



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
held on Monday 8 December 2014 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Kana Naheerathan

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor Lesley Jones B.Ed MA

COUNCILLORS:

Aden	Agha
Ahmed	Bradley
Butt	Carr
Chohan	S Choudhary
Colacicco	Conneely
Crane	Daly
Davidson	Dixon
Duffy	Ezeajughi
Farah	Filson
Harrison	Hector
Hirani	Hoda-Benn
Hylton	Kabir
Kansagra	Kelcher
Khan	Long
Mahmood	Marquis
Mashari	McLeish
McLennan	Miller
Moher	J Mitchell Murray
W Mitchell Murray	Nerva
BM Patel	M Patel
RS Patel	Pavey
Perrin	Shahzad
Ms Shaw	Ketan Sheth
Krupa Sheth	Southwood
Stopp	Thomas
Warren	

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Councillors A Choudry, Collier, Colwill, Denselow, Eniola, Hossain, Oladapo, Tatler and Van Kalwala

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 September 2014 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

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

None declared.

3. **Procedural motion**

Councillor Kabir moved a procedural motion.

RESOLVED:

that in respect of Summons items 7, 1st Reading of the 2015/16 – 2018/19 budget:

- the Leader be permitted up to 10 minutes in which to present the report
- the Leader of the Conservative Group be permitted up to 10 minutes to debate the item
- the Deputy Leader be permitted up to 10 minutes to debate the item
- a general debate to follow, in accordance with Standing Order 46 (each member called having up to 3 minutes)
- the Leader be invited to respond to the debate for up to 5 minutes.

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

The Mayor congratulated all Brent Staff who had received an award at the Staff Awards ceremony on 27 November.

The Mayor referred to his charity Christmas party which had been a huge success. He thanked all fellow councillors who had supported the event and was delighted to announce that in excess of £3,000 had been raised.

The Mayor congratulated Councillor Jean Hossain who had recently celebrated her 80th birthday.

The Mayor wished everyone a lovely Christmas and all the very best for a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

The Mayor stated that, in accordance with Standing Orders, a list of current petitions showing progress on dealing with them had been tabled.

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

RESOLVED:

that the following appointments be made:

Nomination/appointment	Body
Jo Ohlson replaced by Sarah Mansuralli	Brent CCG representative on Health and Wellbeing Board
Ann O'Neill	Brent Health Watch representative on Health and Wellbeing Board
Councillor Perrin replaced by Councillor Crane	Brent Council representative on Health and Wellbeing Board
Councillor Filson to replace Councillor Van Kalwala	Audit Committee
Councillor Shahzad to replace Councillor Van Kalwala	Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Khan to replace Councillor Collier	Alcohol & Entertainment Licensing Committee
Councillor Crane to replace Councillor Perrin	General Purposes Committee
Councillor Kabir to replace Councillor Crane and made vice chair	Standards Committee
Councillor Dixon made chair	Standards Committee
Councillor Tatler to replace Councillor Kabir as a substitute member	Standards Committee
Councillor Daly to replace Councillor Van Kalwala as a substitute member	Employees Joint Consultative Committee
Councillor Collier to replace Councillor Khan	Disability Service User Consultative Forum
Councillor Crane in place of Councillor Perrin	London Councils Transport and Environment Committee (Associated Joint Committee)
Councillor Stopp as a deputy	London Councils Transport and Environment Committee (Associated Joint Committee)
Councillor Pavey as deputy	London Councils Leaders' Committee

6. **Report from the Leader or members of the Cabinet**

The Leader invited his colleagues to report on matters which were the responsibility of the Cabinet.

Councillor Moher (Lead Member for Children and Young People) reported on the latest position regarding school places. She explained that at the beginning of the school summer holidays all children had been allocated a school place. However, during the course of the holidays more children had moved into the borough resulting in 155 children not having a school place. So far 93 had been made an offer with 56 rejecting the offer they had been made. The biggest pressure was on

years 5 and 6 and from the north of the borough. A fourth form of entry was due to be opened at Wembley High Technology College. Councillor Moher referred to the very good exam results achieved by Brent schools. Councillor Moher also reported on the problem of the recruitment and retention of social workers and how hard it was to reduce their caseload.

Councillor Hirani (Lead Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing) referred to the public health annual report that had been published and presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board. Levels of mortality were better than might be expected with the difference in life expectancy between the rich and the poor reducing. Dealing with dementia still posed a significant challenge. Teenage pregnancy levels were down significantly but there remained a lot more that could be done to reduce the levels of obesity and diabetes. Cancer remained the main cause of death before age 75 and work was being undertaken on combatting tobacco use including running a stop chewing campaign.

Councillor Mashari (Lead Member for Employment and Skills) reported on the success of Small Business Saturday held on 7 December. She congratulated the five businesses which won the "Think Brent, Celebrate Local" competition. She stated that the Council was committed to working in close partnership with small businesses. Councillor Mashari referred to the work being done to champion the paying of the London Living Wage, including offering rebates on business rates to companies paying the living wage.

Councillor McLennan (Lead Member for Regeneration and Housing) referred to the large number of people who visited her surgery about their housing situation. The number of people placed in bed and breakfast had increased to 700 as the Council tried to accommodate people in the borough. She reported on the introduction on 1 November of selective landlord licensing. She was pleased that Estate Agents appeared to be well aware of the new requirements and were advising landlords accordingly. This would help ensure that people were living in dwellings that were fit for purpose. Enforcement of the licence requirements would begin on 1 January 2015. Councillor Mashari reported that the Council had submitted applications to the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Greater London Authority for two housing zones in Alperton and Wembley and stressed the challenge facing the Council in trying to provide adequate housing provision within the borough.

Councillor Crane (Lead Member for Environment) reported that in the weeks to come, leaflets would be distributed detailing the new recycling and waste service that would be starting in April 2015. He reported on the free parking in the Council's car parks in the period leading up to Christmas. Councillor Crane also pointed out that the Council was consulting on a cycling strategy and referred to the exhibition on display outside the meeting hall.

7. Deputations

None submitted.

8. First reading debate on the 2015/16 - 2018/19 budget

Councillor Butt referred to the outcome of the local elections returning a Labour Administration and the actions of the present Government in requiring the Council to cut £54M from its budget in addition to the £80M already cut. He put forward a two year budget which he stated would be influenced by the outcome of the largest consultation carried out by the Council on a borough plan which would reflect local priorities. Work was being undertaken to engage with the Council's partners and the capital programme would focus on the provision of school places and the supply of housing. In the circumstances he stated that local organisations would have to learn to be self sufficient but that the Council would support them the best it could. The Council would need to be ever more innovative and examine carefully the potential for charging. Councillor Butt acknowledged that it would be difficult for residents and staff and stated that the cuts threatened the most vulnerable. The budget would present challenges for all both within the Council and outside.

Councillor Kansagra sought to remind councillors that the country's present economic position was due to the previous Labour government. He stated that the present government had invested more in the NHS, schools and housing. He acknowledged that the cuts were hitting local government the hardest but submitted that it had only gone to show how much wastage there had previously been. He commented that there was no indication of where the Administration was minded to make the cuts. Councillor Kansagra felt that it was a priority to assist small businesses in the borough by introducing free parking for the first half hour. Shopkeepers around Wembley Stadium complained that traffic diversions on event days meant they were not getting the custom and this needed to be looked into. The pavements and roads in the borough were in a poor condition and there needed to be greater effort made to pursue developers and the utility companies that damaged them. Councillor Kansagra submitted that the savings the Council had so far made were largely due to the One Council programme which the previous Lib Dem/Conservative Administration had introduced. Finally he felt that the changes to top management had led to the Council paying out too much money on departure costs.

Councillor Pavey stated that the Government had had the choice between promoting growth or making cuts and made the wrong choice. It had promised to eliminate the deficit within a single Parliament but the Council was being made to make cuts for two years beyond. If the Government economic strategy had worked there would not be a need for such cuts. There were now record levels of youth unemployment and reductions in real wage levels. He referred to Councillor Kansagra's contribution and stated that the Council needed to save £54M not spend more. He presumed that he was happy with cuts to all the other services not mentioned. Councillor Pavey stated that a budget could have simply been presented and agreed but the Council wanted to hear what the community thought which would then help shape the final budget. He concluded that the Council would seek to protect the services it provided that helped the most vulnerable and built a strong local economy.

Councillor Warren, representing the Brondesbury Park Conservatives, felt there was a lack of balance in the debate. Whilst he recognised that local government was taking a hit, he could not accept that the legacy of the previous Labour government had not affected the position. He felt that the way some money was spent by the Council did not reflect the sentiments expressed and submitted that the Council's staff would be concerned by the actions of HR.

Upon debating the matter, a view was expressed that the Government was pursuing a political agenda in reducing the size of local government and the public sector generally. The cuts were far more than had first been stated. Whilst it was agreed that government debt had to be reduced it was submitted that to do this needed a thriving economy and yet business rate rises had hit small businesses and local traders were facing eviction from their premises because of high rent rises. It was said that local councillors had not been elected onto the Council in order to make £54M cuts but this was being forced upon them. Reference was made to meetings of the Brent Connects forums at which local people had been informed of the challenges facing the Council and that new ways of working would need to be found. However it was not possible for the people to comprehend the scale of the cuts especially when the revenue the Council had available to spend was being reduced by half. It was stated that local people were suffering financially with 44,000 residents in the borough qualifying for Universal Credit. Delays in making payments meant they were attracted to loan sharks and then got into more debt. There was no confidence in the Universal Credit programme being rolled out competently or for the Council being compensated for the work it was having to do to support the programme. A special plea was made to protect support for health and social care and thereby pursue improvements in quality and productivity within the NHS in order to protect local people. The view was expressed that the lack of adequate housing was the main problem facing the local population. Those that could not afford high rents were being evicted and forced out of the borough. Others were forced to live in sub-standard housing. Representations had been made to lift the benefits cap and allow Councils to borrow in order to build more housing of a quality suitable for the present day. The Government's economic policy was questioned by asserting that only a few could see the benefits from any growth and the majority were worse off, with a further squeeze to come on benefits meaning the most vulnerable would further suffer. Further reference was made to the legacy of the previous Labour government but it was pointed out that the present government had failed to meet its targets in cutting expenditure. It was submitted that no-one had put forward savings proposals as a result of the consultation on the Borough Plan and it was the Council's responsibility to take decisions on this. It was questioned whether it was time to increase the level of Council Tax. It was stated that some Council services needed improving to meet the challenges faced and there were some aspects of expenditure that affected members that could be reduced. Reference was made to the recently published National Audit Office report which concluded that the Department for Communities and Local Government had little understanding of the affects the cuts were having on local government. It was also pointed out that those authorities with the highest levels of deprivation were subject to larger cuts with an average level of cuts of 37% but Brent facing 50% cuts.

Councillor Butt thanked his colleagues for their contributions and echoed their concerns. He stated he wanted to make Brent a fairer place to live in, create jobs and prosperity and strengthen resilience. The Council was working with local employers and businesses, tackling rogue landlords and ensuring effective arrangements with partner agencies to provide effective local services and look after the health of local residents. He stated that communication with local people would continue.

9. Report from the Chair Scrutiny Committee

The report before members provided a summary of the work of the council's Scrutiny Committee in accordance with Standing Order 14. It covered the period September to November 2014. During this period the Scrutiny Committee had been focused on consolidating its role, further developing its work programme and taking forward four time limited task groups.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

10. **2014/15 Mid-Year Treasury Report**

RESOLVED:

that the 2014/15 mid-year Treasury report, providing an update on treasury activity during the 2014/15 financial year, as submitted to the Audit Committee and the Cabinet, be received.

11. **Motions**

11.1 **Government cuts**

Councillor Kelcher moved the motion circulated in his name. He stated that political choices were being made on the scale of public sector cuts being imposed. He referred to the high satisfaction rating of the NHS in 2010 and yet the Government had chosen to re-organise it and the imposition of the 'bedroom' tax which he submitted had hit the most vulnerable. He stated that resources were being diverted from poorer areas to better off areas, that Brent residents would be unlikely to vote Conservative given the unfairness of the cuts being made and that an incoming Labour government would seek to address the present unfair distribution of resources.

Councillor Warren referred to public spending being in surplus in 1997 only for it to be in deficit by £162B by 2010. He stated he had not heard what an incoming Labour government would do and that the answer to a problem was not always to spend more money on it; this showed a resistance to change.

Councillor Daly made reference to the cases of two residents, one who was referred to Northwick Park hospital but had to wait a long time for an appointment, and the other who had to go to A&E at Northwick Park hospital and had to wait a long time. She submitted that local residents were suffering and it was getting worse.

The motion was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that Brent Council believes that the severe depth of cuts to local government, imposed by the current coalition Government, has been chosen by Conservatives and Liberal Democrats together in office;

- (ii) we note that:
- the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats could have chosen not to cut the top rate of tax for those earning more than £150,000 per year – but they did
 - the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats could have chosen not to force through an expensive, unwanted and unnecessary reorganisation of the NHS – but they did
 - the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats could have chosen not to create a costly chaos in the social security system through the botched roll out of Universal Credit – but they did;
- (iii) that the price of these decisions is not being paid by Government ministers in Westminster but by working families in Brent, who must sacrifice their local services to fund tax cuts for the richest and the Conservatives’ pet projects;
- (iv) that Brent Council promises never to put rigid dogma ahead of the hopes and aspirations of the families of Brent, and for their interests to always be our guiding principle.

11.2 Health Services in Brent

Councillor Kansagra introduced the motion circulated in his and Councillors Colwill and BM Patel’s names. He stated that generally the health services in Brent had improved but problems remained with the provision of A&E despite assurances given to the Scrutiny Committee. He felt the Council needed to keep this matter under review and work in partnership with Northwick Park Hospital to bring about improvements.

Councillor Warren submitted that the Council needed to be a critical friend of Northwick Park hospital. He referred to the independent commission, chaired by Michael Mansfield QC, established by Brent Council along with three other local councils in west London to look at the impact local closures were having, and at the implications of further hospital reorganisation proposals. He felt this was neither independent or that money needed to be spent on it.

Councillor Hirani acknowledged the scale of the issue and the concern the Council had previously expressed over the impact of closing the A&E unit at Central Middlesex hospital. He referred to the limited role the Council had in this matter and how Government actions led to unaccountable decisions being taken on matters such as this. Councillor Hirani moved an amendment to the motion. Councillor Kansagra indicated he was prepared to accept the amendment subject to the deletion of part of it which Councillor Hirani accepted.

The motion, as amended, was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to note the concerns expressed by the Council regarding the present state of the Health Service in the Borough, especially since the recent closure of the

A&E at Central Middlesex hospital which has resulted in an increased demand at Northwick Park hospital for accident and emergency services;

- (ii) that the Cabinet be called on to explain exactly what safeguards have been put in place to ensure that their fears never become reality and for reassurance that council officers are in debate when possible with the NHS and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on the situation and will keep the Council updated on progress;
- (iii) that the Council will work to protect the interests of Brent residents in the NHS.

11.3 **Employment tribunal**

Councillor Warren moved the motion circulated in his and Councillors Davidson and Shaw's names which sought alternative actions in response to the Council losing a recent Employment Tribunal case. He asked why the Council had spent money on appealing the outcome and sought re-assurance that no further avenues for appeal would be pursued. He was dismissive of the inquiry led by Councillor Pavey and felt the officers responsible should be held to account. He asked how staff could believe they would be treated fairly.

In response, Councillor Butt stated that the Council remained committed to supporting the diversity of its staff. He referred to the Council being one of the few councils across the country which had attained the silver standard for Investors in People. The Councillor Pavey led inquiry would be reporting to the General Purposes Committee early in the New Year and Councillor Butt explained that the outcome would be open to discussion within the Council and with the Council's partner agencies.

The motion was put to the vote and declared LOST.

12. **Urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm

COUNCILLOR KANA NAHEERATHAN
Mayor