the offer of the London Living Wage.

Councillor Hylton, as the final contribution from the Labour Group during the debate, advised that she was deeply saddened by the need to have to set yet another budget which had been directly impacted by the ongoing and devastating nature of the funding cuts being imposed on local authorities by the Conservative Government and their longer term impact on Local Government finance. Notwithstanding the significant budget pressures identified, Councillor Hylton felt it was important to highlight the positive measures which it had still been possible for the Council to deliver, whilst seeking to set a responsible and balanced budget but ended by stating that she was now tired of austerity, Brexit and the Government.

Responding during the debate to the comments made in relation to the Conservative Group, Councillor Colwill whilst recognising the challenges faced in balancing the budget, felt it was too easy for the Labour Group to blame the Conservative Government for the lack of funding available. Referring to his experience of the allocation of NCIL funding he supported the need identified for the process to be reviewed but expressed concern at delays in completion of regeneration schemes, especially within the South Kilburn area.

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 Cabinet colleagues and Members for their contributions, highlighting the difficult nature of the choices once again having to be made given their impact on local residents and the borough. He felt, however, that this was entirely as a consequence of the position taken by the Conservative Government and was proud that the Labour Administration were seeking to continue defending, protecting and where possible enhancing services for local residents and those most in need. In terms of the concerns raised earlier in the meeting regarding NCIL he felt the member concerned had failed to understand the process and workings of local government finance and also expressed strong reservations about the tone of the alternative budget proposals submitted by the Conservative Group and also the potential risks identified. The Labour Administration, he pointed out, remained committed to the values of transparency, honesty and social justice and in this respect questioned why the Conservative Group had not submitted their proposals to public consultation and scrutiny in advance of the meeting. In concluding, he reminded Members that the budget proposals had been designed to address the steps needing to be taken by the Council in order to continue delivering for the borough and as such ended by once again commending 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 alternative budget proposals and then (subject to any amendments agreed) the recommended budget moved by Councillor Butt. As the recommendations to be considered related to the budget setting process, he reminded Members that these would require a recorded vote to be taken.

On a recorded vote being taken, the budget proposals, as moved by Councillor Butt were declared **CARRIED**.

Accordingly, it was **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the decisions made by Cabinet on 10 February 2020 in relation to the budget and Council Tax 2020/2021.
- (2) To approve an overall 3.99% increase in the Council's element of council tax for 2020/21, with 2% as a precept for Adult Social Care and a 1.99% general increase.
- (3) To approve the General Fund revenue budget for 2020/21, as summarised in Appendix A of the report.
- (4) To approve the cost pressures and technical adjustments set out in Appendix B of the report.
- (5) To approve the budget savings proposals set out in Appendix C of the report.
- (6) To note the report from the Budget Scrutiny Panel in Appendix D of the report and approve the recommendation from Cabinet that any overall underspend across the General Fund at the end of March 2020 be ring fenced and that proposals are brought forward for spending on the climate change emergency
- (7) To approve the HRA budget for 2020/21, as set out in section seven of the report.
- (8) To approve the dedicated schools' grant, as set out in section eight of the report.
- (9) To approve the Capital Programme as set out in section nine and Appendix E of the report and that the Chief Officers be authorised to take all the necessary actions for implementation of the programmes.
- (10) To approve the changes to the existing Capital Programme in relation to additions of new projects, as set out in Appendix E of the report.
- (11) That the Director of Finance be authorised to make the necessary adjustments to the Capital Programme to account for the final 2019/20 outturn position and any associated programme slippage
- (12) To approve the Capital Strategy, Investment Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy in Appendices G, H, I and J of the report and to note the pipeline schemes in Appendix F of the report.
- (13) To note the advice of the Director of Legal, HR, Audit and Investigations, as set out in Appendix K of the report.
- (14) To approve the schedule of fees and charges, as set out in Appendix L of the report.
- (15) To note the results of the budget consultation, as set out in section six and detailed in Appendix M of the report.

- (16) To approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix N of the report.

Council Tax recommendations

These recommendations only include a provisional council tax level for the GLA as its final budget was not agreed when the report was despatched. This means that the statutory calculation of the total amount of council tax under Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 cannot be carried out until the final GLA precept has been received.

- (17) In relation to the council tax for 2020/21 to resolve:

That the following amounts be now calculated as the Council's element by the Council for the year 2020/21 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended:

- (a) £1,029,121,285 being the aggregate of the amount that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.
- (b) 900,990,772 being the aggregate of the amounts that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
- (c) £128,130,513 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) £1,312.74 being the amount at (c) above, divided by the amount for the tax base of 97,605, agreed by the General Purposes Committee on 9 December 2019, 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
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
875.16	1021.02	1,166.88	1,312.74	1,604.46	1,896.18	2,187.90	2,625.48

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.

- (18)** To note that for the year 2020/21 the proposed GLA precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, in respect of the GLA, for each of the categories of dwellings are as shown below. The GLA intends to agree its precept on 24 February 2020.

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
221.38	258.28	295.17	332.07	405.86	479.66	553.45	664.14

- (19)** That the Council establishes a Council Tax Setting Committee, to set the council tax for the year 2020/21, in accordance with section 67(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and agrees the terms of reference, size and political composition as set out in Appendix O of the report.
- (20)** That the Council appoints Councillors to serve on the council tax setting committee and appoints a chair and vice-chair of the council tax setting committee.
- (21)** That the special Council Tax Setting Committee meet as soon as possible after 24 February 2020 to allow council tax notices to be issued in line with the normal statutory timetable.
- (22)** To note that the Director of Finance has determined that the Council element of the basic amount of Council Tax for 2020/21 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- (a)** That the Director of Finance 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)** That the Director of Finance 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)** That the Director of Finance 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.

In accordance with Standing Order 43, as the above decisions related to the setting of the budget and Council Tax they were subject to a recorded vote.

Prior to the above recommendations being approved the alternative budget proposals, moved as an amendment to the budget report by the Conservative Group, were put to the vote and declared **LOST**. The voting recorded on this amendment was as follows:

For the Amendment (3): Councillors Colwill, Kansagra and Maurice

Against the Amendment (55): Councillors Abdirazak, Aden, Afzal, Agha, Ahmed, Akram, M.Butt, S.Butt, Chan, Chappell, Chohan, S Choudhary, Choudry, Conneely, Crane, Daly, Dar, Denselow, Dixon, Donnelly-Jackson, Ethapemi, Farah, Gbajumo, Georgiou, Gill, Hassan, Hirani, Hylton, Johnson, Kabir, Kelcher, Kennelly, Knight, Lo, Long, Mahmood, Mashari, McLeish, McLennan, Miller, Mitchell-Murray, Murray, Naheerathan, Nerva, M.Patel, R.Patel, Sangani, Shah, Shahzad, Ketan Sheth, Krupa Sheth, Southwood, Stephens, Tatler and Thakkar

Abstentions to the Amendment (2): Councillors Ezeajughi (Mayor) and Colacicco (Deputy Mayor)

The substantive recommendations, as detailed above, were then put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**. The voting recorded was as follows:

For (54): Councillors Abdirazak, Aden, Afzal, Agha, Ahmed, Akram, M.Butt, S.Butt, Chan, Chappell, Chohan, S Choudhary, Choudry, Conneely, Crane, Daly, Dar, Denselow, Dixon, Donnelly-Jackson, Ethapemi, Farah, Gbajumo, Gill, Hassan, Hirani, Hylton, Johnson, Kabir, Kelcher, Kennelly, Knight, Lo, Long, Mahmood, Mashari, McLeish, McLennan, Miller, Mitchell-Murray, Murray, Naheerathan, Nerva, M.Patel, R.Patel, Sangani, Shah, Shahzad, Ketan Sheth, Krupa Sheth, Southwood, Stephens, Tatler and Thakkar.

Against (4): Councillors Colwill, Georgiou, Kansagra and Maurice

Abstain (2): Councillors Ezeajughi (Mayor) and Colacicco (Deputy Mayor)

8. Result of local by-elections: Alperton, Barnhill & Wembley Central Wards

Having concluded the budget debate, the Mayor then moved on to deal with the remainder of items on the agenda. Members noted the results of the by-elections held in the wards of Alperton, Barnhill and Wembley Central on Thursday 23 January 2020, with the Mayor expressing thanks to the Chief Executive and her team for their efforts in delivering the by-elections so soon after the General Election in December 2019.

Having formally noted the results the Mayor advised he also needed to inform Members that the Chief Executive had subsequently received a petition to the Election Court, regarding the Barnhill by-election, which was being dealt with through the appropriate court process. Members were advised that both Councillors Akram and Lloyd would remain as elected members until and unless the court ordered otherwise and that any decisions or actions they took as councillors would not be declared null and void should the election petition be successful.

9. Representation of Political Groups on Committees

Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) introduced the report from the Director of Legal, HR, Audit & Investigations, which he advised, fulfilled the Council's duty to review and determine the representation of different political groups on certain Committees. This was as a result of the membership and political balance on the Council having changed following the result of the by-elections held in the wards of Alperton, Barnhill and Wembley Central on Thursday 23 January 2020.

As no Members indicated that they wished to speak on the item, the Mayor put the recommendations in the report to a vote by show of hands and they were unanimously declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) The size of each existing committee remain unchanged, as set out in section 3.8 of the report, with the newly established Council Tax Setting Committee to comprise of 5 seats, as detailed in section 3.10 of the report.
- (2) To confirm (where the rules of political balance apply) the allocation of seats on committees to each of the Council's political groups as detailed within the report.
- (3) That appointments be made, where required, to the committees in (2) above giving effect to the wishes of the political groups allocated the seats.
- (4) To note that the political balance on sub-committees for the General Purposes Committee and Licensing Committee would be reviewed at the first available meeting of both bodies.

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

In accordance with the change on the order of business agreed at the start of the meeting the Mayor then referred Members to the list of changes to be considered in relation to appointments on Council Committees, Sub Committees and other bodies.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To confirm, following on from the review of political representation, the current membership on Council Committees and Outside Bodies, subject to the following changes:
 - (a) Licensing Committee: Councillor Long to be appointed as Vice-Chair with Councillor Shahzad to fill current vacancy as a full member.
 - (b) Fostering Panel: Councillor Thakkar to replace Councillor Dixon as a full member

- (c) Teachers Joint Consultative Committee: Councillor Agha to be appointed as Chair to full current vacancy with Councillor M.Patel to fill the second vacancy, both as full members.
- (d) Brent Connects – Wembley: Councillor Shah be appointed as a full member to fill the vacancy as Vice-Chair
- (e) Service User Consultative Forum – Voluntary Sector: Councillor Miller be appointed as full member to fill the current vacancy
- (f) Chalkhill Community Trust: Councillor Akram be appointed to fill the current vacancy
- (g) Hillside Housing Trust: Councillor Knight be appointed to fill the current vacancy
- (h) Wembley Educational Foundation: Councillor Shah be appointed to fill the current vacancy
- (2) To appoint the following as members of the newly established Council Tax Setting Committee:
 - Labour Group: Councillors M.Butt, Hirani, McLennan and Tatler to be appointed as full members
 - Councillors Kabir, Knight and Nerva to be appointed as substitute members
 - Conservative Group: Councillor Kansagra to be appointed as full member
 - Councillors Colwill and Maurice to be appointed as substitute members

11. **Submission of Draft Brent Local Plan for Examination**

Councillor Tatler (Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning) introduced the report of the Strategic Director, Regeneration & Environment detailing the representations received on the draft Brent Local Plan and seeking approval for its submission for Examination by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.

In introducing the report Councillor Tatler highlighted the significant amount of work and consultation that had been undertaken to shape the draft Local Plan, which had been developed to complement higher-level policy of the National Planning Policy Framework and the emerging draft London Plan. In setting out the policies governing development of the borough to 2041, the Plan had been developed to reflect the significant increase forecast in the boroughs population and associated challenges in terms of the provision of new homes, jobs and associated physical and social infrastructure and in terms of addressing the climate emergency. In addition to the existing areas identified, the Draft Plan had identified three new Growth Area at Northwick Park, Staples Corner and Neasden Station. In concluding her introduction, Councillor Tatler drew Members attention to the

summary of responses received in relation to the consultation process, as detailed in section 3 of the report and thanked all those involved in development of such a key document.

The Mayor then opened the debate inviting other members to speak on the report.

Councillor Kabir open the debate by expressing her support for the Draft Local Plan, which she felt was a detailed and comprehensive document that reflected the changing needs and priorities within the Borough. In terms of specific content she highlighted the need to ensure that the policies being developed in relation to the Plan remained sensitive to the needs of children and young people ,including those with special needs and specifically in terms of the provision of public spaces.

Councillor Denselow, expressing support for the Draft Plan, drew attention to the targets included in relation to affordable housing. He took the opportunity to thank Planning Officers (in his role as Chair of the Planning Committee) for their efforts to ensure that applications coming forward to the Committee reflected the necessary policy and Plan requirements.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak on the report, and Councillor Tatler advised she did not wish to exercise her right of reply, the Mayor then put the recommendations to the vote by a show of hands and they were declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED**

- (1) To approve submission of the draft Brent Local Plan as set out in Appendix 1 and Policies Map as set out in Appendix 2 of the report for examination, together with associated Proposed Modifications as set out in Appendix 4 and the Integrated Impact Assessment as set out in Appendix 5 of the report.
- (2) To endorse the officer responses to representations, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report.
- (3) To delegate authority to the Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment in association with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning to make proposed modifications to the Brent Local Plan throughout the examination process to ensure that it can be found 'sound' by the Planning Inspector.

12. **Members Allowance Scheme - Annual Review**

Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) introduced the report from the Assistant Chief Executive seeking approval to the making of a Members' Allowance Scheme, in the proposed terms set out in the report, for the 2020/21 Financial Year.

In introducing the report Councillor Butt highlighted the annual review had continued to be informed by the principles and guidelines within the most recent review of Members Allowances undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in 2018 on behalf of London Councils. As part of the annual review process the Scheme included provision for an annual uplift in line with the

inflationary pay award agreed under the Local Government Pay Settlement. The review had also resulted in the recommendation of a proposed increase in the Special Responsibility Allowance payable to the Leader of the Opposition and Chair of the Audit & Standards Committee in order to bring these in line with the average provided for the same role across other London Boroughs.

The Mayor then opened the debate inviting other Members to speak on the report.

Councillor Abdirazak, whilst understanding the review had been informed by the guidelines within the review undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), expressed concern at the proposed uplift being recommended in allowances given the decisions that had just needed to be taken on the budget and in relation to the increase in Council Tax. As such, he advised he would not be supporting the proposals.

Similar concerns were also highlighted by Councillor Georgiou in his response on the report.

Whilst recognising the concerns raised, Councillor S.Choudhury felt there was a need to properly recognise the time involved in undertaking the role of ward councillor. He also highlighted the additional responsibilities and commitment involved in serving as Chair of a Committee, such as the Pension Fund, which he also felt needed to be properly recognised in terms of the level of SRA payable.

The need to recognise the time commitment required to fulfil the role of local councillors was supported by Councillors Kelcher and Miller who also highlighted the difficulty in councillors being required to consider and set their own allowance schemes rather than for this to be undertaken independently. It was also pointed out that any uplift in general allowances had been designed to mirror that provided for staff with members also not benefiting from access to the Local Government Pension Scheme. In addition, both advocated the need for allowances to be set at a level that would enable people to undertake the role of councillor, whilst not acting as a purely financial incentive to do so, and to remove any barriers to ensure that those standing could be as representative of their local communities as possible.

Councillor Johnson, supported by Councillor Daly and Kennelly also highlighted the element of personal choice with members, they pointed out, not having to accept any uplift or able to donate their allowance to other causes.

Councillor Kansagra also supported the need to recognise the workload involved in fulfilling the role of local councillor and committee member. Given the time commitment involved, he also supported the view that the position of local councillor was not one undertaken in order to gain any form of financial incentive and was keen to ensure that any future review also included more detailed consideration of the role and allowances payable to members of the Opposition Group.

As an issue not already covered, Councillor Nerva, felt it important to recognise the changes made following the last major review of the scheme in 2018 to reduce the number and level of many SRAs payable in Brent. Whilst also supportive of allowances being set independently or on a London wide basis, he also highlighted the fact that under the changes to be introduced following the Local Government

Boundary Review in Brent there would also be six less councillors representing constituents across the borough after the next local election.

Councillor Shahzad was also keen to stress the importance in ensuring councillors were suitably and fairly recompensed for their time, as a means of ensuring it was possible to avoid excluding and in being able to attract the right quality of candidates. He pointed out that despite the recommended uplift Brent was still placed towards the lower/middle end of the scale in terms of the level of allowances paid when compared to other London Boroughs.

As a final contribution towards the debate Councillor Maurice advised that he was also supportive of the comments made in relation to the important representational role undertaken by councillors and the need to ensure this workload was properly reflected in terms of the allowance available to support members in their different roles.

As no other members indicated they wanted to speak on the report, Councillor Butt in exercising his right of reply, thanked all members for their contribution. He also felt it was important to recognise the need to ensure the Council was governed by as representative a group of councillors as possible, which the payment of a basic allowance within the guidelines set by the Independent Remuneration Panel had been designed to support.

The Mayor then put the recommendations to the vote by a show of hands and they were declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED**

- (1) To approve and make a Members' Allowance Scheme in the terms set out in the report for the financial year 2020/21.
- (2) To approve the change in level of Special Responsibility Allowance payable in respect of the following roles, to be payable with immediate effect:
 - (a) Chair of Audit & Standards Committee (Vice-Chair of Audit & Standards Advisory Committee) – increase from £1,500 to £5,000; and
 - (b) Leader of Principal Opposition Group – increase from £6,000 to £8,000
- (3) To authorise the Director of Legal, HR Audit and Investigations to comply with the statutory requirements to publicise the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme.

13. **Changes to the Constitution**

At this stage in proceedings, the Mayor advised that as the remaining time available for the meeting was shortly due to expire he would be moving the suspension of Standing Order 44 (Council Guillotine Procedure) in order to extend the time of the meeting by 30 minutes and enable consideration of this as the final item on the agenda. In accordance with Standing Order 42 (d) the procedural motion was put to the vote without further discussion and **AGREED**.

Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) introduced the report from the Director of Legal, HR Audit & Investigations which he advised detailed a number of small changes to the Council's Constitution. These had been designed to reflect an increase in EU procurement thresholds and to remove a number of inconsistencies in current wording.

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

It was therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the changes to the Constitution, as set out within the report.
- (2) To authorise the Director of Legal, HR, Audit & Investigations to amend the Constitution accordingly, including making any necessary incidental of consequential changes.
- (3) To note that, to the extent that the changes relate to executive functions of the Council, they have been approved by the Leader.

14. **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 Wednesday 27 May 2020.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

COUNCILLOR ERNEST EZEAJUGHI
Mayor