



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

**Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
held on Monday 23 November 2015 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor

Councillor Lesley Jones MBE B.Ed MA

The Deputy Mayor

Councillor Parvez Ahmed

COUNCILLORS:

Aden	Agha
Allie	Bradley
Butt	Carr
S Choudhary	A Choudry
Colacicco	Collier
Colwill	Conneely
Crane	Daly
Davidson	Dixon
Duffy	Eniola
Ezeajughi	Farah
Harrison	Hector
Hirani	Hoda-Benn
Hossain	Hylton
Kabir	Kelcher
Khan	Long
Mahmood	Marquis
Mashari	Maurice
McLeish	McLennan
Miller	Moher
J Mitchell Murray	W Mitchell Murray
Naheerathan	Nerva
M Patel	RS Patel
Pavey	Perrin
Shahzad	Ms Shaw
Ketan Sheth	Krupa Sheth
Southwood	Stopp
Tatler	Thomas
Van Kalwala	Warren

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Councillors Chohan, Denselow, Kansagra and

Oladapo

1. **Procedural motion**

Councillor Kabir moved a procedural motion.

RESOLVED:

That in respect of Summons items 7, First Reading of the Budget:

the Leader be permitted up to 10 minutes in which to present the report,
a representative of the Conservative Group be permitted up to 10 minutes to debate the item,
a representative of the Brent 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,
the Leader be invited to respond to the debate for up to 5 minutes.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 September 2015 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

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

None declared.

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

The Mayor announced with sadness that Councillor Dan Filson had passed away suddenly on Friday 30 October 2015. She offered her sincerest condolences and deepest sympathies to Councillor Filson's family and friends.

The Mayor extended her sincerest condolences to the families and friends of those killed and injured in the devastating attacks in Paris and Mali during the past week. She added that Brent stood shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with those countries who are victims of terror.

In memory of Councillor Dan Filson and those killed and injured in recent terrorist attacks the Council stood in silence for one minute.

The Mayor invited councillors to pay tribute to Dan Filson and his work as a councillor both in Brent and in Hammersmith and Fulham and welcomed his sister Deborah Filson who was present at the meeting. The Leader of the Council and a number of other councillors referred to Dan Filson as being generous, kind, a committed democrat, hard working with a good sense of humour. Particular reference was made to his work as chair of Scrutiny Committee and his efforts to increase the profile of scrutiny within the Council.

The Mayor announced that Councillor Carr had asked her to confirm that, following her speech at the meeting of Council in September, she had written to Mr Phillip Grant to apologise for her comments. Councillor Carr recognised that it was not appropriate to personalise and express her views on the correspondence from Mr Grant at a public forum in the way she had.

The Mayor announced that in September 2015, the Queen became the longest serving monarch in Britain's history. She congratulated Her Majesty on behalf of all Brent residents.

The Mayor was pleased to announce that Councillor Oladapo had been discharged from hospital following successful surgery and was now at home recuperating. His aim was to return to council duties in the New Year and he looked forward to seeing his friends and colleagues again then.

The Mayor stated that she had been proud to lead this year's Borough Remembrance Services at both Barham Park and the Civic Centre. It had been wonderful to see so many attending both services, and especially the Ghurkhas who marched in the procession for the first time.

The Mayor referred to the first visit to the UK of Narendra Modi as India's Prime Minister on 20 November, and the estimated 60,000 visitors to Wembley Stadium. She was sure members would recognise the solemnity of this occasion.

The Mayor announced that Brent's Annual 'White Ribbon Day' would be on 25 November from 10am until midday at the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn. The day would focus on the particular issue of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and feature first hand stories from survivors as well as advice on practical steps on how to combat it. The Mayor encouraged everyone to attend.

The Mayor congratulated Councillor Denselow on his recent marriage.

The Mayor announced that her charity Christmas party would take place on 10 December 2015 and anyone wishing to purchase a ticket should contact her office.

The Mayor announced that Andy Donald (Strategic Director, Regeneration & Growth) would soon be leaving Brent to take up the position as Chief Executive in Redbridge. Andy had worked for Brent for over 15 years and had contributed a great deal to the regeneration of the Borough. On behalf of the Council she wished Andy Donald well in his new role.

5. **Deputations**

None.

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

RESOLVED:

- (i) that Councillor Kelcher be appointed chair of Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Long be appointed to fill the vacancy on the Scrutiny Committee;
- (ii) that Councillor Mahmood be appointed to replace Councillor Naheerathan on the Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing Committee.

7. Report from the Leader or members of the Cabinet

There was no report to this meeting.

8. First reading debate on the budget

Councillor Butt opened the debate by referring to the 36% cut in the Council's budget and the further 30% cut required over the next 4 years. He attacked the Government's management of the economy and stated that the Council needed to plan for the worst case scenario given the Government's track record. The message from the Council was that it would continue to protect those services most needed by local residents and he referred to a number of areas where the Council was working with local communities and partner agencies to maintain the delivery of services. Nevertheless he accepted that deep cuts would have to be made which would affect some services. Many areas so far protected would have to be looked at again in view of the savings that needed to be made in 2017/18. Councillor Butt stated that the possibility of increasing Council Tax would be considered.

Councillor Maurice stated that the level of cuts still only formed a small proportion of the Council's expenditure and that other Councils were able to achieve these savings. He referred to the London Borough of Wandsworth which had the lowest Council Tax in the country. Councillor Maurice felt that lessons could be learned from a borough such as this.

Councillor Warren referred to the previous Labour Government and suggested it was the cause of the financial situation now faced by the country. He expressed his hope that future Council spending plans would not be subject to long consultation exercises. He felt the Council should know what services residents wanted and suggested they wanted more spent on street paving, security through the provision of more CCTV and neighbourhood watch schemes, rubbish clearance and community libraries. Councillor Warren wanted to see savings made by removing the various consultation forums and deleting the press and communications function. He wanted to see the green bin tax abolished and withdrawal of the changes to parking permit charges. Councillor Warren stated that he would present in February a legal and fair alternative budget including a 2½% reduction in Council Tax.

Councillor Pavey referred to the unusual level of uncertainty in planning for a budget with new schemes being announced by the Government but with no details accompanying them. This had the potential for local councils being left to pick up the pieces. He felt that Government was trying to micro manage local councils and criticised the adverse affect this had on local residents. Councillor Pavey submitted that the budget submitted in February would be based on civic enterprise. It would be a creative, dynamic forward looking budget.

During the debate there was criticism of the Chancellor's ambition to try to cut the deficit in one go. The view was expressed that Labour Councils were innovative and well managed, working with their staff and trade unions in order to keep services running. Reference was made to social care needs across London and the work being undertaken to meet demand. The impact on the NHS of cuts in social care was highlighted and the need to spend on prevention in health not just treatment. It was disputed that only 2-3% of the Council's budget was being cut when it was felt to be clear that the Council would lose 50% of its budget. The reduction in funding was seen as an attack on local government. Concern was expressed for maintaining the provision of services for women, which it was felt were vulnerable to being impacted disproportionately. Reference was made to Conservative Council Leaders expressing concern over the level of cuts being imposed. The view was expressed that Council Tax needed to be increased by the permitted 2% to help fund social care. A specific request was made for provision to be made for improving air quality and increasing cycling facilities.

An alternative point of view was submitted that comments made on the budget represented a negative attitude. It was submitted that it was clear that residents wanted their rubbish collected, the streets kept clean and pavements maintained. Instead there were record levels of fly tipping and criticism was levelled at the green bin charges. Additionally it was put forward that only a negative response was forthcoming from the Council on the Chancellor's announcement regarding business rates.

Additional suggestions put forward to improve the budget situation were to charge councillors for use of the Civic Centre car park, delete the provision of refreshments at Council meetings and reduce the use of paper by restricting the circulation of paper copy agendas. A request was made to explore the establishment of a mutual co-operative for the New Millennium day centre and progress the Church Road redevelopment. The view was expressed that the arrangements for the provision of green bins were an improvement. However criticism was voiced over past officer restructures carried out at a cost to the Council. It was submitted that all governments had a duty of care towards local people and that local councillors were elected to improve the lives of people not see cuts implemented which affected the lives of young people, especially the poorest.

Councillor Butt thanked those who had made a contribution to the debate. He criticised those members who spoke in opposition to the budget proposals but did not mention the pressures facing adult social care, housing and the provision of school places. He stated that the Council was working with businesses, looking at flexible models of provision, ensuring key contracts were delivering value for money and at the same time providing the first house building programme for many years. However, he reiterated that the Council was losing £50M and this would affect the poorest most vulnerable people.

RESOLVED:

that the contents of the report from the Chief Finance Officer be noted and Scrutiny Committee be informed of the outcome of the first reading debate.

9. **Report from the Chair Scrutiny Committee**

There was no report to this meeting.

10. **Backbench members' debate**

Police Community Support Officers(PCSOs)

Upon the Mayor submitting it to a vote it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders in so far as to allow a non cabinet members' debate to take place at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That standing order 37 be suspended in so far as to allow a non Cabinet members' debate to take place at the meeting.

The Mayor reported that the most support received for discussion of an item was on the provision of PCSOs in the borough. She explained that 20 minutes would be allowed for this item.

It was submitted that the biggest issue on which many ward councillors received casework was on crime and anti social behaviour. Reference was made to murders and burglaries with a plea for more deployable CCTV in the Kensal Green area. A respect for the role of PCSOs was stated but nevertheless their number had been reduced from 5000 to 800 and there was concern that this number would be removed. It was submitted that removal of a police presence in an area resulted in an increase in crime. A plea for additional CCTV in the north of the borough was made. It was submitted that cutting the number of PCSOs did not fulfil the government's duty of care. The borough and specifically Harlesden had seen a steady drop in crime. It was felt that this was down to PCSOs working with the local community and freeing Police time to deal with more serious crime. A call was made for the Mayor of London to protect the provision of PCSOs. It was stated that police cuts led to increased crime and that crime had a debilitating effect on a neighbourhood.

An alternative view was submitted that Brent currently had record low levels of unemployment and had benefited from a huge drop in crime with the number of burglaries and robberies down. It was scaremongering to suggest there would not be a police presence in the area and there was little evidence that PCSOs made much difference to the level of crime.

In contrast it was submitted that investment in policing was the reason for the fall in crime and further reductions would have a devastating effect on the borough. The view was expressed that PCSOs provided local knowledge and cutting their numbers would put a strain on the relationship between police and local residents.

Councillor Butt responded to the debate on behalf of Councillor Denselow (Lead Member, Stronger Communities). He felt that the concerns expressed were valid and at a time of heightened fears over security the Government was making the situation worse. He referred to the cuts to the police service and that PCSOs had been a familiar re-assuring sight on London streets. He had taken the issue up with the Borough Commander and partner agencies to make sure everybody worked together to provide re-assurance to local residents that they were safe.

11. **Statement of Licensing Policy**

The report before members set out the requirements for the Council to publish a Statement of Licensing Policy at least once every 5 years, setting out its policies with respect to the exercise of its licensing functions. The Council's current policy had come into effect on 7 January 2011 and would expire on 6 January 2016. On 26 October 2015 the Alcohol & Entertainment Licensing Committee had agreed the draft policy.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the draft Statement of Licensing Policy attached as Appendix 1 to the report submitted be agreed;
- (ii) that the intention to carry out a further review of the Council's policy next year with the aim of formulating practical policies which respond to local issues, assist decision making and facilitate the achievement of the Council's objectives and vision be noted.

12. **Statement of Gambling Principles**

Members considered the report regarding the need to prepare and publish every three years a Statement of Principles that sets out the Council's policy for dealing with applications and regulating gambling premises within the borough. The Council's current Statement would expire in January 2016 and therefore a draft Statement to replace it had been prepared. The Alcohol & Entertainment Licensing Committee on 26 October 2015 and Cabinet on 16 November 2015 had agreed the draft Statement of Gambling Principles.

RESOLVED:

that the revised Statement of Gambling Principles (31 January 2016 – 31 January 2019) attached as Appendix 1 to the report submitted be approved.

13. **Members' code of conduct and gifts and hospitality**

Members considered the report which set out proposed changes to the Members' Code of Conduct and a draft Members' Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for approval and the consequential amendment to Standing Orders.

It was pointed out that the Standards Committee had approved the changes and had recommended that a general obligation be added.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the proposed changes to the Members' Code of Conduct and the consequential amendment to Standing Orders be approved, including the addition of the following general obligation:
You must not –
(e) make frivolous, vexatious or repeated complaints against another member or an officer of the council;
- (ii) that the draft Members' Gifts and Hospitality Protocol be approved;

- (iii) that the new Members' Code of Conduct and the Members' Gifts and Hospitality Protocol come into force on 30 November 2015 and the Chief Legal Officer be authorised to discharge the Council's duty to publicise the new Members' Code of Conduct;
- (iv) that the Chief Legal Officer be authorised to revise the Licensing and Planning Codes of Practice to reflect the new Members' Code of Conduct.

14. **Member's absence from Council meetings**

Item withdrawn

15. **Motions**

15.1 **Trade Union Bill**

Councillor Stopp moved the motion circulated under Councillor Miller's name. He accused the Government of mounting a divide and rule attack on the trade union movement and reminded members of the benefits trade unions had fought for over the years. He called for the scrapping of the bill and for the Council to stand up for the fundamental role that trade unions played in protecting human rights. It was argued that existing controls on trade unions were sufficient without the need to introduce more. It was suggested that the bill was politically motivated. The view was submitted that trade unions were needed to provide checks and balances and that their role should be outside party politics.

In response it was argued that the bill was not about recognising the good things that trade unions had achieved but about introducing reasonable controls. It was submitted that the recent London Underground drivers strike had had a devastating effect on London. It was submitted that from what had been said it was made to sound as if the Government was proposing to ban trade unions altogether. The measures contained in the bill were felt to be reasonable and whilst trade unions had done a lot of good they could also be very destructive.

The motion was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that, as a major employer in the local area, this Council welcomes the positive benefits that arise from the relationship that it has with recognised trade unions and believes that the relationship between employers and their employees through their collective representatives would be damaged by reducing facility time for elected representatives and by removing the ability of union members to pay union dues direct from wages;
- (ii) this Council believes that the Trade Union Bill, far from assisting employer-employee relations or improving workplace democracy, is an ideologically driven attack on the fundamental rights and freedoms of workers to organise or take strike action. It is also deliberately designed to dramatically reduce funding to the main Party in opposition to the Government, and as such is a threat to our democracy;

- (iii) the Council notes that the Bill and associated secondary legislation will:
- Allow agency labour to be used to substitute for striking workers, currently outlawed, which would be deeply divisive and, with agency workers often doing unfamiliar jobs, could pose a serious health and safety risk to themselves and others
 - Introduce very high thresholds for industrial ballots, with an extra threshold in certain public services, without doing anything to improve the ability of workers to participate in ballots
 - Severely restrict the right to picket and peacefully protest, including organising campaigns through social media
 - Significantly reduce trade union facility time and withdraw check off union contributions in the public sector, irrespective of the wishes of the employer
 - Require union members to 'contract in' to their union's Political Fund every 5 years, thereby significantly reducing the ability of trade unions either to campaign on political issues or to support political parties.
- (iv) this Council therefore calls on the Government to withdraw the Trade Union Bill and all associated regulation/secondary legislation;
- (v) this Council also commits to promote the positive role that trade unions bring to society. The Council will endeavour within law to preserve facility time for union representatives and enable union members to pay their union fees through the payroll, whatever the outcome of this Government's legislative attack on the rights of working people.

15.2 **Crime in Brent**

Councillor Colwill moved the motion circulated in his and Councillors Kansagra and Maurice's names. Councillor Warren moved an amendment to the motion which was ruled out of order because it had the effect of negating the motion. An amendment to the motion was proposed by the Leader of the Council which had the effect of removing reference to the north of the borough and substituted Barnhill ward for Kenton ward. This was accepted by Councillor Colwill. In support of the motion, attention was drawn to the reduction in the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and the disproportionate effect this had on women subject to violent crime. The Mayor allowed an additional speaker on this item. Councillor Warren stated his objection to this.

RESOLVED:

that it be noted that:

- crime in the Borough is increasing in relation to violent crimes; recently there was another murder of a young man, this time in Barnhill;
- the numbers of police officers have been reduced in the Borough which is now causing an escalation of serious crime'
- the Conservative Group calls on the Council to take action to reduce the crime rate and the deaths and injuries that are now occurring all across the Borough due to the lack of police officers in Brent.

15.3 **Business rates**

Councillor Warren moved the motion circulated in his and Councillors Davidson and Shaw's names. He referred to the devolution of business rates to local authorities as a good news story which had been turned into a bad news story by the response from the Council's leadership. He urged the Leader and his colleagues to use their imagination and welcome the resources the Council would get to use. It was added that the retention of business rates could make the Council more efficient and should not be used to blame the Government over the proposals.

In response it was pointed out that there was still some time to go before the proposal was implemented and the estimated income had to be seen in the context of the cost pressures facing local government. It was accepted that the proposal held many potential benefits but it was not equal across all local authorities and if it was used to replace other forms of finance then councils would be no better off.

The motion was put to the vote and declared LOST.

16. **Urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm

COUNCILLOR LESLEY JONES MBE B.ED MA
Mayor