



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL held in the Grand Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 22 November 2021 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Lia Colacicco

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor Abdi Aden

COUNCILLORS:

Afzal	Agha
Ahmed	S Butt
Chan	Chohan
Colwill	Conneely
Crane	Daly
Dar	Dixon
Donnelly-Jackson	Ethapemi
Ezeajughi	Farah
Gbajumo	Georgiou
Grahl	Hirani
Hylton	Johnson
Kabir	Kansagra
Knight	Lo
Mahmood	Maurice
McLeish	McLennan
Miller	Murray
W Mitchell Murray	Naheerathan
Nerva	M Patel
Sangani	Shah
Shahzad	Ketan Sheth
Krupa Sheth	Stephens
Thakkar	

1. **Mayor's Introductory Statement**

The Mayor welcomed all those present to the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

The Mayor reported that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Muhammed Butt, Chappell, Choudhary, Choudry, Denselow, Hassan, Hector,

Kelcher, Kennelly, Lloyd, Long, Mashari, Ramesh Patel, Perrin, Southwood & Tatler.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 20 September 2021 be approved as a correct record.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

5. **Mayor's Announcements (including any petitions received)**

The Mayor made the following announcements:

- (i) Minutes silence in memory of Sir David Amess MP and former councillor Mike Grabiner

The Mayor advised that it was with sadness she needed to begin her announcements with reference to the death of Sir David Amess MP who had been attacked and tragically lost his life whilst holding a constituency surgery in Leigh-on-Sea on 15 October 2021. The tragic nature of the incident had unfortunately required all councillors to reflect and think carefully about how they would continue to conduct business locally.

At the same time as remembering Sir David Amess, the Mayor announced it was also with regret she had to report the death of Mike Grabiner, a former Councillor for St Raphael's in Brent who had served on the Council between 1978 and 1982. Members were informed that his death, aged 71, had followed a long illness with him being survived by his wife, four children, two brothers and a sister.

The Mayor, on behalf of the Council, expressed condolences to both Sir David's and Mike's family and friends and then invited all members to observe a minutes silence in memory of both Sir David Amess and Mike Grabiner.

At this stage the meeting was paused to observe a minutes silence.

- (ii) Remembrance Sunday

The Mayor advised members she had been honoured to attend the recent ceremony held to commemorate Remembrance Sunday and all those who had lost their lives in various conflicts throughout the world.

The ceremony had been held at the Barham Park Memorial with the Mayor thanking everyone who had attended in order to pay tribute.

- (iii) Visit by Navel Clarke

The Mayor advised that she, along with the Chief Executive, Leader and Deputy Leader, had been delighted to host a recent visit to Brent by Mr Navel Clarke for Black History Month.

Members were advised that Mr Clarke had been part of the original Committee in 1965 responsible for the merger of the former boroughs of Willesden and Wembley to form Brent and had also, that same year, been appointed the TGWU delegate to the Brent Trade Council. Along with his other achievements the Mayor informed members she had been interested to learn that Mr Clarke had also written a book called Necktie Man.

(iv) 100th Birthday Celebration

The Mayor advised she had been fortunate to join the recent 100th birthday celebrations for Mrs Bertina Brown, which had taken place in October 2021. Mrs Brown had left Jamaica in 1954 and settled in Brent with her family who now included six children, 22 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren. She had also worked for a number of local companies in Brent over the years although her main passion had always remained dressmaking.

(v) Recent Mayoral Events

The Mayor then outlined the range of events she had attended over the previous two months, with specific highlights including:

- A visit to Metroland Studio's - open-house Day of Visibility;
- A Theatre performance at Willesden library;
- Beyond Brent 2020 - to celebrate the success of Brent 2020;
- Visiting Park Lane Primary School for their School Council elections;
- The launch of St Raphael's Family Wellbeing Centre;
- Black History Month at Brent Mencap;
- Faith Covenant Celebration Event;
- A Tree presentation to London's Mayors by The Lord-Lieutenant at a special presentation in Hyde Park to mark HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, as part of The Queen's Green Canopy.

(vi) Mayors Civic Ceremony

Highlighting the success of her Civic Ceremony in September, the Mayor took the opportunity to thank all those who had attended for their support. The event had been held to celebrate her Civic Year and its dedication to her two chosen charities – Parkinson UK and Cricklewood Library.

(vii) Zadie Smith's Play "The Wife of Willesden"

The Mayor advised she was also keen to draw attention to a play written by Zadie Smith called "The Wife of Willesden". This was a twenty first century translation of Geoffrey Chaucer's classic "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" with the play having been commissioned to celebrate Brent's year as Borough of Culture 2020 and currently being performed at the Kiln Theatre.

(viii) Petitions

Finally, the Mayor referred members to the list of current petitions tabled at the meeting, in accordance with Standing Orders which also detailed the action being taken to deal with them.

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

The Mayor advised that there were no membership changes to be considered at the meeting so moved straight on to the next item.

7. **Deputations (if any)**

The Mayor advised that no request for any deputations had been received at the meeting.

8. **Questions from Members of the Public & Brent Youth Parliament**

88.1 Questions from the Public

The Mayor advised that the following four questions had been received from members of the public:

Question 1 from Martin Francis to Councillor Krupa Sheth, Lead Member for Environment, regarding a review of flood management arrangements within the borough.

Question 2 from Rimal Shah addressed jointly to Councillor McLennan, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, and Councillor Krupa Sheth, Lead Member for Environment, regarding the impact of Council Tax increase and traffic fines on levels of poverty across the borough.

Question 3 from Julia Lefene to Councillor Tatler, Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning, regarding the impact of planning developments on infrastructure, sewers and access to housing across the borough.

Question 4 from Philip Grant to Councillor Tatler, Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning, regarding the level of affordable housing being provided within the development on the former Copland School site on the corner of Cecil Avenue and Wembley High Road.

Members noted the written responses provided on each of the questions, which had been circulated with the agenda. The Mayor advised that each member of the public had been invited to attend the meeting. Whilst Rimal Shah and Julia Lefene had been unable to attend, members were advised that Martin Francis was present in order to ask a supplementary question on both his question and that submitted by Philip Grant, who had been unable to attend the meeting. The Mayor welcomed Martin Francis to the meeting and the following supplementary questions were asked of the relevant Lead Member(s).

Question 1: Supplementary Question from Martin Francis to Councillor Krupa Sheth, Lead Member for Environment

Having noted the written response provided, Martin Francis felt this had not directly covered all points raised in his original question. Referring to a response provided at a scrutiny meeting earlier in November where members had been advised a review of the 2015 Flood Risk Management Strategy was required within the context of climate change (for example the forecast 59% increase in winter rainfall) and necessary local mitigations, he asked the Lead Member for Environment:

- If a timetable could be provided for the review along with details of the partnership members that would be involved; and
- Whether the review, as recommended by the London Flood Risk Management Strategic Partnership, would include an assessment of the accumulative impact of developments across the borough on flooding and drainage infrastructure systems.

Given the detailed nature of the issues raised Councillor Krupa Sheth advised that she would arrange for a written response to be provided following the meeting.

Question 4: Supplementary Question presented on behalf of Philip Grant by Martin Francis to Councillor Tatler, Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning.

Referring to the urgent need for more affordable Council homes in the borough the supplementary question presented by Martin Francis on behalf of Philip Grant began by querying why only 37 of the 250 properties in the plans for the Cecil Avenue site would be for affordable rent whilst 152 had been identified for private sale by the developer. Reference was also made to use of GLA grant, which it was felt could also be used to provide social rent housing on the site rather than being directed towards infill development schemes on existing housing estates, many of which would take time to deliver. As a result the Lead Member was asked about the justification for this approach, given the impact it was felt this would have on the provision of homes for those families in need and on existing residents in terms of the potential loss of green space on their estates.

The Mayor advised that as Councillor Tatler, Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning, had unfortunately needed to submit her apologies for absence a written response would be provided on the supplementary question following the meeting.

Having noted the responses provided, the Mayor thanked Martin Francis and Philip Grant for their supplementary questions and then moved on to deal with the questions submitted by Brent Youth Parliament.

8.2 Question from Brent Youth Parliament

The Mayor advised that the following question had been received from Brent Youth Parliament:

Question 1 from Ben Maher to Councillor Mili Patel, Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care regarding the Ofsted review of sexual harassment in schools and colleges and the approach being adopted in Brent to address the issues identified.

Members noted the written response provided on the question with the Mayor welcoming Ben Maher (as a representative from Brent Youth Parliament) to the meeting in order to ask a supplementary question. The supplementary question from Brent Youth Parliament was as follows:

Supplementary Question from Ben Maher to Councillor Mili Patel, Lead Member for Children’s Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care.

Having thanked Councillor Mili Patel for the written response provided, Ben Maher asked if the Lead Member would be willing to attend a future Youth Parliament session in order to update them on the work being undertaken with schools and to consider how it was felt the Council and Youth Parliament could work together in order to address the issue of sexual harassment within schools.

In response, Councillor Mili Patel advised that she would welcome attending a future Youth Parliament session in order to update them on the work being undertaken within schools and more widely in relation to safeguarding and look at ways of working more closely together in tackling these issues, which it was pointed out was also a responsibility shared by everyone.

Having noted the response provided, the Mayor thanked Ben Maher for his question and for attending the meeting. As there were no further questions the Mayor concluded the public question session.

9. Petitions (if any)

The Mayor advised that no requests for debates on any petitions had been received for consideration at the meeting.

10. Reports from the Leader and Cabinet

As a result of Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) having had to submit his apologies for absence, the Mayor invited Councillor McLennan, as Deputy Leader, to introduce the report updating members on the work being undertaken across each Cabinet portfolio. As part of the update, Councillor Nerva, as Lead Member for Public Health, Leisure & Culture, provided an update on the progress being made with the roll out of the covid and winter flu vaccination programmes across the borough, including use of the vaccine bus and drop in vaccination clinics being used to support the programme. In recognising the achievements which had been made, all staff and partners involved in delivery of the programme were thanked for their efforts.

In ending the update, members were also asked to note the list of Executive decisions tabled at the meeting which had been taken under the Council’s urgency procedures.

The Mayor thanked the Deputy Leader for the report and it was **RESOLVED** to formally note the update provided.

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

Before moving on to consider the questions submitted by non-Cabinet members, the Mayor reminded Members that a total of 30 minutes had been set aside for this item, which would begin with consideration of the written questions submitted in advance of the meeting along with any supplementary questions. Once these had been dealt with, the remaining time available would then be opened up for any other non-Cabinet members to question Lead Members (without the need for advance notice) on matters relating to their portfolio.

The Mayor advised that four written questions had been submitted in advance for response by the relevant Lead Member. The written responses supplied had been circulated within the agenda. The Mayor then invited supplementary questions on the responses which had been provided:

11.1 As Councillor Kelcher had submitted his apologies for absence no supplementary question was raised on the joint written response provided by the Lead Members for Community Safety & Engagement and Regeneration, Property & Planning to his question regarding the action being taken to prevent the proliferation of Adult Gaming Centres across the borough.

11.2 Councillor Johnson thanked Councillor McLennan, as Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, for the written response in relation to his question on the social value commitments being generated through the Council's Procurement Strategy and way in which the Strategy was being used to support the response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency. In welcoming the way in which the Procurement Strategy was being used to support social value and community wealth building, Councillor Johnson, as a supplementary question, asked for further details on the work being undertaken to develop this approach in conjunction with other London Boroughs.

In response, Councillor McLennan advised of the success of the Strategy in using the Council's purchasing power to ensure suppliers were aligned with the Council's aims and objectives. In terms of the focus on the climate and emergency strategy and work with other London Boroughs she highlighted the activity being undertaken through the West London Alliance (involving Brent and the other Local Authorities covering West London) to deliver a Carbon Reduction Charter in order to achieve the ambition of net zero. The Charter included a number of innovative initiatives such as working with suppliers to encourage the use of lower carbon sources of power; to improve the energy efficiency of their equipment; to delivery digital social value and provide clearer data on levels of greenhouse gas emissions all designed to support the move towards carbon net zero. Under the Charter, suppliers would also be asked to provide details on their carbon reduction strategies meaning that once in place, this would provide an opportunity to ensure work being undertaken across the Alliance towards sustainability and securing carbon net zero was also being supported by suppliers across West London.

11.3 Councillor Sangani thanked Councillor Stephens, as Lead Member for Schools, Employment and Skills, for the written response to her question regarding measures being undertaken by the Council to expand SEND school places and provision across the borough. As a supplementary question further details were sought on the extent of lobbying being undertaken with

Government in order to ensure the necessary level of funding was provided to support the delivery of SEND provision within the borough.

In response, Councillor Stephens highlighted the extensive lobbying being undertaken by both himself, the Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care and the Deputy Leader at national and regional level (through London Councils) both in terms of the wider funding allocation for schools in Brent and to ensure a fair allocation for the High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant. Alongside these efforts the Council had recognised the need to invest in local SEND provision in Brent giving the growing level of demand, with proposals currently being finalised for a programme of investment designed to deliver an increase of almost 50% on current local available spaces. Alongside the lobbying for a fairer funding allocation, this would reduce the need for out of borough placements whilst increasing the level of good quality SEND provision for local residents in Brent.

- 11.4 Councillor Maurice acknowledged the response to his written question provided by Councillor Tatler, as Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning regarding the planning consent and development work on the Preston Library site. In commenting on the outcome of the Judicial Review process relating to the planning appeal and work which had commenced on site, Councillor Maurice, as a supplementary question, sought further details on why work had been permitted to go ahead on the development.

In response to this question the Director of Legal, HR, Audit & Investigation clarified the position in relation to the outcome of the legal challenges regarding the granting of planning consent for the development, with it being noted that the Council's decision to grant planning permission had been upheld enabling the development to proceed.

The Mayor thanked members for their written questions and Lead Members for the responses provided to the supplementary questions. She then advised that the remainder of the time available would be used for an open question time session to the Cabinet. The following questions were raised and responses provided:

- (i) Councillor Mahmood regarding the impact and Council's response to the Nationality and Border Bill currently being considered by Parliament.

In response, Councillor Knight, Lead Member for Community Safety & Engagement, advised that she along with the Council were aware of the significant and detrimental impact the Bill, if passed, would have on residents across Brent and as such assured Councillor Mahmood of the robust response that would be made on behalf of the Council as part of the consultation process.

- (ii) Councillor Agha regarding problems being experienced with delays in the notification of covid test results and difficulties in being able to clarify these by phone and in details being available regarding those who had received the booster vaccine.

In response, Councillor Nerva in recognising the concerns expressed felt it was important to start by reminding members that the Council was not responsible for delivery of the national vaccine programme. Concerns had already been raised regarding the availability and way in which data from the programme was being shared with both Local Authorities and local health services to support them in being able to engage with and reach out to local communities where take up of the vaccine was lowest. Concerns had also been raised in relation to the level of data available on the number of children within Brent having received the vaccine and fact that details on those having received a booster vaccine was also not available through the NHS App given the increasing requirements for access to Covid passports in order to travel and gain entry to certain venues. In sharing the concerns raised, Councillor Nerva advised that he would be seeking to raise the issues identified with local MP's and the relevant Government Ministers.

- (iii) Councillor Chan regarding the support available from the Council in seeking to address, with TfL, concerns raised following a local campaign by residents in Kensal Green and parents of children who attend Kenmont Primary School (which included a number of families who lived within Kensal Green) about the crossing and traffic related issues at the Harrow Road junction with Wrotesley Road.

In response Councillor Krupa Sheth, Lead Member for Environment, advised that she would be willing to liaise further with the local ward councillors on the issue and support that could be provided to promote walking, cycling and other more active forms of travel in the area.

- (iv) Councillor Georgiou who advised he was awaiting a full response to his previous question raised at the September Council meeting from the Lead Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning, highlighted concerns regarding the ongoing development of tall buildings particularly within Alperton ward and wider impact in terms of addressing the Climate Emergency. Given the concerns raised, further details were sought on the steps being taken to acknowledge and act on the issues outlined within the report from the GLA Planning and Regeneration Committee on the impact of tall buildings. In addition clarification was sought on the Council's policy in relation to the ongoing development of tall buildings, taking account of concerns expressed by local residents and whether the Council would commit to undertaking a full environmental assessment on each planning application involving a tall building in advance of any decision being made.

In response to the concerns raised in relation to resident engagement and the Climate Emergency Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Lead Member for Environment, highlighted the success achieved in terms of engagement on the Strategy with over 1000 individuals now having joined the Brent Environmental Network. As the Lead Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning, had needed to give her apologies for the meeting Councillor Georgiou was advised that a written response would be provided on the wider planning issues raised.

- (v) Councillor Miller regarding the steps being taken to address the issues highlighted in the findings of a recent Ombudsman complaint regarding a case involving disabled access within temporary accommodation.

The Mayor advised that as the Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform had needed to submit her apologies for the meeting a written response would be provided.

- (vi) Councillor Chan regarding the process undertaken in developing the Council's tree felling and replanting programme, particularly given the challenge arising from insurance claims.

In recognising the balance needing to be maintained and difficulties identified when dealing with insurance issues relating to trees Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Lead Member for Environment assured members of the replacement planting undertaken should any tree need to be removed as the result of an insurance related issue.

- (vii) Councillor Kansagra seeking further clarification on the outcome of the legal challenges in relation to the granting of planning consent for the Preston Road library development.

As the Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Regeneration had needed to submit her apologies for the meeting the Director of Legal, HR, Audit & Investigations advised that she would arrange for a written response to be provided clarifying the position.

Councillor Kansagra also requested a copy of the written response to be provided in relation to the supplementary public question asked earlier during the meeting on behalf Philip Grant.

- (viii) Councillor Miller regarding the measures being undertaken to support the recruitment and retention of both adult and children's social care staff.

In response Councillor Farah, Lead Member for Adult Social Care, confirmed that suppliers being commissioned to provide care were already required to pay care workers the London Living Wage. Councillor Stephens, as Lead Member for Schools, Employment and Skills, also referred to the Good Work for All programme provided through Brent Start and funded by the GLA, which included a specific focus in supporting the development of carers across the care sector and on which he would be willing to provide further details outside the meeting.

- (ix) Councillor Maurice seeking clarification as to whether the Council was developing proposals for introduction of a borough wide Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ).

In response Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Lead Member for Environment, confirmed that no plans were being developed for the introduction of a borough wide CPZ although consideration was being given to the ways in which parking could be made more efficient across the borough whilst also supporting schemes to enhance Active Travel.

At this stage in the proceedings, the Mayor advised that the time available for the open question session had expired. She therefore thanked all members for their contributions and advised that she would now move on to the next item.

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

Before being presented with the updates from each Scrutiny Committee, the Mayor reminded members the time set aside for this item was 12 minutes, with each Chair having up to three minutes in which to highlight any significant issues arising from the work of their Committees. Once these updates had been provided, the remaining time available would then be opened up for any other non-Cabinet members to question (without the need for advance notice) the Scrutiny Committee Chairs on matters relating to the work of their Committee.

Councillor Ketan Sheth was then invited to introduce the update report on the work being undertaken by the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, with the following issues highlighted:

- The ongoing work being undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee focussed around the health and wellbeing of residents across Brent. As part of a busy work programme the Committee had met in September 2021 to review the support and services being delivered for families in the borough who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. At that same meeting the operational performance of Brent Housing Management had also been subject to detailed review, including the framework for resident engagement. The final recommendations had also been confirmed from the extraordinary meeting of the Committee held in August in response to the CQC inspection of Maternity Services at Northwick Park Hospital.
- The Committee had held a further extraordinary meeting in October 2021 in order to undertake pre decision scrutiny and review the implications for Brent Housing Management and the Housing Revenue Account in relation to the proposals for ownership and refurbishment of the Granville New Homes Blocks, prior to their consideration by Cabinet. A number of recommendations were made by the Committee focussed around ensuring the necessary due diligence had been undertaken in terms of the assessment of options and in procuring and monitoring the design and build quality of any similar types of construction work in the future, which Cabinet had agreed to take forward, as appropriate, with the relevant services across the Council.
- The Committee had also meet in November 2021 to review the Brent Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2020-21 and focus on multi-agency partnership arrangements, the interim report from their GP Access Task Group and to agree the scope and terms of reference for an upcoming Transitional Safeguarding Task Group.
- The ongoing engagement of the scrutiny function in the North West London Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee with the next meeting due to be hosted by Harrow in December 2021 including consideration of the transitional arrangements for introduction of the Integrated Care System.
- As a final comment Councillor Sheth also welcomed (given the remit of the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee) the commitment highlighted earlier in the meeting by Brent Youth Parliament in seeking to engage with the

Council to tackle issues relating to safeguarding and sexual harassment within schools.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Ketan Sheth for his update and advised that as Councillor Mashari had given her apologies the report on the activity of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee would be noted as submitted.

As a result it was therefore **RESOLVED** that the contents of both update reports be noted.

Following the updates provided, the Mayor advised that the remainder of time available would be open for questions from non-cabinet members to the Scrutiny Chair in attendance. As no questions were raised the Mayor moved on to the next item.

13. **Report from the Vice-Chair of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee**

The Mayor invited Councillor Lo, as Vice-Chair of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee, to introduce the report updating members on the work of the Committee.

In terms of issues highlighted, Councillor Lo drew members attention to the work undertaken by the Committee since the previous update in September 2021 which had included a focus on finalising the Councils Statement of Accounts and Audit Findings as well as on performance of i4B Holdings Ltd and First Wave Housing Ltd, Counter Fraud and Internal Audit activity and Member complaints and conduct.

The opportunity was taken to thank all those involved in submission of the Council's Statement of Accounts for their efforts in ensuring Brent was one of the first local authorities to have completed the process within the required deadline. Members were also advised that the focus at the Committee's next meeting would be on cyber security and the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

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

14. **Non Cabinet Members' Debate**

In accordance with Standing Order 34, the Mayor advised that the next item on the agenda was the non-cabinet member debate, with the subject chosen for consideration being Brent's pledge to tackling Violence against Women and Girls in Brent.

Members were advised that the motion submitted as the basis for debate had been circulated with the agenda and that the time available for the debate was 25 minutes.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Thakkar to introduce the motion. As context for the debate, Councillor Thakkar highlighted the unacceptable nature of violence against women and girls (VAWG) given the suffering caused in what was felt to be a hidden element of the pandemic. In highlighting the different forms of violence and abuse, Councillor Thakkar outlined how whilst they would all have their own

distinct causes and impact on victims and survivors the common theme remained how they cut across society regardless of background or circumstance, with many victims often not heard. In seeking to highlight the issue as an urgent priority, Councillor Thakkar advised that the motion put forward for debate also sought to outline the work already being undertaken by the Council in tackling violence against women and girls and empowering victims of abuse. These initiatives included Brent having incorporated the VAWG strategy in to the Safer Brent Community Partnership strategy; signing the Mayor of London's Women's Night Safety Charter; developing services and projects to support victims of VAWG and their families; coordinating the IRIS project; providing additional funding and investment for independent domestic violence advisor services and the Brent perpetrator programme and commissioning three Women's Refuges.

It was, however, pointed out that more work was needed in order to eradicate violence against women and girls in all its forms, with Councillor Thakkar commending the motion to Council by re-iterating that although Brent had committed to tackling violence against women and girls, there could be no complacency. The need was identified to continue raising awareness in order for government and other institutions of all kind to address the issues highlighted as a priority.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Thakkar for her powerful message in introducing the motion and opened up the debate to other members, with the following comments made during the discussion that followed.

Councillor Kabir, in supporting the motion, agreed that violence against women and girls was an issue that could not be tolerated and highlighted a need to acknowledge the magnitude of the problem, with religion and culture being used too often as ways to excuse acts of violence against females.

Councillor Colwill also advised that he fully supported the motion.

Councillor Dixon highlighted both the damaging psychological and potentially fatal impact of violence against women and girls and emphasised the increased risk women faced when they were pregnant or trying to leave a violent relationship. Councillor Dixon felt that by supporting the empowerment of women, the borough would be able to prosper even further and expressed her full support for the motion.

Councillor Donnelly-Jackson also welcomed the motion, but in so doing also highlighted the additional difficulties faced by women with disabilities experiencing violence or abuse in being able to access support. In response to this concern, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson suggested an amendment to the motion designed to ensure that as part of the action identified within the motion any information publicised to support women was also made available in an accessible format for deaf and disabled women.

Councillor Grahl then spoke to highlight her support of the motion and reflected upon personal experience and the entrenched attitudes that continued to support a culture of violence and abuse against women and girls. Councillor Grahl also thanked Brent Youth Parliament for having raised the issue of sexual harassment in schools earlier in the meeting and highlighted the continued need to challenge all examples of gender based inequality in order to effectively tackle the issues raised

and drive the change required so that women and children could feel safe and live without fear of harm.

Councillor Daly also supported the motion and highlighted, as a concern, the increased challenges during the winter months when it was darker which would decrease access to public spaces as a means of seeking refuge. In order to increase safety in these outdoor spaces the Council was therefore urged to ensure outdoor lighting was adequate and bushes or hedgerows were maintained to increase visibility so that women could feel safer in accessing these areas.

Councillor Georgiou also expressed his support for the motion and the need identified for further urgent action to tackle the various forms of violence and abuse against women and girls which had been highlighted, referencing recent high profile cases across London and in Brent. As a result Councillor Georgiou advised that he would like to see more community work to educate and spread awareness of respect, consent and equality supported by specific work in Brent to enhance CCTV and lighting, tackle cultural based concerns and provide further training for councillors to support and advocate on behalf of constituents in tackling these issues.

Councillor Maurice also expressed his supported for the motion highlighting concerns in relation to safety on public transport and the need to improve the effectiveness of lighting used in public spaces to enhance safety.

Councillor Afzal also spoke to express his full support for the motion and share his concerns about what he felt to be multiple systemic failures from institutions such as the media, police and government to effectively challenge violence and abuse against women and girls. Highlighting the impact of Government austerity on the funding available to provide support and focus on preventative strategies he also felt it was unacceptable to remain silent and avoid tacking action.

Councillor Sangani also took the opportunity to express her full support for the motion. Echoing the sentiments highlighted by Councillor Dixon earlier in the debate she also supported the need to reduce fear and empower women and girls in tackling the issues raised which it was felt would lead to a more prosperous future for all Brent residents.

At this stage in proceedings the Mayor advised that the time available for the debate had expired and therefore asked Councillor Thakkar, as the member who had introduced and moved the motion, if she would be willing to accept the suggested amendment put forward by Councillor Donnelly-Jackson regarding support also being made available for deaf and disabled women in an accessible format. Councillor Thakkar agreed that the support being provided needed to be accessible to all women and advised she therefore welcomed and supported the amendment.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Knight as Lead Member for Community Safety and Engagement, to sum up and close the debate.

Councillor Knight began by thanking members for highlighting the challenges faced in tackling violence against women and girls, which despite its impact still remained one of the least prosecuted crimes. In condemning any form of violence or

harassment she pointed out the Council, despite the initiatives already taken, was aware there was more to do especially in seeking to challenge the culture which allowed these types of behaviours to go unchallenged. In seeking to ensure that the memories of those affected by such violence, including Bibaa and Nicole Henry, were not forgotten she reiterated the Council's commitment to breaking the cycle of violence and abuse which would include ongoing efforts in commissioning support services, working with cultural specific organisations in the community and in partnership with the Metropolitan Police to ensure justice was delivered for all those who had been affected and exposed to this type of violence and abuse, recognising its ongoing prevalence in society. She therefore urged all members to support the motion presented as the basis for debate.

Councillor Knight ended by drawing attention to two events that all members and residents were invited to attend as part of Brent's 16 Days of Activism including a candle vigil on 25 November in respect of victims of violence and domestic abuse and a Time to Talk event focussed on women's safety taking place on 29 November.

The Mayor thanked all members for their contributions and as an outcome of the non-cabinet member debate it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the motion (as amended) set out below:

"This Council notes:

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is an unacceptable and preventable issue which needlessly blights millions of lives. Crimes of violence against women and girls are many and varied. They include rape, sexual assault, stalking, domestic abuse, 'honour based' abuse (including female genital mutilation and forced marriage and 'honour' killings), 'revenge porn' and 'up skirting', as well as many other heinous acts. While different types of violence against women and girls have their own distinct causes and impacts on victims and survivors, what these crimes share in common is the way that they cut across society regardless of background or circumstance.

The crimes committed in Fryent Park are appalling beyond comprehension. We send our thoughts, prayers and solidarity to Mina Smallman. We will keep Bibaa and Nicole at the forefront of all our work to redress the injustices this tragedy has cruelly exposed.

VAWG must be an urgent priority for this government and institutions of all kind.

To this end, Brent Council believes in meeting words, with action.

We have:

- Incorporated the VAWG strategy into the safer Brent Community Safety Partnership Strategy. This strategy (for all agencies in Brent) will focus on tackling all forms of violence and abuse that disproportionately affect women in Brent.
- Signed the Mayor of London's Women's Night Safety Charter, and continue to work alongside local night-time economy venues to improve the safety of

female customers and staff within their premises. We are developing and commissioning bespoke vulnerability training for businesses in Brent to help identify and support women as a result.

- Developed and continue to develop various services and projects to support victims of VAWG and their families. These include the Brent Chrysalis Centre, Advance, NIA, Global thinking and the Brent domestic abuse housing team.
- Coordinated the IRIS project – which offers direct support to GPs for identification and referral of patients who may be victims of abuse and trafficking. In consultation with specialist support organisations, Brent Council has developed guidance on appropriate VAWG language, encouraging its use whenever there are discussions or communications regarding those impacted by VAWG.
- Provided additional funding and investment into independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) services and the Brent perpetrator program in partnership with Barnet and Enfield. The Council is liaising with the Home Office to increase local support to address gaps in culturally appropriate services for perpetrators of domestic abuse in minorities and/or marginalised groups.
- Commissioned three Women’s Refuges of 19 units, with work underway to procure further spaces as soon as possible.

In light of the deeply disturbing figures showing that in 2020, only 1.5% of all rape cases led to charge or summons this Council believes that much more urgent work is needed to eradicate violence against women in all its forms.

With this in mind, the Council pledges to:

- Make the safety and support of victims of any form of gender-based violence a priority at every level and with every partner in this borough.
- Work alongside stakeholders, in particular the Metropolitan Police to improve safety for women and girls in Brent. Where they fail to do so, we will not hesitate to call for changes to the model of policing in this borough.
- Work with all our partners to continue raising awareness for victims of VAWG including everyday sexism that precipitates into the most aggressive forms of violence.
- Secure further wrap-around support for women escaping domestic abuse – and to undertake steps to publicise this help available to anyone in need which (as an amendment unanimously agreed at the meeting) will also be provided in formats which are accessible to deaf and disabled women.”

15. **Brent Black Community Action Plan - Annual Report**

The Mayor then invited Councillor McLennan, Deputy Leader, to introduce a report from the Assistant Chief Executive providing an update on the progress being made

against the Brent Black Community Action Plan (BCAP). In introducing the report the Deputy Leader highlighted the key activities undertaken during 2021/22 to deliver the priority themes within the Action Plan along with key successes. These had included development of the Harlesden Curriculum, the introduction of a Youth Advisory Group, delivery of an Insight Day and work to establish a Black Business Network and Excellence Quality Mark.

The report also highlighted the challenges which had been identified to date in delivering the BCAP along with the approaches being developed to overcome these as delivery continued to be progressed during 2022/23. The measures included activity designed to deliver systemic change e.g. establishing a senior officers delivery group, further investment in community facilities, introduction of a programme of Civic Life opportunities and development of a new Brent Council Black Graduate Scheme; the introduction of a number of roles across the community to amplify BCAP work and development of an enhanced communications strategy. In commending the report to Council the Deputy Leader thanked all members, officers and key stakeholders within the local community for their ongoing support in delivery of the Action Plan.

Whilst no members indicated they wished to speak on the report, Councillor McLennan in exercising her right of reply once again thanked everyone involved for their engagement and efforts in development and delivery of the Action Plan. The Mayor then put the recommendations in the report to the vote and they were unanimously declared **CARRIED**.

Council therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the progress against the Black Community Action Plan delivery plans 2021/22.
- (2) To note the identified challenges and action planned to overcome them.
- (3) To note the emerging areas of focus for the Black Community Action Plan in 2022/23.

16. **Proposed renewal of the Council's Current Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles (Policy Statement)**

The Mayor invited Councillor Knight, Lead Member for Community Safety & Engagement, to introduce a report from the Strategic Director, Regeneration & Environment, seeking approval to renew the Council's existing Gambling Policy in its current form for a maximum period of a further 24 months until 31st January 2024.

In introducing the report, Councillor Knight advised members of the requirement under the Gambling Act 2005 for the Council to publish a statement of principles (policy statement) to be applied in exercising its functions under the Act. In December 2020 the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) had launched a major and wide ranging review of the Act to consider the increase in online gambling along with advertising, marketing rules and the powers of the Gambling Commission and to ensure the necessary protections were available within the regulatory framework in order to protect children and vulnerable people,

prevent gambling related crime and keep gambling fair in the digital age. The Council had made representations in response to the consultation seeking to secure more control over the number of Adult Gaming Centres (AGCs) able to be established within the borough given the detrimental impact they were felt to have on local communities, particularly in areas of deprivation. Given the need for the Council to review and prepare a new or revised gambling policy and statement of principles that would align with any new legislation framework introduced as a result of the review, it had been recommended that the current policy be renewed for up to a further two year period in order to allow this process to be undertaken. Confirmation was provided that the current policy had been reviewed and remained fit. An assurance was also provided regarding the robust and hostile stance being maintained by the Council against the establishment of AGCs in Brent given the detrimental impact they were felt to have on town centres, local communities and in targeting the most vulnerable and deprived neighbourhoods, particularly within the south of the borough.

As no members indicated they wished to speak and Councillor Knight had confirmed she did not need to exercise her right of reply the Mayor then put the recommendations in the report to the vote and they were unanimously declared **CARRIED**.

Council therefore **RESOLVED** to approve the renewal of the current Gambling Policy and Statement of Principles for a maximum period of 2 years until 31st January 2024, as had been recommended by Cabinet on 8 November 2021.

17. **Motions**

Before moving on to consider the motions listed on the summons, the Mayor advised members that a total of 30 minutes had been set aside for the consideration of the three motions submitted for debate, based on an initial allocation of 10 minutes per motion. Should the time taken to consider the first motion be less than 10 minutes she advised that the remaining time available would be rolled forward for consideration of the remaining motion.

17.1 1st Motion (Conservative Group) – Granville New Homes Independent Inquiry

The Mayor invited Councillor Kansagra to move the first motion which had been submitted on behalf of the Conservative Group. Councillor Kansagra, in moving the motion, highlighted the Conservative Groups concern regarding the issues outlined within the Ridge Report on the Granville New Homes Block development. Referring to the potential cost in addressing the issues and defects identified he also highlighted the wider inconvenience caused by the delays in undertaking these works for residents living in the blocks. Whilst recognising the issues had been subject to consideration at the Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Standards Advisory Committee it was not felt this had provided sufficient opportunity to fully explore the matters needing to be considered with a number of concerns still to be addressed. Concerns were also expressed at the delay in members being advised of the report and issues in relation to the blocks, with the Conservative Group therefore calling on the Council to request that Cabinet commission an independent inquiry into the matter.

The Mayor then invited other members to speak on the motion, with the following contribution received.

Councillor McLennan, in responding to the motion, began by recognising the impact on residents within the blocks and highlighting the Council's commitment towards addressing the issues and works identified in order to ensure the provision of a building that was safe, secure and fit for purpose. In outlining the background and history to the construction and ownership of the blocks, she highlighted that approval of the original development had been subject to planning permission granted by Planning Committee in 2008 when Councillor Kansagra had been chair. Commenting on the background to the Ridge Report, Councillor McLennan advised this had been commissioned once the extent of the works required to rectify the original construction defects had become clear in order to enable a full assessment of the options and costs of the works required. Confirmation was provided regarding the consultation and engagement with those residents affected, who members were advised had been fully supportive of the approach now agreed by Cabinet to rectify the defects and undertake the works required.

As no further members had indicated that they wished to speak the Mayor invited Councillor Kansagra to exercise his right of reply.

In summing up, Councillor Kansagra felt it was important to clarify that as Chair of the Planning Committee his remit had been to consider the planning application rather than assess the construction of the blocks. He therefore urged members to support the call for an independent inquiry in order to establish what had gone wrong and how these issues could be addressed moving forward.

The Mayor then put the motion, as set out below, to a vote by show of hands which was declared **LOST**.

"This Council notes with grave concern the issues raised by the Ridge Report on the Granville New Homes build by Brent Council.

This matter was briefly discussed at the Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Standards Advisory Committee. Because of time constraints, the matter has not been fully aired. There still remains very large and serious questions the Administration needs to answer, for example:

- When and who commissioned the Ridge Report?
- When did the serious defects in the structure of the construction come to light?
- What was the Building Contractors and Councils Building Control Department's involvement during construction and issue of Completion Certificate?

There are various estimates circulating as to the amount of money required to remedy the defects. One source reports that £18.4 million will be required. This amount is larger than the Council potentially lost by investment in Icelandic Banks.

This Council therefore agrees to request that the Cabinet commissions an independent inquiry into the matter”.

Councillors Colwill, Kansagra and Maurice voted in favour of the above motion.

All other members present at the meeting voted against the above motion.

17.2 2nd Motion (Labour Group) – The Big Issue Campaign – Stop Mass Homelessness

The Mayor then invited Councillor Johnson to move the second motion which had been submitted on behalf of the Labour Group. Councillor Johnson in moving the motion began by highlighting the number of families who were either classified as homeless or threatened with homelessness, which had been further impacted as a result of the pandemic and changes introduced to the welfare system. Given the importance of access to safe and secure housing in terms of residents health and wellbeing, employment and education opportunities he advised the motion was seeking support from the Government as part of a Big Issue campaign to prevent any further increase in homelessness by taking action to address issues such as rent arrears; suspend no fault evictions; make permanent the Universal Credit uplift; improve access to Discretionary Housing Payment; unfreeze Local Housing Allowance; improve support for financial literacy education and investing to create new green jobs. Referring to the action already taken by the Government during the pandemic through the “Everybody In” initiative the motion was seeking to lobby for continued support from Government in order to protect those most at risk.

The Mayor then invited other members to speak on the motion, with the following contributions received.

Councillor Kansagra whilst broadly supportive of the motion felt care need to be taken in use of phrases such as “mass homelessness” which were felt to be unhelpful as a means of highlighting the issue or securing support.

Councillor McLennan then spoke in support of the motion and in addressing the comments made by Councillor Kansagra regarding the scale of the issue, highlighted the large number of people presenting at the Civic Centre and Community Hubs on a daily basis due to homelessness or the threat of it. The problem, she felt, had been made even worse by the detrimental impact of the changes and removal in Universal Credit uplift introduced by the Government as part of its welfare reforms. Whilst the Council, through delivery of its Council House building programme and initiatives designed to increase the supply of Affordable Housing, was actively seeking to prevent homelessness and provide support for those most in need or at risk of homelessness Councillor McLennan felt these actions needed to be matched by Government and therefore urged all members to support the motion.

Councillor Donnelly-Jackson also spoke in support of the motion, reinforcing the importance in having access to safe, secure homes and the challenges faced by the local authority in providing the level of support required due to the lack of funding from central government and wider challenges within the planning system. As a result of her own personal experience, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson felt the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition in speaking on the motion had

highlighted a lack of empathy towards those experiencing or at risk of homelessness and again urged all members to support the motion.

As a final comment, Councillor Thakkar also highlighted the importance in all members acknowledging the reality and magnitude of the current issues relating to homelessness needing to be addressed and expressed her support the motion.

As no further members had indicated that they wished to speak the Mayor invited Councillor Johnson to exercise his right of reply.

In summing up, Councillor Johnson queried the approach being taken by Central Government in response to the issues highlighted within the motion and in terms of their support for those most vulnerable members of society, especially given the positive impact of the “Everyone In” initiative. In commending the approach being taken by the Council in terms of the support provided for its most vulnerable residents he hoped all members would support the motion and urge the Government to reconsider their approach in order to address the housing crisis and prevent issues in relation to homelessness being made even worse.

The Mayor then put the motion, as set out below, to a vote by show of hands which was declared **CARRIED**.

“This Council notes:

That thousands of families are facing evictions and repossessions as measures to protect residents put in place during Covid-19, end; Universal Credit is reduced; the furlough scheme ends; and electricity, gas and the cost of living rises at pace.

This Council believes that:

Now is not the time to unravel the interventions that the government has introduced to protect people during this unprecedented period.

Unless urgent action is taken by this government, the UK will face a homelessness crisis this winter, on a shameful scale.

Over the last year, nearly 6,000 residents approached Brent Council because they feared being made homeless. While our officer’s work tirelessly to offer assistance to as many residents as possible, the sheer scale of demand sadly outstrips supply. The pandemic has shown that mass homelessness is a political choice – the government averted it once with the Everybody In initiative and they can do so again; simply by making additional funding available to this Council.

This Council resolves to:

1. Support the Big Issue’s plan to Stop Mass Homelessness and call on the Lead Member for Housing & Welfare Reform to write to the relevant Secretaries of State asking them to keep people in their homes and in sustainable jobs. They could do this by committing to pay off £360m in rent arrears; suspend no fault evictions until a Renters’ Reform Act is passed; make permanent the £20 Universal Credit uplift; improve access to Discretionary Housing Payment; unfreeze Local Housing Allowance; improve support for financial literacy

- education and invest to create new green jobs.
2. Express its support for a Wellbeing of Future Generations Act requiring public bodies to consider how decisions made now affect future needs, and tackle persistent problems such as poverty, homelessness, health inequalities and climate change.
 3. Call on the Lead Member for Housing & Welfare Reform to Commission a report to be heard at the appropriate committee outlining options to amend the decision-making process to ensure that the impact of Council decisions on future generations are properly considered.
 4. Tackle the root problem head on, by forging ahead with our ambitious programme to build 1700 council homes by 2028 and to maximise affordable housing options through the council's own company I4B, pan-London Capital ***Letters scheme and by working with trusted developers across the borough.***

Councillors Colwill, Kansagra and Maurice abstained from voting on the above motion.

17.3 3rd Motion (Labour Group) – Towards Greener Energy

The Mayor then invited Councillor Dixon to move the final motion which had been submitted on behalf of the Labour Group. In moving the motion Councillor Dixon was pleased to be able to draw members' attention to the successes achieved by the Council since declaring a climate emergency being delivered through the Climate Emergency Strategy. This included the efforts being made to actively work towards carbon neutrality and promoting more renewable and greener forms of energy, which had been recognised within the motion, along with the levels of community engagement and support from local residents in seeking to create more sustainable and responsible lifestyles. As a result Councillor Dixon advised the motion was seeking the support of all councillors in terms of the Council's continued approach and in seeking to secure local and more greener and renewable forms of energy.

The Mayor then invited other members to speak on the motion, with the following contributions received.

Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Lead Member for Environment, thanked Councillor Dixon for moving the motion and again highlighted the important role being played by the Council in terms of leading the drive towards net zero and also in terms of seeking to promote more sustainable and local renewable sources of energy. This was felt to be even more relevant given the recent surge in energy prices and pressures being created on household bills. Given the challenges identified in terms of addressing the current energy crisis, the support being sought through the motion for introduction of a Local Electricity Bill, including establishing and promoting the right to local supply was welcomed as a means of reducing reliance on the main energy suppliers and providing a boost to the local economy and residents as potential customers.

Councillor Maurice also spoke on the motion and whilst supportive felt there was a need to be aware of the technical challenges involved in both establishing and providing access to local energy supplies.

As no further members had indicated that they wished to speak the Mayor invited Councillor Dixon to exercise her right of reply.

In summing up, Councillor Dixon reassured members about the level of technical expertise and advice available in order to promote the development of local energy supplies, with the motion designed to support the Council's positive focus on activity being undertaken across the borough and to maintain the momentum in moving towards the provision of more sustainable renewable and greener energy in Brent.

The Mayor then put the motion, as set out below, to a vote by show of hands which was declared **CARRIED**.

“This Council notes:

In July 2019, Brent Council declared a climate and ecological emergency and committed to do all in its gift to strive for carbon neutrality by 2030. This target is borough-wide, not just council-only emissions, because of how urgent this issue is – and therefore more ambitious goals are required. We are one of only 12 councils in London who have adopted this 2030 target.

This council has recently joined the UK100, a network of radical local authorities that wish to do more to confront the climate emergency and call on government for urgent action.

Brent Council has cut its emissions by 63.7% since this Labour Administration took control – this exceeds the government's targets and our own ambitious goals.

This Council further recognises:

- the efforts that this Council has made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy;
- the surge in wholesale gas and electricity prices to almost five times the level of a year ago has resulted in suppliers defaulting and putting pressure on household bills;
- that currently, very large financial setup and running costs are involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity back to local customers, making it near impossible for local renewable electricity generators to get a foothold in the market,
- that making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would create significant opportunities for local companies and community groups to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people, businesses and organisations;

- that revenues received by such local companies or community groups that chose to become local renewable electricity providers could be used to help improve the local economy, local services and help reduce local greenhouse gas emissions; and
- the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, recommended that a Right to Local Supply for local energy suppliers be established to address this.

This Council resolves to:

- Support the Local Electricity Bill, currently supported by a cross-party group of 266 MPs. If made law, this would establish a Right to Local Supply and promote local renewable electricity supply by making the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate to the size of the supply company.
- Turbo-charge the transition to renewable energy in the Council, by bringing forward a report to outline options to fully switch to sustainable energy sources significantly in advance of our 2030 target.
- To support residents with grant funding for projects to confront the climate & ecological emergency through the Brent Together Towards Zero Grant and the recently launched Carbon offset fund, called for by this chamber.”

18. **Urgent Business**

There were no urgent items of business raised at the meeting so the Mayor, in closing the meeting, thanked all members for their co-operation and support and advised that she looked forward to seeing everyone again in person at the next Full Council which would be the Budget Setting meeting on Thursday 24 February 2022.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm

COUNCILLOR LIA COLACICCO
Mayor