



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
held as an online virtual meeting on Monday 13 July 2020 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT (in remote attendance):

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	Hector
Hirani	Hylton
Johnson	Kabir
Kansagra	Kelcher
Kennelly	Knight
Lloyd	Lo
Long	Mahmood
Mashari	Maurice
McLeish	McLennan
Miller	J Mitchell Murray
W Mitchell Murray	Naheerathan
Nerva	M Patel
RS Patel	Perrin
Sangani	Shah
Shahzad	Ketan Sheth
Krupa Sheth	Southwood
Stephens	Tatler
Thakkar	

1. **Welcoming Statement**

Prior to formally opening the meeting, the Mayor took the opportunity to welcome everyone to the first online meeting of the Full Council and invited Carolyn Downs (as Chief Executive) to run through the guidance issued in relation to conduct of the meeting. Having noted the guidance provided, the Mayor then moved on to the formal agenda for the meeting.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

The Mayor advised that no direct apologies for absence had been received.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council (Budget and Council Tax Setting) meeting held on Wednesday 19 February 2020 be approved as a correct record.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared by Members at the meeting.

5. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor began by taking the opportunity to congratulate Councillor Kansagra on his recent appointment as Leader of the Conservative Group and to wish him well in his new role. He then moved on to make the following announcements:

(i) Covid-19

The Mayor advised that during lockdown he had been pleased to be able to visit some of the mutual aid organisations who had been working with the council to distribute food to local people across the borough. These visits had included the main Brent food hub responsible for co-ordinating the delivery of all food parcels. He commended everyone involved for their fantastic efforts.

In addition, he advised Members that he had also attended the opening of the COVID-19 Test Centre in Harlesden along with Dawn Butler MP and the Leader of the Council.

The Mayor felt it was important to recognise the hard work and dedication of all staff, councillors and key frontline workers whose efforts had been essential in responding to Covid-19 pandemic across the borough. He was sure residents would also be keen to express their appreciation for the way Brent Council had supported them during the pandemic.

Members were also advised that leaders from Brent's Multi-Faith Forum had also come together to produce a short video showing solidarity in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. This had been supported by a co-ordinated programme of action on Thursday 11 June, with churches ringing their bells, mosques calling Adhan, synagogues praying silently, temples calling for Prathana and mediation within

spiritual centres designed to ensure all faiths were able to come together in solidarity.

The Mayor also took the opportunity to express his condolences, on behalf of the Council, to those who had lost someone during the pandemic.

(ii) Former Mayor of Brent Jim O'Sullivan

The Mayor announced it was with regret he had to advise members of the death, back in March, of former Mayor, Jim O'Sullivan who had passed away aged 84. He had served as Mayor between 2009 and 2010 having represented Barnhill as a ward councillor for 12 years. The Mayor remembered Jim O'Sullivan as a councillor who cared about all the residents he served but with a particular focus in ensuring the Irish community were recognised for their contribution and success to the borough. The Mayor advised that he would be missed, not just by his family but also by all of those who had known and worked with him.

The Mayor then invited everyone to observe a minutes silence in tribute and memory to all those who had lost their lives during the pandemic and to former Mayor and Councillor Jim O'Sullivan.

The online meeting was then paused to observe a minute's silence

The Mayor then invited a member from each Group to pay tribute to Jim O'Sullivan

Councillor Muhammed Butt, speaking on behalf of the Majority Group, led the tributes by highlighting the passionate work Jim O'Sullivan had undertaken on behalf of the local communities he represented. His tireless work and fundraising activities would be missed by all those who had known him and especially within the Irish community.

Councillor Kansagra, then paid tribute on behalf of the Conservative Group. Referring to Jim O'Sullivan as both a friend and former colleague, having represented Barnhill ward from 1998-2010 he remembered him as a person of principle and recalled with fondness how popular he had been amongst all members of the local community. He would, he pointed out, be missed by his family and former colleagues.

The Mayor thanked both members for their kind tributes and then continued with his announcements as follows:

(iii) Memorial Service

The Mayor announced that it was with sadness he had recently attended a memorial service dedicated to the memory of Biba Henry and Nicole Smallman, following their tragic deaths in Fryent Country Park. The service had been attended by the Bishop of Willesden Right Rev, Peter Broadbent and Vicar Natasha Woodford of Holy Innocents Church, Kingsbury along with many members of their family and friends. The Mayor took the opportunity, on behalf of the Council, to express his sincere condolences to the family and friends of both sisters for their tragic loss.

(iv) Black Lives Matter

The Mayor was proud to announce the lighting up of the Civic Centre in purple on 2 June in order to highlight the Council's and local community's solidarity with the Black Lives Matter campaign and in order to condemn the brutal and callous murder of George Floyd by the Police in the USA. He took the opportunity, on behalf of the whole borough, to express his sincere condolences to the family and friends of George Floyd.

Commenting on how proud he was of the diversity within Brent, he was keen to assure everyone that such lack of respect and brutality would not be tolerated in the borough and was pleased to note the item scheduled for discussion later on the agenda regarding the action plan that had been developed, following a meeting with Brent's Black Community Leaders to address their concerns.

(v) The Nations Toast

The Mayor was pleased to announce that he had been able to join the Nation's Toast as an online event on Friday 8 May in order to celebrate the heroes of WW2. The event had been organised by the London Mayors Association and had been very well attended in marking 75 years since the end of the war.

(vi) Srebrenica Commemoration 2020

The Mayor reminded Members that this year marked the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, in which over 8,000 Muslims had been murdered as a result of their religious identity in one of the worst atrocities on European soil since the Second World War.

In reflecting on this, the Mayor was keen to remind Members of the theme "Every Action Matters", which sought to encourage each person to reflect upon their own behaviour and choices, and demonstrate that however insignificant it may seem, every action mattered when looking to unite against hatred and discrimination.

In terms of Brent, he was proud that the area was recognised as the most diverse borough in the country and a fantastic example of how people from communities across the world, could live together and be proud of their background, whilst respecting and embracing other cultures.

(vii) 100th Birthday Celebration

The Mayor asked all Members to join him in congratulating Mrs Jane Fisher, whom he had recently joined online in order to celebrate her 100th birthday and who had been part of the Windrush commemoration video organised by Brent. This had been released on 22 June, to celebrate the second anniversary of the windrush celebration day.

(viii) Petitions

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

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

The Mayor referred Members to the supplementary agenda circulated in advance of the meeting, which contained details of the changes to appointments on Council Committees, Sub Committees and other bodies.

It was **RESOLVED**:

(1) To approve the following change in membership on Council Committees:

(a) Councillor Choudry to be replaced by a vacancy as full member of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee and Audit & Standards Committee.

(b) Councillor Long to be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee and Chair of the Audit & Standards Committee.

(2) To note that General Purposes Committee would be asked to confirm the replacement of Councillor Colwill with Councillor Kansagra as a full member on the Senior Staff Appointments Sub Committee with Councillor Colwill to replace Councillor Kansagra as substitute member.

7. Deputations (if any)

The Mayor advised that no requests for any deputations had been received, so moved straight on to the next item.

8. Questions from Members of the Public and Brent Youth Parliament

The Mayor advised that the following four questions had been received from members of the public along with one from the Brent Youth Parliament:

Question 1 from Robin Sharp (Chair - Brent Patient Voice) to Councillor Hirani, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Leisure & Culture relating to deaths in Brent arising from Covid-19 and the publishing of details on levels of testing and confirmed infections across the Borough.

Question 2 from Martin Francis to Councillor Agha, Cabinet Member for Schools, Employment & Skills relating to the catchment area for the new North Brent School.

Question 3 from Amandine Alexandre to Councillor Tatler, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning relating to the Council's bid for Transport for London ((TfL) emergency funding.

Question 4 from Scott Wade to Councillor Tatler, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning relating to the Community Asset Transfer of Tenterden Pavilion & Sports Ground.

Members noted the written response provided on each of the questions, which had been circulated with the agenda with the Mayor advising that each member of the public had been invited to attend the meeting in order to ask a supplementary question. Whilst Martin Francis, Amandine Alexandre and Scott Wade had been unable to attend, the Mayor advised that Robin Sharp (who had also been unable to attend) had arranged for Mr Peter Latham to represent him in order to ask a supplementary question. The Mayor welcomed Mr Latham to the meeting (who joined as a remote attendee) and invited him to put his supplementary question to Councillor Hirani, as Cabinet Member for Public Health, Leisure & Culture.

Supplementary Question from Mr Latham to Councillor Hirani, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Leisure & Culture.

Having thanked Councillor Hirani for the written response provided, Mr Latham felt it was important to recognise that Brent had suffered with one of the worst Covid-19 infection and death rates per capita in the country. Given the particularly adverse impact on the Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community, NHS and elderly across the borough, he highlighted the need to continue raising awareness of the essential need to maintain and enforce social distancing measures. As a means of assisting to monitor and encourage the necessary preventative action, he asked if Brent would be able and willing to publish on a regular basis the latest information available on the number of infections, broken down on a ward-by-ward basis.

In response, Councillor Hirani thanked Mr Latham for his supplementary question. Whilst recognising the benefits that the provision of this data by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) would have had at the height of the pandemic, he felt its impact would now be more limited given the reduced number of Covid-19 cases currently being recorded in Brent. He assured Mr Latham however, that any increase in the rate of infections would prompt a review of the process.

Having noted the response provided, the Mayor thanked Mr Latham for his question and for attending the meeting.

Following on from the public question session the Mayor then moved on to deal with the following question received from Brent Youth Parliament:

Question 1 to Councillor Muhammed Butt, Leader of the Council, on the plans being developed to support the Black Lives Matter movement and reach out to young people in Brent.

Members noted the written response to the question, circulated with the agenda with the Mayor welcoming Bashra Mahamed to the meeting (who joined as a remote attendee), as a representative of the Youth Parliament in order to ask a supplementary question.

Supplementary Question from Bashra Mahamed (Brent Youth Parliament) to Councillor Muhammed Butt, Leader of the Council.

Bashara Mahamed began by thanking the Leader of the Council, on behalf of Brent Youth Parliament for the written response provided and for the opportunity to address the meeting. Whilst welcoming the Black Community Action Plan, which had been developed as part of the response to the Black Lives Matters campaign

she advised that the Youth Parliament were keen to ensure the response was as inclusive as possible with regular progress updates provided on key timescales and achievements. The Youth Parliament, she pointed out, wanted to ensure that young people were fully engaged and not disenfranchised in terms of the process or consultation on the various initiatives being progressed.

In response, Councillor Butt thanked Bashara for the question and also the Youth Parliament for their ongoing engagement with the Council. Young People, he pointed out, were at the heart of what the Council was seeking to achieve in terms being able to release their potential and realise their aspirations. As such he was keen to ensure that the Youth Parliament were fully engaged as part of the ongoing conversation and process in relation to the Action Plan. The Plan itself had been designed to be as inclusive as possible, in order to reflect and represent the diverse communities across the borough, with timescales for action clearly identified. The Plan would also be subject to ongoing scrutiny as well as consideration by Cabinet with the Youth Parliament, he pointed out, very much welcome to be part of the ongoing discussions in order to ensure their voice and any issues or concerns were also reflected in the process moving forward.

Having noted the response provided, the Mayor thanked Bashara Mahamed for her question and for joining the meeting. As there were no further questions to be dealt with, the Mayor advised this now concluded the public question session.

9. **Petitions (if any)**

The Mayor advised that no requests for any debates on petitions had been received.

10. **Reports from the Leader and Cabinet**

The Mayor advised Members that the Leaders Update for this meeting would be provided as a verbal report. He then invited Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Leader of the Council, to present his update. In presenting his update, Councillor Butt took the opportunity to thank all members and staff who had worked so diligently during the pandemic within their communities to help support everyone during such challenging and difficult times. The support provided for those most in need was, he felt, testament to the commitment of all members, staff and other partners and organisations across the borough in delivering the support required. Members were also asked to note, as part of the update, the list of urgent Executive decisions taken since the last Council meeting.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Muhammed Butt for his report and it was **RESOLVED** to formally note the update provided by the Leader of the Council.

11. **Questions from the Opposition and other Non-Cabinet Members**

The Mayor advised that following discussion between both Groups no advance notice questions had been submitted for response at this meeting. In addition, it had been agreed that no issues would be raised during the open question time session. On this basis, the Mayor advised that he would therefore move straight on to the next item.

12. **Report from Chairs of Scrutiny Committees**

Before inviting the Chairs of each Scrutiny Committee to speak, the Mayor drew members attention to the written reports circulated as part of the agenda, which highlighted the key issues arising from the work of each Committee. He then invited each Chair to present their update.

Resources and Public Realm Committee

Councillor Kelcher (as Chair of the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee) advised that in the interest of time he was not intending to add anything further to the written update provided but advised Members that the Committee was due to hold its first virtual meeting Tuesday 14 July 2020. The main items for review included:

- an update on the Council's Public Realm Strategy and its impact on the management of Brent's climate change agenda and public health concerns;
- the strategy in place to support the local economy and businesses in order to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and encourage recovery; and
- the strategy in place to provide social welfare support for those residents most in need as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Ketan Sheth (as Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee) advised that he was also not intending to add anything further to the written update provided but advised Members the the Committee were also due to hold their first virtual meeting on Tuesday 21 July 2020. Given the public health challenge created as a result of the pandemic, the meeting had been designed to scrutinise the work being undertaken by the Council and other partners in responding to this along with the recovery plans being developed in relation to adult social care, housing, culture, public health and children's services. Whilst recognising the efforts of all those involved in responding to the crisis, the Committee were keen to seek assurances around the lessons learnt and also in relation to the recovery planning process, should any subsequent waves of infection be experienced.

The Mayor thanked Councillors Kelcher and Ketan Sheth for the updates provided and it was **RESOLVED** that the content of their reports be noted.

Following the updates provided, the Mayor advised that whilst it would be usual for the remainder of the time available to be open for questions to the Scrutiny Chairs he was aware, following agreement reached between both Groups prior to the meeting, that no questions were due to be raised during the open session of the meeting. As there were no additional questions, the Mayor advised he would move on to the next item.

13. **Report from the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee**

The Mayor invited Councillor Long, as newly appointed Vice Chair of the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee, to introduce the report updating Members on the work of the Committee.

Councillor Long advised that as with the previous updates from each Scrutiny Chair, she was not intending to add anything further to the written update but felt it was important to highlight the review undertaken by the Committee in relation to Brent's emergency planning response on the Covid-19 pandemic and the resilience within the system. In addition, the Committee had been required to agree the Council's Annual Governance Statement and would shortly be considering the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts, for which the submission deadline had been extended as a result of the pandemic.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Long for the update provided and it was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

14. **Non Cabinet Members' Debate**

The Mayor advised that no subject had been identified for debate and therefore moved on to the next item on the agenda.

15. **Brent Black Community Action Plan**

Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) introduced the report from the Assistant Chief Executive presenting the Brent Black Community Action Plan, which he advised had been developed in conjunction with leaders from the black communities across the borough.

In introducing the report, Councillor Butt thanked the officers and all community representatives who had participated in development of the Action Plan and acknowledged the contribution made by the community. He outlined the Council's commitment to work with the community to address the concerns identified, with the next step being for the Action Plan to be taken to Cabinet for consideration and its delivery then subject to ongoing scrutiny.

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

Councillor Kelcher opened the debate by highlighting the role that scrutiny would play in ensuring the outcomes of the Action Plan were met. He advised that the report was due to be considered by the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee towards the end of the year so as to ensure it remained an ongoing priority. Particular attention was drawn to the need to ensure safer neighbourhoods and address the relationship between the police and the Black community, with Councillor Kelcher also highlighting a need to ensure all councillors (including himself) continued to be educated in order to address unconscious bias and wider prejudices in society.

Councillor Kansagra also took the opportunity, on behalf of the Conservative Group, to endorse the Action Plan and congratulated all those involved in its production. The need for those in authority to be properly screened and checked was also highlighted to ensure the right people were appointed in the right posts and avoided any abuse of power. He also felt it was important to recognise the work being undertaken by the Council in addressing concerns relating to educational attainment across different communities within the borough.

Councillor Choudhary then spoke to highlight the diverse nature of communities across Brent and, whilst welcoming the report, was keen to ensure as wide a focus as possible in terms of the coverage and activities identified within the Action Plan.

Councillor Kabir also spoke to commend the report and Action Plan highlighting a number of specific areas in support of its implementation. These included the need to support parents from different communities in understanding and being confident in navigating the education and apprenticeship system, in order to maximise access to the support available. She was also keen for the Council to support community facilities being made available to the Black community and for funding to be made available for the voluntary sector and community groups, whose officers were delivering training and capacity building within these communities. As a further suggestion, she felt Brent should continue to be marketed to businesses as a borough with a diverse, bright, young and increasingly skilled workforce. In summing up, she felt it was important for the Council to be accountable for delivery of the proposed outcomes within the Action Plan and to ensure that support was provided within the BAME communities most adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, within the budgeting priorities moving forward.

Councillor Murray also welcomed the Action Plan, but recorded his sadness that it had taken the death of George Floyd for this work to be undertaken. He encouraged Members to keep listening and reaching out to Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities across the borough.

Councillor Nerva in supporting and welcoming the Action Plan also recognised the importance of the work being undertaken to address educational attainment amongst black Caribbean boys, along with the need to ensure members continued to educate themselves on matters affecting the wider community, including inequality and the impact of unconscious biases. He also took the opportunity to highlight a national review being undertaken into racism impacting on the Jewish community, on which he looked forward to considering the findings, once available.

Councillor McLennan also welcomed the Action Plan, which she felt represented a good starting point. Whilst recognising that all communities and lives mattered, she highlighted that the statistics were clear in identifying that Black communities were some of the most adversely affected in many outcomes and as a result was keen to support the need for the black community to be treated fairly and equally.

Councillor Afzal, in welcoming the report highlighted the need to tackle the issues identified through a process of not only structural but also institutional change. Whilst the Action Plan was a positive step forward, he was keen to ensure Brent's status as the most diverse and multicultural borough was used to provide a positive example in order to holistically address the issues faced by many BAME communities, working in conjunction with the affected individuals and local communities.

Councillor Hassan also welcomed the report as an important first step forward and stressed the importance of expanding the involvement of affected communities in the ongoing development and delivery of the Plan and in also addressing instances of dual discrimination within many local communities.

Councillor Shahzad then spoke, highlighting the need, given his long-standing involvement in seeking to tackle discrimination, to ensure the issues highlighted were taken seriously in order to encourage real change. The Council, he felt, needed to lead by example and take a different approach to central government, which had commissioned many reports yet taken limited action. He also took the opportunity to highlight the adverse impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities due to their socio-economic position and felt there was a need to fully recognise the contributions made by members of these communities as key workers in many front line services during the pandemic whilst also facing discrimination. He ended by expressing his support for the Council being seen to take the lead and in standing shoulder to shoulder with their residents on such an important issue.

Councillor Mahmood congratulated everyone involved for their efforts in producing the Action Plan and also took the opportunity to express condolences to those who had lost loved ones during the pandemic. Commenting on the extent to which it was felt institutional racism remained an issue in the UK, he wanted to ensure that this was recognised in Brent with appropriate training and awareness raising activity in place across all relevant institutions and public services, including the police.

Councillor Miller was then invited to speak. In highlighting that the Action Plan covered many areas within his Community Safety & Engagement Cabinet portfolio including the voluntary sector, community cohesion & engagement and policing he assured members of the corporate approach being taken across the Council in dealing with the issues highlighted. In terms of transparency, the Council would continue to use its political and moral power to seek transparency not only in the police but also in relation to social justice and to improve the lives of people within the borough. He ended by also supporting the need, highlighted by Councillor Kabir during her earlier contribution for the Council to continue to support the voluntary and community sector in providing the necessary training and capacity building within the most disadvantaged and adversely affected communities.

Councillor Chohan then spoke, highlighting what he felt was a need for the Council to continue looking at ways to improve engagement across all sectors of BAME communities within the borough.

Councillor Mili Patel, also speaking in support of the Action Plan was keen to recognise the importance and involvement of young people in its development and ongoing delivery. As Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care she advised that she would be working to ensure the issues raised were addressed with work already underway within the affected communities to do so.

Councillor Johnson in welcoming the report, hoped that the proposed actions were seen as a real and genuine opportunity for change. He applauded the Council for being one of the first local authorities to address the issues that had been raised by the Black Lives Matter movement, with all councillors he felt needing to work together in order to take the lead in addressing the concerns raised, repair trust and tackle the inequalities identified in relation to health, education, housing and social justice. The Council, he felt, was key in ensuring ownership was taken for the actions set out in the report and in providing much needed leadership on such an important issue affecting communities across the borough.

Councillor Mitchell-Murray advised that she welcomed the actions identified and looked forward to them being taken forward. At the same time, however, she felt it was important to recognise that the UK was not yet at a point in which it could claim that all lives mattered, especially given its history in terms of slavery, which was unfortunately still an issue today. As a result she supported the need for the UK to face up to its history and ensure all forms of discrimination and modern day slavery were eliminated.

Councillor Tatler also advised that she welcomed the report and activities identified within the Action Plan as a means of starting to address many of the issues highlighted during the debate. In terms of her portfolio as Cabinet member for Regeneration, Property and Planning, she assured members that she would continue to support the work being undertaken to provide inclusive economic growth for BAME communities and to ensure a level playing field for all communities within the borough in terms of access to support and development opportunities.

Councillor Maurice also welcomed the report and expressed his support for Brent leading the way to address the long-standing discrimination within the BAME communities.

Councillor Kennelly was then invited to speak and took the opportunity to emphasise the need for real foundational and structural change in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. He was also pleased to be able to support the approach adopted by the Council in leading on this issue but also felt there was a need to challenge social media companies on how they tackled instances of discrimination and abuse online.

Councillor Daly also took the opportunity to express her support for the Action Plan with particular reference to the different examples of discrimination she had witnessed.

Councillor Abdirazak also spoke to welcome the report, but in so doing highlighted the need for the Council to take it forward in what he felt was a meaningful way and with the support of the local community.

Councillor Georgiou then spoke to congratulate all those involved in the development of the Action Plan and also took the opportunity to express his condolences to those who had lost loved ones during the pandemic. In commending the sentiments expressed by Councillor Johnson earlier in the debate he also questioned why it had taken the death of George Floyd to prompt action with the Council encouraged to learn the lessons of the pandemic and apply them in its response to the Black Lives Matter movement, including its communication strategy.

As final contributions, Councillors Denselow, Sangani and Gbajumo also welcomed the report and took the opportunity to thank all those involved in its production, highlighting their support for the comments expressed by previous speakers. Councillor Denselow also took the opportunity to highlight the work of ex-councillor Michael Pavey in championing diversity issues across the Council and borough as a whole.

Before inviting Councillor Butt to exercise his right of reply the Mayor took one final contribution from Councillor Stephens who whilst supporting the previous comments made felt it was also important to recognise the impact of COVID-19 as another manifestation of inequality, this time in relation to health and encouraged all councillors to take responsibility for ensuring the activities within the Action Plan were progressed.

As no other members wished to speak, Councillor Butt, in exercising his right of reply, thanked all members for their contributions. He expressed his pride in being Leader of the Council, given the contributions made by members during the debate covering issues such as education, employment, health, poverty and structural inequality. The desire to address these issues were seen as some of the main reasons driving members in their role as local community representatives, with the report focussed on addressing the concerns highlighted. In summing up, he felt it was important to recognise that the Action Plan had been developed in partnership and for the benefit of the local community and demonstrated Brent's commitment to listening to, and delivering on their priorities.

The Mayor then put the recommendations to the vote and they were declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore unanimously **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note and endorse the Brent Black Community Action Plan.
- (2) To refer the Action Plan to Cabinet for appropriate resourcing and implementation.

16. **Emergency Planning Response to Covid-19**

Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) introduced the report from the Assistant Chief Executive outlining the work that had been undertaken since emergency planning and GOLD arrangements were established across the Council as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In introducing the report, Councillor Muhammed Butt highlighted the work undertaken to ensure members had been kept updated on the various actions and work being undertaken, with many of these actions still ongoing.

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

Councillor McLennan opened the debate by praising and thanking all council staff and the wider community for the response provided and in coming together to co-ordinate efforts. It was noted that the Council had shut the Civic Centre on 23 March and enacted its emergency planning arrangements in order to support local communities across the borough in responding to the pandemic.

Councillor Shahzad then spoke to highlight (as referenced within the report) that Brent had suffered with one of the highest Covid-19 death rates of all local authorities with some of the worst affected areas being Alperton, Church End and Barnhill. Public Health England had cited poverty and lack of opportunities as significant factors and he expressed concern at the impact which the proposed

closure of medical facilities within the borough, including at Central Middlesex Hospital would have in this respect and at a time when they were most needed. In congratulating the Leader and Chief Executive for the Council's response, he welcomed the update provided and expressed thanks to local communities and all staff across the Council who had worked so hard in delivering the support required.

Councillor Southwood, whilst recognising the extent of the national and global tragedy created by the pandemic felt it was also important to highlight the unique opportunity that it had given the Council to make a concerted effort to safeguard rough sleepers. In Brent, this had led to 250 rough sleepers or those classified as homeless being accommodated with thanks expressed to everyone involved in that response. Concern was, however, expressed that while central government had initially encouraged local authorities to do whatever it took to respond to the pandemic and provide safe and secure accommodation to protect residents, they were now (as the lockdown was eased) also being expected to share the financial burden for this. Highlighting the challenges this created for the Council going forward, members were assured that officers were working hard to continue assisting those provided with temporary accommodation and those who had no recourse to public funds.

Councillor Kabir also took the opportunity to thank all officers for their outstanding work in responding to the pandemic and as a result expressed her pride at being a councillor in Brent. The Council was already working to engage with residents and seek their views on the response to and impact of the pandemic, which she was supporting in her ward and beyond. In looking forward, the suggestion was made that an analysis regarding the impact of the pandemic on individual departments might be useful in assisting members to feed in their experience and assist in planning ahead as part of the post-pandemic recovery process within Brent.

Councillor Sangani also thanked the officers, as well as those in the community, who had worked so hard to protect Brent residents during the pandemic. Having witnessed the response provided, she again expressed her pride at being a councillor in Brent and commended all those who had stepped forward to support their local community response.

Councillor Azfal in supporting the sentiments expressed regarding the support provided for local communities, also took the opportunity to highlight, as specific examples the role played by the Council in the provision of PPE and support being provided to care homes and local businesses across the borough. It was noted that some of the poorest areas, including many BAME communities had been hardest hit by the pandemic. Given the longer-term nature of the issues identified, Councillor Afzal remained keen to ensure that work continued to address these issues whilst also recognising the efforts made to respond to the crisis.

Councillor Dar then spoke to thank the Chief Executive and all council staff for their efforts in caring for so many vulnerable members of the community during the lockdown. He also took the opportunity to highlight the efforts of all the mutual aid volunteers who had worked so hard to support the response in their local areas and was keen to ensure their contributions were formally recognised.

Councillor Choudhary in supporting the comments made also took the opportunity to thank all staff for their efforts and for the dignity and humanity displayed in caring

for some of the most vulnerable in society during the pandemic, often at risk to themselves.

Councillor Tatler also expressed her appreciation to the officers who had often gone above and beyond their normal responsibilities and roles to deliver the emergency response and support those affected by the pandemic. Particular thanks were expressed to the Emergency Planning team for ensuring the response was provide so quickly and efficiently.

Councillor Kennelly also took the opportunity to thank all staff and key workers for their contributions (often at high risk) in delivering the response and caring for the most vulnerable and again expressed his pride at being a councillor in Brent.

Councillor Denselow then spoke to commend how quickly the Council had responded to the pandemic especially in relation to the provision of PPE. He also highlighted the need to ensure that the issues identified in relation to the reasons contributing to the high Covid-19 death rate within the borough were fully considered and addressed, especially in relation to poverty.

On a separate note, Councillor Long then spoke to highlight the importance of communication methods, especially for those that were digitally excluded. She commended the Council for being one of the first boroughs to deliver Covid-19 information leaflets to residents, which she felt had been important for those not able to access digital content. She remained keen to ensure that the Council continued to encourage the use of leaflets and magazines as a means of informing the public whilst also targeting efforts to ensure as many residents as possible signed up to the relevant Council email alerts.

Councillor Krupa Sheth then spoke to also thank staff, especially those involved in the provision of the temporary mortuary at Marsh Road, Alperton and who had been involved in organising food deliveries and establishing and delivering safe practices in order to enable refuse collections to continue during the lockdown.

Councillor Ahmed also took the opportunity, on behalf of residents in his ward, to highlight his support for the comments and tributes paid to staff and also to the mutual aid volunteers for what he felt had been their significant role in the response.

Councillor Kansagra, speaking on behalf of the Conservative Group, also extended his thanks to the Chief Executive and council staff, as well as all volunteers and those working in care homes for their efforts in responding to the pandemic whilst also maintaining service levels. As with previous comments, he was also concerned at the high death rates experienced across BAME communities in Brent related to Covid-19 and supported the need for further research into the reasons for this in order to ensure the issues were addressed moving forward.

Councillor Agha also took the opportunity to pay tribute to council staff, especially those who had worked so tirelessly to keep schools open for the children of key workers and to establish appropriate risk management and infection control measures.

Councillor Dixon also extended her thanks to all staff involved in delivery of the emergency response and also highlighted how useful the member briefings and

leaflets produced had been. Looking forward, she hoped the Council would be able to build on the experience and spirit of co-operation gained from local communities to continue providing the necessary support to residents across the borough as the lockdown measures were eased.

As a final contribution to the debate, Councillor Hirani also took the opportunity to thank the Chief Executive and council staff, especially those within the Public Health team for the support provided, especially in relation to schools and care homes. He also reminded members that as the lockdown measures were eased there would still be a need to maintain vigilance and the necessary social distancing measures in order to avoid any second wave of the virus and the extension of any emergency decision making powers. Whilst there would be a gradual return to more normal ways of working this would, he highlighted, still require a significant period of transition and adjustment to a new ways of working.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak Councillor Muhammed Butt, in exercising his right of reply thanked all members for their contributions and commended both all councillors and officers for their dedication and work undertaken to support their local residents and communities so well during the pandemic. Highlighting the need to learn from the experience as the Council moved forward towards its recovery phase, he outlined the focus on the following themes in terms of how the Council would need to consider which elements of the services provided they would wish to retain, restore, reinvent or remove. The development of these themes would be subject to ongoing discussions, with the next agenda item due to focus on the costs and risks involved in funding the response and recovery process as it moved forward. He ended by assuring members and staff that as the Council moved towards reopening the Civic Centre and other Council facilities, significant work had been undertaken to ensure these were operated in a Covid safe environment and thanked staff within Property for their efforts in ensuring the necessary measures had been put in place.

Having thanked Councillor Butt for his closing remarks, the Mayor then put the recommendations to the vote and they were declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Council note the actions taken since the emergency planning and GOLD arrangements were established across the Council as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and level of assurance provided in relation to the associated governance and decision making arrangements.

17. **Financial Impact of Covid-19**

Councillor McLennan, Deputy Leader of the Council, introduced the report from the Director of Finance setting out the overall financial position facing the Council and highlighting the significant risks, issues and uncertainties. The report also presented an early overview and assessment of the financial impact of COVID-19 on the medium term financial strategy and outlined future steps to ensure the Council continued to operate in a financially sustainable and resilient way.

In introducing the report, Councillor McLennan explained that the update had been designed to provide an outline of the past, present and future financial position of the Council and of the challenges now faced as a result of the impact of the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, the Council had been able to operate on the

basis of a balanced budget, with a programme of savings agreed for 2021-22 and 2022-23. This position had become much more challenging, however, as a result of the pandemic given the additional financial impact associated with responding to Covid-19 estimated to be in excess of £47.6 million, including associated loss of income in the form of fees and charges. Whilst the Council, acting as requested by Central Government, had put in place measures to support residents it had only to date received £21.2 million in additional funding from central government towards these costs. As further context, members were advised that the cost incurred by the Council in supplying PPE already stood at approx. £2 million. Given the challenges highlighted and initial commitment made by Central Government, the Council would be continuing to lobby for additional funding to cover the full costs identified. The challenges identified were also expected to be made worse once the furlough scheme ended, with Brent having over 50,000 residents on the scheme and unemployment expected to increase as the full economic impact of the pandemic became clear. Whilst the position remain difficult, the report had been designed to outline the full extent of the financial challenges and risks faced in order to support the continued lobbying of Government for the additional funding required to address these.

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

Councillor Nerva opened the debate by highlighting the difficult position the Council found itself in with such a significant funding gap to address. The approach adopted by the Council was, however, fully supported as it was felt the prioritisation of finances over resident outcomes in responding to the pandemic would have resulted in a far worse position. Councillor Nerva felt there was a need to ensure residents were made fully aware of the financial position the Council now found itself in and the reasons for this post Covid-19, which all councillors would have a role to assist in. Concerns were also expressed about the proposal from Transport for London (as part of the package of measures in response to its funding deal with central Government) to cease free travel for children. With schools being asked to return in September, it was felt this would place an additional financial strain on parents and it was suggested that the Council should continue to lobby the Mayor of London and Department for Transport on this issue.

Councillor Donnelly Jackson then spoke and also expressed concern about the number of residents who had been furloughed and who would face the real prospect of unemployment once the scheme ended. Concern was also expressed about the housing market given the impact of the Governments current housing policies and the pandemic on the Council's ability to meet its affordable housing development targets. The Council was encouraged to look at how it could continue to support the provision of affordable housing in the borough and prevent a wave of evictions post-pandemic, especially in areas such as Willesden Green where over 50% of rented accommodation was in the private sector.

Councillor Johnson whilst recognising the concerns expressed regarding the financial challenges faced, felt it was important to commend the Council for the efforts made to provide PPE to care homes, as well as food for residents and to provide accommodation and food to the homeless during the pandemic. This had been in line with the approach requested by the Government and as a result he felt it was entirely reasonable to expect them to cover the associated costs, with

support expressed for the Council's continued efforts to lobby for this additional funding.

Councillor Shahzad then spoke to thank all councillors and officers for their hard work during the pandemic, which he felt had brought out the best across all communities in Brent.

Councillor Azfal in recognising the bleak nature of the challenges and risks identified within the report, felt it was important to also highlight the impact which the Government's programme of austerity had had on the residents of Brent in order to ensure the position post pandemic was not made any worse by the imposition of any further austerity measures.

Councillor Kansagra, speaking on behalf of the Conservative Group, expressed his surprise that no members had yet commended the impact of the initiatives introduced by the Chancellor in responding to the economic effects of the pandemic. This had involved the provision of what he felt had been an unprecedented level of financial support for many individuals and businesses. Given the challenges identified he felt there was also a need for the Council to consider how best to make use of its available reserves to support Brent's post-pandemic recovery.

Councillor Ethapemi also spoke in support of the need for continued lobbying of Government in relation to their funding of the full costs incurred by local authorities in leading the local response on the pandemic. He felt there was also a case to be made for the additional funding required to be ring fenced to avoid the Council needing to utilise a significant amount of any reserves.

Councillor Tatler then took the opportunity to assure members, in view of the concerns expressed, about the Council's continued commitment towards the achievement of its affordable housing targets with 700 affordable homes delivered on site during this year, despite the impact of the pandemic. Turning to Councillor Kansagra's comments, she felt there was a need for the Chancellor's approach to have been better targeted with flexible approaches to the furlough scheme. She also shared the concerns raised regarding the impact any potential increase in levels of unemployment would have once the scheme ended. Whilst the Council had made prudent decisions to ensure it managed its overall level of reserves, Councillor Tatler felt it was unacceptable that the Government had now appeared to renege on their initial promise of financial support to local authorities, with the level of funding provided to date not sufficient to cover the challenges and costs carefully identified and on which continued lobbying was supported.

Councillor Kabir then spoke to highlight the need for the Council to ensure sufficient resources were identified, as part of the ongoing budgeting process, to fund the Brent Black Community Action Plan. Whilst recognising this would need to be planned within the context of the funding gap and loss of income created by the pandemic, a fully funded programme would, she felt, be able to provide huge benefits for many communities within Brent that had been affected the hardest as a result of the pandemic.

Councillor Chohan and Councillor Dar then both spoke in praise of the Council's leadership during the pandemic, with Councillor Dar also commenting on the

effective speed of decision-making under the virtual meeting and emergency decision making arrangements.

Councillor Thakkar highlighted the potential likelihood of the demand for Adult Social Care services increasing post-pandemic and suggested the Council explore the possibility of bringing care homes in-house.

Councillor Kennelly then spoke to highlight his concern at the impact of the pandemic on the hospitality industry and delayed response from central government in supporting the sector. He felt this contrasted significantly when compared to the speed of the wider response by the Council and also local communities to support those most in need.

Responding to previous comments regarding the Chancellor's support packages during the pandemic, Councillor Kelcher felt it was important to recognise the impact of the Government's austerity programme on public sector finances (particularly NHS and Public Health budgets) since 2010, which had clearly impacted on their ability to respond to the pandemic. Moreover, he highlighted how World Health Organisation (WHO) advice had been ignored in relation to testing along with the Government's failure to provide adequate PPE which he felt provided the real context in which to reflect on the Government's efforts to date. In terms of the Council's approach to spending, he encouraged the continued adoption of a sensible and prudent approach, especially in relation to the suggested use of reserves and with lobbying needing to continue in relation to the level of Government funding being made available, given their initial commitments in relation to provision of the financial support.

As a final contribution, Councillor Mahmood felt it was important to recognise that without the dedication of council staff and community volunteers the costs incurred as a result of the pandemic could have been far greater. He ended by urging the Leader of the Conservative Group to join the Administration in highlighting the efforts made by the Council, partners and local communities across the borough to support the most vulnerable and in lobbying to ensure that they honoured their initial commitment to fund whatever was necessary in order to support the response which had needed to be delivered.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak, Councillor McLennan, in exercising her right of reply, once again took the opportunity to thank all members for their contributions. She hoped all members would support the Council in continuing to lobby for funding to be reimbursed by Central Government as a result of the costs incurred in responding to the pandemic not only within Brent, but across the country as a whole. This would ensure local authorities (whatever their political persuasion) were able to continue focussing on the support for residents moving forward rather than on having to address the financial challenges identified in order to balance their books.

The Mayor then put the recommendations to the vote and they were declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore unanimously **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report and potential financial impact of COVID-19 on the Councils Medium Term Financial Strategy.

18. **Council Guillotine Procedure**

At this stage in proceedings, the Mayor advised that the time available for the meeting had expired and that the Council's Guillotine procedure (as detailed within Standing Order 44) would need to apply. As Members indicated they were not minded to waive the Standing Order on this occasion in order to extend the time of meeting or to adjourn the meeting it was **RESOLVED** that the Guillotine procedure should apply with the remaining items of business on the agenda to be moved and put to the vote without further debate.

The Mayor then moved on to deal with the remaining items of business in the order listed on the agenda.

19. **Pan-London Dockless Vehicles Byelaw**

In accordance with the guillotine procedure, the Mayor moved straight to the vote on the report from the Strategic Director, Regeneration & Environment which detailed the background to the dockless cycle hire scheme in London and a proposal by London Councils Transport and Environment Committee (TEC) for the creation of a pan-London byelaw that would regulate the use and management of dockless cycles.

On being moved and put to the vote without debate it was unanimously **RESOLVED**, as recommended in the report:

- (1) To delegate authority to the London Councils Transport and Environment Committee to make byelaws to govern the operation of dockless vehicles by making a pan-London byelaw to regulate the use and management of them on the highway and/or public places (as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report).
- (2) To authorise the Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment to sign the form of delegation as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report, on behalf of the Council.

20. **Resolution to approve reason for non-attendance at meetings**

Once again, in accordance with the guillotine procedure, the Mayor moved straight to the vote on the report from the Director of Legal, HR, Audit and Investigations seeking approval, under Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, to a reason under which the requirement for a member to attend at least one meeting of that Authority within a six month period could be waived for circumstances specified in relation to Covid-19.

On being moved and put to the vote without debate, it was unanimously **RESOLVED**, as recommended in the report:

- (1) To approve, in relation to each member of the Council in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 the reason set out in (2) below in respect of non-attendance of any member until the Council's annual meeting in May 2021.

- (2) The councillor has been unable to attend as a member (including remote attendance) any relevant meeting (as detailed in section 3.1 of the report) throughout a 6-month period due to the circumstances set out in section 3.5 of the report.

21. **Municipal Calendar of Meetings 2020/2021**

Again, in accordance with the guillotine procedure the Mayor moved straight to the vote on the final item of outstanding business on the agenda relating to the report from the Chief Executive setting out the calendar of meetings proposed for the remainder of 2020/21, which had been provisionally agreed by the Chief Executive using her emergency delegated decision making powers in order for meetings to recommence under the restrictions in place relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.

On being moved and put to the vote without debate, it was unanimously **RESOLVED**, as recommended in the report:

- (1) To approve the dates for Full Council and other meetings to take place during the remainder of 2020/21, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.
- (2) That the Head of Executive & Member Services be authorised to make any alterations deemed necessary to the Municipal Calendar during the course of the year having consulted with the Leader of the Council, Leader of the Opposition Group and Chair of the affected meeting.

22. **Motions**

The Mayor advised that following an agreement reached between both Groups, no motions had been submitted for debate at the meeting.

23. **Urgent Business**

The Mayor advised Members there were no urgent items of business for consideration. Before closing the meeting he thanked all members for their cooperation and patience in successfully delivering the first virtual Full Council meeting and advised that he looked forward to seeing all members at the next Full Council, which again would be taking place virtually on Monday 14 September 2020.

The meeting was declared closed at 9:02pm.

COUNCILLOR ERNEST EZEAJUGHI
Mayor