



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
held on Monday 18 November 2013 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Bobby Thomas

COUNCILLORS:

Aden	Adeyeye
Al-Ebadi	Arnold
Ashraf	Mrs Bacchus
Baker	Beswick
Brown	Butt
Cheese	S Choudhary
A Choudry	Colwill
Crane	Cummins
Daly	Denselow
Gladbaum	Harrison
Hashmi	Hector
Hirani	Hopkins
Hossain	Hunter
John	Jones
Kabir	Kansagra
Kataria	Leaman
Long	Lorber
Mashari	Matthews
McLennan	Mitchell Murray
J Moher	R Moher
Moloney	Ogunro
Oladapo	BM Patel
CJ Patel	HB Patel
HM Patel	RS Patel
Pavey	Powney
Ms Shaw	Ketan Sheth
Krupa Sheth	Singh
Van Kalwala	

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Councillors Chohan, Naheerathan and Sneddon.

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 September 2013 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

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

Councillor Cheese declared a non pecuniary interest as a member of the Kilburn Advisory Board.

3. **Procedural motions**

The Chief Whip moved two procedural motions.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That in respect of Summons item 7, 1st Reading Debate – 2014/15 Budget:
 - the Leader be permitted up to 10 minutes in which to present the report,
 - the Leaders of the Liberal Democrat Group and the Conservative Group be permitted up to 10 minutes each to debate the item,
 - a general debate to follow in accordance with Standing Order 44(b).
- (ii) that in respect of the Labour Group motion to be moved under Summons item 15:
 - one speaker from the Labour Group be permitted to move the motion for debate within the 3 minutes allowed and take the time allowed for the two additional 2 minute contributions, the rights of the Liberal Democrat and Conservative Groups to their normal allocation of two speakers each taking up to 2 minutes each being unaffected.

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

The Mayor announced with sadness that Len Snow had passed away on 1 November 2014. Len had represented for Tokyngton ward in 1963 which saw the beginning of 27 years of service in local government. He was elected Mayor of Brent in 1976 and remained a school governor, being particularly linked with Copland School, where he was Chair for over 20 years until 1998. The Mayor expressed the Council's condolences to his widow Joan, who was in hospital herself and wished her a speedy recovery, daughter Sue Dorman, son Ralph Snow and two grandsons.

Members stood for a minute's silence in memory of Len Snow.

The Mayor pointed out that the meeting was being webcast live for the first time and the Council was the first in London to integrate Twitter and webcasts for meetings in

this way. It was hoped this would encourage residents to get involved and contribute to the debate. The Mayor also pointed out that the TV cameras were filming for the Panorama programme.

The Mayor referred to the official opening of the Civic Centre that took place on Sunday 6 October and stated that feedback had been extremely positive, with an estimated 5,000 people attending the event of which 96% rated the venue and facilities as good or very good.

The Mayor announced that on 28 October 2014 he and the Leader of the Council, high ranking military personnel and voluntary organisations had signed a pledge of support for the military. The Armed Forces Covenant was a mutual pledge that the civilian population and its local armed forces community made to work better together to support veterans and help them and their families integrate into civilian life.

The Mayor thanked Europa services for the outstanding service they had provided during a recent Mayoral event at the Civic Centre.

The Mayor announced that he would be hosting his Christmas Ball in the Grand Hall, Civic Centre on Friday 13 December. Tickets were available from his office and he hoped it would be well supported.

The Mayor drew attention to the list of current petitions showing progress on dealing with them which had been circulated around the chamber.

The Mayor referred to one of the motions to be discussed later in the meeting and reminded all councillors to attend a member development event on Thursday 21 November from 6pm on Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in Brent. He added that the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (White Ribbon Day) was on Monday 25 November.

The Mayor welcomed to the meeting senior officers attending for the first time.

Members paid tribute to Len Snow, remembering his long association with the borough, his love of the history of the borough and writing about it and that he had been married to his wife Joan for 70 years.

5. **Appointments to committees and outside bodies and appointment of chairs/vice chairs (if any)**

RESOLVED:

that Miranda Wixon (Healthwatch chair) and Daksha Keys (a Healthwatch Brent CIC director) be appointed as first and second alternates respectively to Ann O'Neill on the Health and Wellbeing Board.

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

Councillor Butt welcomed Conrad Hall, Chief Finance Officer and Ben Spinks, Assistant Chief Executive to their first meeting of Full Council. Councillor Butt commented on the opening of the London Design Outlet which he felt would be

good for Brent and was an example of the continued regeneration of the borough providing more employment opportunities. He also reported on the accreditation of the Council by the London Living Wage Foundation and how the Council was working with business partners to encourage them to pay people a living wage.

Councillor Mashari was pleased to report on the award of the public realm contract to Veolia. The contract represented a £1.3m in-year saving, increasing to £1.7m and contained strict financial penalties against any drop in customer satisfaction rates. It included increased resources for education and resident engagement activities. Other features of the contract included jet spray cleaning, recycling to flats above shops and a new phone app for reporting fly tipping. Councillor Mashari stated that the inaugural meeting of the Brent libraries forum would take place on 26 November 2013 in the Civic Centre library. She also reported that the Civic Centre library had extended its opening hours to 8am to 8pm and visitor numbers to the library were on the increase. Councillor Mashari added that the Council was prepared for any snow or icy conditions with stocks of grit and grit bins on the streets. She congratulated the sports service on winning the financial excellence award at the Guardian public service awards ceremony for the contract to run the Vale Farm sports centre.

Councillor Pavey reported on the progress being made to deal with the problems at Copeland school by converting it to become an Ark Academy. He compared a critical OFSTED report on Copeland school to one that praised the Ark Academy and submitted that the partnership between the two schools would provide improved opportunities for local families.

Councillor Hirani reported on the first safeguarding conference to be held in Brent involving the ambulance and police services, the health service and the Council working together to put safeguarding at the centre of everything and he referred to the posters displaying the 'See it Stop it' slogan. He reported on the new meals on wheels service and the decision to replace the block contract with a service delivery arrangement that involved local organisations and the making of direct payments to the clients. He thanked the local organisations who would be delivering the meals on wheels for their work. He reported on the success of the Council's bid to become a pioneer in the delivery of a more integrated health service to residents of the borough and that the Council would be taking part in the Sir John Oldham commission on Whole-Person Care set up by the Labour Party.

Councillor McLennan reported the good news that the asset management strategy had been ratified, meaning for the first time in years there would be stock investment leading to home improvements and plans to build new homes, especially larger family homes. Consideration would be given to a rental policy that would allow people to be able to afford to live in Brent. In terms of welfare reform Brent was the most affected borough in the country and she paid tribute to the housing team who were doing their utmost to work with residents who were affected to try to find them employment and keep them in Brent rather than face having to move away.

Councillor Denslow reported on the meeting being live streamed. He referred to the increased use of social media to communicate with local residents and reminded members of the member development session taking place in January on the use

of Twitter. He stated that the Communications team were working hard to improve the Council's digital offer.

Councillor Choudry reported on the appointment of a new head and deputy head of the Community Safety team and on the substantial reduction in the crime figures in Brent. The work on gangs, domestic violence and other crime issues were all contributing to this. He added that the community and stakeholders were all working together in the effort to reduce crime. There had also been a drop in the number of anti-social behaviour cases and he thanked all those involved in helping to reduce the number of cases.

7. Questions from the Opposition and other Non- Executive Members

Councillor Hunter referred to the Willesden Green week of action which had started that day. She stated that she had received the final programme of events only that morning. She expressed her frustration that one of the lessons from the previous Church End week of action had not been learnt which was to keep residents and councillors fully involved during the preparations for such a week. The week represented a major investment of time and money by the Council and partner agencies and she asked what steps were being taken to evaluate what is achieved during the week so that improvements could be made for future such weeks. Councillor Denselow replied that the weeks of action were designed to ensure there was a joined up approach to the delivery of services to local areas. He stated that the Council was getting better at organising them but acknowledged that the points were well made by Councillor Hunter and stated that he was open to ideas on how to improve the initiative, including being able to internally communicate with members better without setting the agenda too rigidly. Councillor Hunter responded that the true test as to whether the weeks were worthwhile would be to see if they led to long term change in the cleanliness and environment of the local streets. Despite requesting it she had not seen a detailed evaluation of the Harlesden week. She reiterated the importance of reviewing the project so that lessons could be learnt and stated that too often the Council failed to provide feedback to the local residents in these situations. Councillor Hunter acknowledged that not all activities could be measured but a lot could be so that lessons could be learnt.

Councillor Daly asked if it was agreed that it was a disgrace that children arrived at school hungry and that as the Government seemed incapable of tackling the cost of living crisis the Council should take the lead by extending eligibility for free school meals. Councillor Pavey replied that the Government was overseeing a return to Dickensian levels of poverty. He referred to a 300% increase in food bank usage with one quarter of the cases as a direct result of the Government's welfare reforms. He referred to increasing child poverty and children attending school not having eaten breakfast. He agreed that extending free school meals was an excellent initiative, with the current eligibility being limited. He confirmed that the Council was actively exploring the feasibility of extending free school meals to every primary school child in Brent. Implementation would involve support from the schools and public health service and would be staggered over a period of time. Councillor Daly responded by sharing some of her experiences as a health visitor working with families in recent weeks. She had met 14 year olds who could only have school meals 2 weeks out of 4 because their parents could not afford them and she saw the situation getting worse. She felt the Council could not stand by and see this happen.

Councillor Cheese asked if it was agreed that the policy of increasing parking permit charges, visitor parking charges and other fees and charges did nothing to help the hard pressed residents of the borough with the cost of living. Councillor J Moher replied by reminding the meeting of the changes agreed in October that reduced parking charges. He also referred to the RingGo system that allowed for payment of parking charges by telephone, the take up of which had already exceeded expectations. He could not see how this amounted to increasing the charges. Councillor Cheese responded by stating that, thanks to the policies of the present Government, inflation was reducing, the cost of mortgages remained low, Council Tax had been frozen and income tax reduced for low and middle earners which was in contrast to the Council increasing its charges. He felt residents deserved better than having to pay more for worse services.

Councillor Krupa Sheth asked if it was agreed that the plan to introduce licensing of private sector landlords would lead to better management and a rise in the standard of housing for young people across the borough. Councillor McClennan replied that she had been appalled by the standard and quality of some housing in the borough which was principally occupied by younger people paying high levels of rent. She stated that in essence introducing licensing to the private sector which comprised 32% of all housing stock in Brent would lead to improvements. This was important for the Council because it did not have sufficient stock of its own to house people. Councillor Sheth thanked the lead member for her reply.

Councillor Lorber asked if it was recognised how let down some parts of the community felt by the Council withdrawing its support for some cultural events and festivals. He asked if it was agreed that the Council's limited budget was better spent on providing support to community organised events and not put towards the Council providing poorly organised events with massive associated overheads. Councillor Butt replied by saying he did not agree with Councillor Lorber. At a time when the Council was facing unprecedented cuts the Council was working with community organisations that were well versed in setting up and organising events and festivals. He referred to recently organised celebrations and festivals which had been undertaken without the direct support of the Council. However, the Council would continue working with the organisations to help them tap into other funding streams. Councillor Lorber responded by asking if things were so tough, how spending £98k on the opening party for the civic centre which it was estimated attracted 5,000 people was justified when, with no Council support the Hindu community organised the celebration of Navratri with an event that attracted 30,000 people. He asked that the Council reconsider how it spends its festival budget.

Councillor Choudhary asked what the Council was doing to reduce gang crime, especially knife crime across Brent. Councillor Choudry replied that overall crime figures for Brent had dropped with 30% less crime recorded than at the same time the previous year. He stated that work was continuing on dealing with serious crime in partnership with other agencies and the local community to reduce levels further. Councillor Choudry referred to the Partnership and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee task group report on gang crime and to the fact that this work had been verified by the Home Office who were pleased to see the progress the Council was making. Councillor Choudhary thanked the lead member for his reply.

Councillor Hopkins asked if it was considered acceptable that 5 months after moving into the civic centre it was still difficult for customers and councillors to get through to officers on the telephone, with staff not using the technology properly and reception in the building very poor. Councillor Butt replied that the move into the civic centre had taken a long time to complete and there had been significant investment in technology. Such change always encountered teething problems with some having now been resolved. Call waiting times had been reduced, staff had been trained and the mobile technology allowed them to take calls wherever they were located. He submitted the system was improving the way the Council worked. Councillor Hopkins agreed it was important to invest in the correct technology but referred to personal experience of trying 20 times to get through the automated switchboard to speak to an officer whose name was not recognised. The impact was that when people did get through they were angry and frustrated. Councillor Hopkins re-iterated that staff were not redirecting their calls properly. She emphasised the importance of getting the basics right and the entitlement of local residents to a basic level of service. The Mayor added that he recognised some of the points being made and stated that officers were working to resolve the issues.

Councillor Oladapo asked what provision was included in the Council's new public realm contract for education and outreach to demonstrate to residents the actions being taken in this area to help clean the streets. Councillor Mashari replied that education and outreach formed a central part of the contract with lots of measures included to encourage and help residents recycle and reduce fly tipping. Crucial to this was encouraging behavioural changes which required a programme of sustained educational and outreach initiatives. Officers had visited properties in Harlesden and Stonebridge in an effort to help reduce waste tonnage and part of the new contract was for thirty roadshows and an additional ten meetings with resident associations and community groups. The contract included financial penalties for every percentage drop in customer satisfaction. There was also included a range of school visits to help educate young people on sustainability issues and the merits of recycling, developing the work already carried out from the Welsh Harp Education Centre. A new smart phone app was available to make reporting flytipping more accessible and faster. Finally Councillor Mashari stated that the existing outreach and educational budget would be increased from £15,000 to over £100,000 pa. Councillor Oladapo thanked the lead member for her reply.

Councillor Cummins stated that he and other councillors continued to receive complaints relating to the consequences of the Council's decision to abolish parking scratch cards and asked if it was not time to listen to the residents affected and agree to provide new scratch cards to those, particularly the elderly, which needed them. He also asked if the database of those residents that lived within CPZs close to the CPZ boundary had been rectified so that they were not told that they were ineligible for a permit when they lived within the relevant area. In replying, Councillor J Moher asked that it be acknowledged that the new parking contract had saved the Council around £850,000. He admitted that there had been difficulties in introducing the new arrangements but these had been tackled with the contractor. He stated that the parking permit within a CPZ was a well valued system giving people the priority to park in their street. In recognition of the difficulties around removing scratch cards their use had been extended until August next year. Recognising some people found it difficult to adjust to new arrangements, work was underway on bringing out a 'care for' permit which would

address this. Councillor Moher added that the new arrangements had been welcomed by those people who had started operating them. Councillor Cummins expressed disappointment that the contractor was blamed when it was the Council that had chosen the contractor despite warnings about the flaws in the system. He referred to a case where it took one resident five letters to get a parking issue resolved but without an apology.

Councillor HB Patel stated that the Council appeared confused when, in the knowledge that parking charges were a burning issue in the borough, it decided to increase them and by removing scratch cards to then have to extend their use because residents could not understand the new arrangements. He asked how much money the Council wasted in making decisions that then had to be corrected. Councillor J Moher replied by asking if it had not been noticed that parking charges had actually recently been reduced and so found the question confusing. Councillor H B Patel responded by referring to a past time when parking charges were even lower and so the reductions referred to by Councillor Moher were not the case when compared to an earlier time. He submitted that parking charges continued to destroy community spirit and that the concerns of residents should be listened to before decisions were made and then revised.

8. First reading debate on the 2014/15 - 2017/18 budget

Councillor Butt opened the debate by referring to difficult times for the Council and residents of Brent. Next year's budget required a saving of £18M and for the years after further savings totalling £52M. This would result in the Council having £100m less to spend on services than it did in 2010. He outlined the effect that Government policies were having on the residents of Brent. Councillor Butt explained that the proposed budget had been designed to protect the most vulnerable residents in the borough and make Brent a fairer place to live. He referred to the move to the civic centre which would save the Council £2m per year and the opening of the new library that had doubled the number of visitors compared to the old Town Hall library. By 2014 the One Council programme would have achieved savings of £74M; £3m had been saved by halving the top management team of the Council and the new public realm contract would make the borough a cleaner and greener place to live whilst delivering savings of £1.3m per year. Councillor Butt pointed out that this was the first time that such a list of savings had been presented to members this early in the budget process. He stated that he wanted to hear the views of members because there would be some difficult decisions to be taken. Council Tax had been frozen for the last 4 years and would be again next year. Residents were being helped to save money by taking part in the Big London Energy switching scheme. The Council now paid the London Living Wage to all its staff and local businesses were being urged to do the same. Support was being provided to the 2,000 families most affected by the benefit reforms through the innovative Navigator programme. A priority for the Council was to help local businesses to grow. Councillor Butt stated that the opening of the London Designer Outlet was a major step forward to make this a reality. The Council had already cut car parking charges to assist local shops and would soon be launching the Brent small business hub. Work was being undertaken to implement the Council's regeneration programme, provide more school places and build more new homes. New arrangements had been introduced to provide meals on wheels which involved local business outlets providing them.

Councillor Butt thanked residents who had got involved in the budget setting process and submitted the report circulated for debate.

Councillor Lorber referred to the reference to difficult times and reminded the meeting that such times had been identified back in 2008 when the Administration at that time was advised that whatever Government was next elected there would be a substantial reduction in funding for local government. A programme was therefore embarked upon which included re-organising the Council and making efficiencies. This was the beginning of the One Council programme referred to by the Leader. Councillor Lorber referred to the report which stated that regardless of the outcome of the next general election, all the political parties were committed to continuing with the current spending plans. He acknowledged that moving to the civic centre would generate substantial efficiency savings and stated that this was the only reason why the previous Administration had allowed the building plans to proceed. He felt the savings for the Council could be larger but were dependant on the current Administration making the most of the new building, ensuring all the available space was hired out to generate income, but he could not see evidence of this. Councillor Lorber stated that the financial disaster in 2008 was created by the then Labour Government and caused the opening of the London Designer Outlet and some housing developments in the area to be 5 years behind the original schedule. He saw no point in blaming the present Government. There was a need to recognise that times were tough and to address the issues by listening to the views of local people. He emphasised the need to have trust in local people having a role in delivering local services. Councillor Lorber stated that the Council had decimated the library service but that a determined bunch of local people had got together to run voluntary libraries thereby defeating the Council. He referred to the proposal to cut the ward working budget for the second year running, having increased it in the past. Whilst acknowledging the need to provide money for local initiatives, Councillor Lorber stressed that the programme needed to be run as efficiently as possible. However, he submitted that the same level of bureaucracy remained. By trusting local people and local councillors it would make better use of the money. He undertook to look at the proposals within the budget and challenge them where necessary. He felt the budget needed to concentrate on keeping the streets clean and removing the rise in parking permit charges which would have a detrimental effect on local people.

Councillor Kansagra referred to spending under the last Labour Government. He reiterated that Labour had said it would have implemented the cuts now being experienced. He referred to an increase in the number of apprentices, higher employment figures with more people in work than ever before and the number of claimants reduced as signs that Government policy was working. He added that statistics were showing that the income inequality gap was at its lowest since 1986. Increases in personal allowances had meant more people were not paying any income tax whilst remembering that it was the last Labour Government that abolished the 10p income tax rate meaning those less well off had to pay higher taxes. The petrol levy had reduced under the present government after Labour had increased it twelve fold. Councillor Kansagra pointed to Councillor Butt taking the credit for freezing Council Tax when he had no alternative because a deemed excessive rise would have meant holding a local referendum. He stated that benefit cuts were needed because many families were living in overcrowded conditions in the rented sector and yet there were people in social housing with spare bedrooms they did not need which were being paid for by the taxpayer. Councillor Kansagra

submitted that the last Government had mis-read the level of immigration which had led to lower wages and pressure being put on local services bringing them to breaking point. He noted that the Council's budget gap had initially stood at £24M but was now £13M. He wanted to know the split between what had been spent on redundancy pay-outs and what had been spent on restructuring costs. Councillor Kansagra also mentioned past increases in the ward working budget which was now facing its second successive cut. He was seriously concerned that in the past money had been found for ward working which could have been spent protecting the library service. He felt that although ward working was important it was not crucial and so suggested it could be stopped now and revived later when the Council could afford it. This would free money to put back into saving some of the libraries and towards community grants/projects. Councillor Kansagra referred to the issue of parking and the need to support the London Designer Outlet by providing cheap and easy parking otherwise it would lose customers to neighbouring shopping areas.

During debate, reference was made to the poor state of repair of the roads and the need to remove some speed humps where they adversely affected the health and well-being of the residents living in the roads because cars slowed down and increased speed causing an increase in noise and fumes. A call was made to retain parking scratch cards. A claim was made that the redevelopment of the Willesden Green centre was not wanted by local people who would rather see the Kensal Rise library re-open. A view was expressed that money was still wasted on such things as the official opening of the civic centre, the installation of a hologram and the creation of an on-line budget calculator. Whilst some blamed the present Government others saw it as the result of the misdeeds of the previous Government. Some members felt that Council led community events should not be scrapped; that Brent was a diverse borough and such a move led to destroying the community spirit. Instead a call was made for some money to be put into supporting the community. In contradiction to the claim that the proposed budget sought to protect local people it was suggested that closing six libraries was not good for local residents. Some members felt greater investment was needed in the borough's roads and pavements. Attention was drawn to the contradiction of, on the one hand devising a health strategy and on the other increasing the cost of getting healthy by increasing fees for sport centres. Increases in the fees for cemeteries again showed that the budget did not benefit local people. Reference was made to plans to scrap school patrols and the view expressed about how important they were considering the number of accidents in London. Reference was made to the Government funding provided to the Council to pay off the housing debt, additional funding for providing health services and other grants provided by the Government as examples of the Council benefiting from Government funding but it was questioned how these various funding streams were identified and spent by the Council. There was criticism that money was being taken away from ward working and expenditure incurred on those people identified as already receiving too much from the public purse.

Councillor Hopkins, Chair of Budget and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee, sought imaginative ideas to cope with the cuts which the Council faced. She stated that her committee had questioned officers to explore the use of jobsearch, freecycle and engagement with business partners to make full use of the civic centre. She felt more imagination was needed and increased engagement with local people in an effort to work together.

Other members emphasised the scale of cuts faced by the Council and referred to them as being the largest seen in a generation. The accusation was made that the opposition parties were failing to stand up for the welfare of local residents. It was pointed out that the level of national debt had increased under the present Government. A comparison was made between those people facing having to move outside the borough as a consequence of Government policy and those who had managed to get a job using the Navigator service provide by the Council. A view was submitted that debating ward working, scratch cards and the condition of roads did not address the situation the Council was in which had resulted from a global economic crisis. It was further submitted that the crisis had been dealt with by the Chancellor of an earlier Labour Government otherwise it would have been far more serious. It was therefore claimed that the budget gap the Council faced was the direct result of Government cuts. Reference was made to government statements that it was the ideological objective of the Government to reduce state spending and that this was therefore a deliberate policy not a passive issue. Reference was made to the views expressed regarding cars and parking and it was pointed out that nothing was said about the effects of the pollution they caused. It was felt that there needed to be greater acknowledgement of the sheer scale of the cuts faced by the Council and members needed to be challenged for their ideas on how these could be achieved. Responding to criticism about lack of engagement with residents, it was stated that the Council meeting was being live streamed for the first time, the budget simulator had asked residents what their priorities were and the establishment of the Brent libraries forum designed to engage with the community sector were examples of such engagement. Councillor R Moher, Lead Member, Finance and Corporate Resources, stated that the debate had centred around who was to blame but it was a fact that the national debt was now higher than under the previous Labour Government, economic growth had been higher under the Labour Government and that the world-wide financial problems had caused the present situation. She explained that the budget proposals had managed to deal with the levels of cuts required from next year's budget but the following two years were going to be much worse. She hoped to hear from members their ideas on how the Council could deal with this rather than proposals on how to move money from one area (ward working) to another area (libraries). There was no spare money and the Council needed to drastically change the way it worked. Councillor R Moher proposed a workshop to look at what could be done with what money the Council had. The Mayor endorsed the idea of a cross party working group.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the broad budgetary priorities set out in the report from the Executive be noted;
- (ii) that the issues raised in the First Reading debate be noted and referred to the Budget and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee as appropriate.

9. Reports from the Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Councillor Ashraf referred to the report circulated with the summons. He explained the report set out the key discussions undertaken within the five main committees and thanked member and officers for their contributions.

10. **Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013**

Members considered the report detailing the provisions of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 which included the power to refuse a licence and to revoke licenses if the dealer was considered unsuitable.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the changes to the legislation and the enactment of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 be noted;
- (ii) that the functions of considering and approving non-contentious applications for scrap metal dealer licences, and of processing minor amendments (variations) to such applications be delegated to the Strategic Director for Environment and Neighbourhoods;
- (iii) that the function of considering appeals against officer decisions or contentious applications for scrap metal dealer licences be delegated to the General Purposes (Licensing) Sub-Committee;
- (iv) that the fees proposed in paragraphs 3.18 and 3.20 of the report circulated be agreed;
- (v) that the function of determining fees in future for scrap metal dealers licence applications be delegated to the Executive;
- (vi) that the necessary amendments to the Council's Constitution to bring these changes into effect be approved.

11. **Changes to the Constitution**

Members considered the report which proposed changes to the Constitution to reflect the decisions taken by the General Purposes Committee on 28 March 2013 and 7 November 2013 to restructure the senior management of the Council and also recommended other miscellaneous changes required in relation to Contract Standing Orders and other matters.

RESOLVED:

that the changes shown as tracked changes in Appendix 1 of the report to reflect the changes to the management structure and the miscellaneous changes to the constitution be agreed.

12. **Health and Wellbeing Board voting membership**

Members considered the report setting out the views of the Health and Wellbeing Board on voting proposals, which the Board discussed at its meeting on 3 July 2013, and called for a final decision to be made.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the response from the Health and Wellbeing Board on the consultation on voting rights be noted;
- (ii) that all members of the Health and Wellbeing Board be given voting rights, except council officers;
- (iii) that the quorum for the Health and Wellbeing Board be four voting members, with at least two councillors and two other voting members present in order for a meeting to take place.

13. **Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Members received the report that proposed that the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee should continue to meet with an updated remit to scrutinise the actual implementation of the 'Shaping a Healthier Future' programme across North West London.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) with Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, Richmond and Westminster be appointed in order to monitor the implementation of the 'Shaping a Healthier Future' reconfiguration of health services across North West London;
- (ii) that Councillor Daly be appointed as a voting member of the JHOSC and Councillor Ketan Sheth be appointed as Councillor Daly's alternate, with voting rights;
- (iii) that the JHOSC be delegated the scrutiny powers in relation to health services in North West London as set out in the draft terms of reference included as Appendix 1 to the report submitted;
- (iv) that none of the functions or powers of the Council either individually or jointly, under Regulation 23 of the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 be delegated to the JHOSC;
- (v) that the Council's membership of the JHOSC be reviewed on an annual basis at its annual meeting at which time it will also agree the Council's nominated member and alternate member of the JHOSC;
- (vi) that the Constitution be amended to reflect the appointment of the JHOSC.

14. **Setting of Council Tax Discretionary Discounts for 2014/15**

Members received the report detailing the classes and discounts currently applicable and seeking approval of the discounts and premiums to be applied to these classes for 2014/15, including changes to the discount for properties requiring major repair works or structural alterations to bring them back into a habitable condition.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the discount applicable to former exemption "Class A" properties (Discount Class D) be reduced from 50% to 0% from 1 April 2014;
- (ii) that the discounts and premiums applicable to the other classes (Discount Class C, second homes and long term empty properties) remain unchanged for 2014/15 as detailed in paragraph 3.2 of the report submitted.

15. **2013/14 mid year treasury report**

Members received the report updating them on recent treasury activity which had already been submitted to the Executive and Audit Committee.

RESOLVED:

that the 2013/14 mid-year Treasury report as also submitted to the Executive and Audit Committee be noted.

16. **Motions**

16.1 **Tackling violence against women**

Councillor John moved the motion circulated in her name. She thanked Councillors Harrison, Hunter and Kabir for their work on the task group. Although the very successful work of the task group was not yet complete, Councillor John stated the matter was being brought to Full Council to engage all members in the issues and get all party agreement to taking the matter forward. She referred to the Member development session that was taking place on 21 November dealing with the issues concerned with violence against women and urged as many colleagues as possible to attend. Councillor John referred back 20 years to when the issues had first been raised and stated that not enough progress had been made until more recently. She felt it was now time to bring the issues up to date again. She referred to statistics on the practices world-wide and the fact they broke two UN charters. Despite this the practices were still widespread in some parts of the world and bore a direct relation to gender inequality. Councillor John referred to a very good House of Lords report which would be available at the development session about the incidence of forced marriages. She referred to press campaigns and stories highlighting cases of violence against women that had taken place across the world and in the UK. She called on the Council to support the motion and adopt the 5 year target set by the Government to end all practices which caused physical or emotional distress to women. In support of this, Councillor John referred to the good work being done on these issues by London Councils and other London Boroughs. Councillor Hunter supported the motion by calling on all members to think what they could do to prevent violence against women and girls. She drew attention to White Ribbon day which was started by a man which she felt was significant. She referred to young people being interviewed on the radio about lowering the age of consent and all of them expressing the view that better sex education in schools and teaching respect for each other would help towards ending these practices, which she supported. Councillor Kansagra supported the motion by recognising the shameful practise that took place and he added to this the issues of human trafficking, forced prostitution and domestic violence. He

stated that the Government had enabled more prosecutions to take place but more resources were needed to help the victims and punish offenders. Councillor HB Patel added that everyone needed to speak out against such violence.

The motion was put to the vote and declared unanimously CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the work of the members' task group on Tackling Violence against Women and Girls in Brent be commended; recognising that the task group is committed to ending harmful practices by raising public awareness of issues such as female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriages and honour-based violence with these practices, and all instances of violence against women, constituting illegal, intolerable acts and human rights violations;
- (ii) that the positive influence members can wield within communities by encouraging individuals and groups to speak out against harmful practices, which impact on the wellbeing of women and girls in Brent be noted; to ensure that members are fully informed on all these harmful practices and how to deal with them effectively, to note that a member development event is to be held on 21 November 2013, led by the expert organisations FORWARD and the Asian Women's Resource Centre;
- (iii) that the work of the White Ribbon Campaign day - a charitable organisation started by men which seeks to end violence against women - be noted and whole-hearted support be given to this cause and the White Ribbon pledge be signed to affirm that members will never condone or remain silent about violent acts against women and to note that a Brent Council event marking White Ribbon Day – the internationally recognised day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women – will be held in the Civic Centre on 25 November 2013;
- (iv) that all members unite in the fight against the harmful practices, and resolve to end all practices which cause physical or emotional distress to women and girls in Brent within the 5-year target set by the Government earlier this year.

16.2 **Cleaner streets in Brent**

Councillor Lorber moved the motion circulated in his name which sought to call on the Executive to improve the cleanliness of the streets. He submitted that the condition of the borough's streets had deteriorated and that the new public realm contract would not deal with the problem. A new approach was needed with increased enforcement to make examples of those people who polluted the streets.

In response, Councillor Mashari stated that flytipping was at a two year low because of the free bulky waste collection. Extensive enforcement action already took place and the naming and shaming of the culprits was the toughest it had ever been. Councillor Mashari stated that the new public realm contract would continue with this work. An alternative view expressed was that the two year low figure referred to indicated it had increased over that period from a lower level when the previous Administration was in control. It was stated that between 2006 and 2010 the streets were cleaner and that there was now less resident satisfaction with

targets for recycling and reducing fly tipping missed. However it was suggested that the opportunity was being taken to oppose the new public realm contract before it had started because it was clear that in 2014 it would provide a better service as a result of the redesign of the service. This was disputed and the suggestion was made that a network of street watchers should be established to report on areas needing to be cleaned up.

The motion was put to the vote and declared LOST.

16.3 **Parking**

Councillor Kansagra moved the motion circulated in his name which sought to introduce some free parking, restrict the hours of enforcement on Wembley event days and re-introduce parking scratch cards. He stated that Wembley High Street had been neglected and it suffered as a result of neighbouring shopping areas having cheap parking. He submitted that if the London Designer Outlet and local businesses were to be successful they needed to be provided with parking. He added that the existing Wembley event day parking restrictions interfered with local businesses and the social lives of local residents.

A comparison of parking charges with Harrow was made which showed charges were higher in Brent. It was suggested that a working group should be established to consider the operation of the Wembley Event Day parking scheme and the traffic congestion that was caused on event days. However, it was felt that one hour before an event was not long enough. Councillor Lorber moved an amendment to the motion seeking to note that high parking charges were harming the local economy, to establish a working Group to review the Wembley Event day scheme and proposing alternative charging arrangements.

Councillor J Moher responded that parking was just one factor that affected town centres and that the major factor harming them was the recession. Action had been taken to reduce parking charges in the Preston Road area and it was submitted that all was not better in Harrow. He criticised the motion for failing to identify how much the proposals would cost the Council and how the loss of revenue would be made up.

The amendment to the motion was put to the vote and declared LOST

The motion was put to the vote and declared LOST.

17. **Urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 10.15 pm

COUNCILLOR BOBBY THOMAS
Mayor