LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Minutes of the EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL held on Monday 12 October 2026 at 5.00 pm

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Amer Agha MB BS, MSc, PHCM

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor Kanta Mistry

COUNCILLORS:

Aden	Ahmadi Moghaddam
I.Ahmed	P.Ahmed
Alexandre	Amadi
Anderson	Bajwa
Brown	Burn
M Butt	S Butt
Chadha	Chauhan
Choudry	Chowdhury
Clinton	Dar
De Souza	Dixon
Donnelly-Jackson	Do Rosario
Gallagher	Georgiou
Ibrahim	Jansali
Johnson	Kelcher
Knight	Lorber
Madabhushi	Malonga
Maurice	McLeish
Mishra	Mitchell
A.Patel	HB.Patel
J.Patel	N.Patel
Perrin	Rubin
Ryan	Thomas
Unger	Want
Warsame	

1. **Mayors Introductory Statement**

The Mayor welcomed all those present and thanked everyone for their attendance, explaining that he had called the Extraordinary Council meeting under Standing Order 29 in order to enable members to consider the following items of urgent business:

- The statutory changes to the terms of reference for the Planning Committee reflecting national changes due to come into effect at the end of October as they related to planning powers and the determination of certain types of planning applications; and

- An amendment within the Members' Allowance Scheme to the allowance payable to the Independent Chair of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee.

Members were reminded that these changes had been considered at the previous Council meeting on 14 September 2026 but were not approved, with the need for them to be reconsidered at an Extraordinary Council Meeting reflecting the Council's statutory duty to amend its planning delegations prior to the end of October and to commence the recruitment of a new Independent Chair of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee.

The Mayor also took the opportunity to acknowledge the difficulties in some members being able to attend the meeting highlighting that whilst aware of the competing demands on members time and availability it was unfortunately not always possible, given the logistical challenges involved, to identify a time that would be convenient for everyone. As a result, he thanked members for their co-operation and flexibility in terms of finalising the arrangements for the meeting.

Before ending his introduction, the Mayor announced that it was with regret he had to inform members of the sad passing of former Councillor Reg Colwill and also Mrs Arshad Mahmood, who served as Mayoress during Councillor Mahmood's Mayoralty.

Acknowledging that many members would have known Reg Colwill during the time he served as a councillor from 1994 – 2022 (representing both Kingsbury and Kenton wards), the compassion, friendship and commitment he demonstrated to local residents and the communities served as a member of the Council was recognised and commended.

The Mayor advised he intended to invite formal tributes at the next Full Council meeting in November, but before finishing offered his sincerest sympathy and heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of both Reg Colwill and Mrs Arshad Mahmood on behalf of the Council.

2. Apologies for Absence

The Mayor reported that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Blackman, Grahl, Hack, Kansagra, Mahmood, Mulaisho, Shah and Vakani.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

4. Changes to the Constitution

Prior to inviting Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) to introduce a report from the Corporate Director of Finance & Resources outlining the

constitutional changes needing to be considered in relation to the Terms of Reference of the Planning Committee (as amended in an updated reported published in advance of the meeting) and Members Allowance Scheme, following their initial consideration at the Council meeting on 14 September 2026, the Mayor invited Kim Wright (as Chief Executive) to provide a brief statement regarding the status of the planning proposals presented for consideration.

In seeking to outline the statutory and operational context in which the proposals included within the report needed to be considered, the Chief Executive began by reminding members of the statutory duty placed upon the Council to ensure the new planning delegation arrangements included within the national regulations were in place by 31 October 2026. Members were advised that failure to do so would not only be a breach of that statutory duty but would also have a number of planning consequences which were highlighted as follows:

- The inability to determine applications set out within the current terms of Reference of the Planning committee that did not align with the national scheme of delegation.

- The increased likelihood of an increased number of planning appeals against non-determination of planning applications.

- The Local Planning Authority potentially being subject to special measures by Central Government because of applications not being determined within the minimum threshold on statutory timeframes or being overturned at appeal.

- The risk that a developer could decide to submit certain applications, including major applications to the Planning Inspector and bypass the Council resulting in the loss of local control over the more strategic and significant applications, reputational damage to the Council and a significant reduction in planning fee income.

- The risk in being required to issue refunds on planning fees if a non-major application was undermined after 16 weeks and a major application was undetermined after 26 weeks where no extension of time had been secured along with associated reduction in planning fee income and impact on the ability to deliver planning and other services.

In also acknowledging the concerns expressed by members at the Council meeting when the proposals had originally been considered in September and at the subsequent All-Member Briefing in October about the loss of the previous “call-in rights” and ability to engage in planning decisions, attention was drawn to the way in which the proposals had been further amended, following discussion with all group leaders, to effectively reinstate para. 2 of the Planning Committee terms of reference with necessary modifications. Members were advised this had been undertaken to enable three or more councillors to request that certain applications be considered for referral to the planning committee in accordance with the new gateway process and was in direct response to the concerns expressed with the new provision having been set out paragraph 5.12 of the report circulated with the agenda.

Having thanked Kim Wright for her statement and the clarification provided, the Mayar then invited Councillor Muhammed Butt to introduce and formally move the proposals within the report.

In moving the recommendations, Councillor Muhammed Butt reminded members that the proposals reflected statutory changes imposed through national legislation which the Council was legally required to implement. Referring specifically to concerns raised at the previous Council meeting, he highlighted the additional safeguards that had been included enabling any three councillors to request referral of planning applications for further consideration, which he hoped gave confidence to members that their concerns and views were being considered. Whilst acknowledging concerns regarding democratic oversight, he advised that the Council had a duty to comply with the new requirements and on this basis moved the recommendations as set out within the report.

Prior to opening the debate, the Mayor advised members of a proposed amendment to the proposals within the report, which had been submitted by the Liberal Democrats Group. Following advice provided by the Interim Director of Law and Monitoring Office the Mayor confirmed that he had not accepted the amendment, with the decision taken on the basis the proposals had been received outside of the necessary timescale and were felt to fall outside the specific scope and purpose of the Extraordinary Meeting. It was confirmed the Liberal Democrats Group had been informed of the decision and reasons in advance of the meeting, with advice also provided on how the proposals could be brought forward for future consideration.

At this stage in proceedings, Councillor Lorber (under Standing Order 42) sought to move a Procedural Motion seeking to suspend Standing Orders to enable consideration of the amendment which had been proposed by the Liberal Democrats Group. In support of the waiver, Councillor Lorber advised that the Liberal Democrats Group had sought further clarification from officers regarding the planning and referral proposals with delays in receiving responses on the issues raised having impacted the timing of the amendment's submission. The opportunity was also taken to highlight concerns regarding the timing of the Extraordinary Meeting and its impact on members' ability to attend.

In accordance with Standing Order 42(d) the Mayor then put the procedural motion to suspend Standing Orders to the vote (without further debate) which was declared **LOST.**

The Mayor then opened the debate inviting other members to speak on the report, with the following contributions made.

In opening the debate, Councillor Lorber reiterated his opposition to the national planning reforms, describing them as a significant reduction in local democratic accountability. Whilst acknowledging the Council's legal obligation to implement the changes, he felt that elected members should retain a stronger role in planning decision-making and outlined the amended proposals supported by the Liberal Democrat Group, including the establishment of a three-member advisory panel to support review of planning application referrals under the new arrangements, a reduction in the size of the Planning Committee from 8 to 5 members, and a review

of the associated Special Responsibility Allowance for Chair of the Planning Committee, which he advised their amendment had sought to propose.

Following on Councillor Clinton, in support of the concerns outlined, referred to information contained within the report noting that whilst only a small proportion of planning applications submitted since January 2025 would have been affected by the reforms, the changes would have applied to a significant proportion of applications considered by the Planning Committee during that period. He emphasised his view that local residents deserved elected representatives who were able to challenge contentious planning decisions, and that removing that ability risked eroding trust in the democratic process. At this stage in the debate, he advised that the Liberal Democrats would therefore consider abstaining on the final vote in recognition of the Council's statutory obligations but advised that the Group's opposition to the reforms remained unchanged.

Speaking next on behalf of the Green Group, Councillor Mitchell acknowledged the additional engagement that had taken place since the previous Council meeting to address some of the concerns raised by opposition groups and welcomed the inclusion of a mechanism enabling three councillors to request referrals under the new arrangements. Despite these amendments, concern was expressed that the proposals would weaken democratic oversight of planning matters by transferring greater decision-making authority from elected members to planning officers which she felt would principally benefit developers rather than local communities. It was also felt that the changes risked undermining public confidence and trust in the planning system and reduced opportunities for meaningful community involvement in planning decisions. Whilst recognising the severity of the current housing crisis and the need to address housing need, she felt that reform should focus on radical solutions that strengthened local involvement in planning rather than limiting it. In that context, she referred to alternative approaches adopted by other local authorities and called on the Council to support those approaches, including measures designed to bring planning decision-making closer to local communities in Lewisham and proposals by the Green Party aimed at increasing the supply of genuinely affordable council-owned housing. For these reasons, Councillor Mitchell advised that the Green Group remained unable to support the recommendations.

Speaking on behalf of the Conservative Group, Councillor Maurice also expressed opposition to the changes on the basis of the impact they would have in restricting the role of councillors in the process as well as opportunities for local residents' concerns to be heard and considered through public planning committee meetings. He felt the reforms would also result in reduced opportunities to scrutinise or challenge planning decisions. Whilst recognising that the Council had a legal obligation to implement the reforms, he also supported the proposed review of the size and membership of the Planning Committee to ensure decisions were not reliant on the Chair's second or casting vote, with the support also expressed for an opposition member to be appointed as chair of the Planning Committee.

As a further contribution, Councillor Jayanti Patel also expressed concern regarding the impact of the new national planning regulations on local democratic accountability once again highlighting how it was felt the changes would significantly reduce the role of elected members in the determination of planning applications and limit opportunities for public scrutiny, with a view that the changes outlined represented a move towards more centralised rather than localised control.

In particular, he raised concerns that a greater number of applications would be determined under delegated authority rather than by Planning Committee and that the gateway arrangements could make it more difficult for applications to be referred for member consideration. He also questioned whether the revised framework would discourage member involvement in contentious planning matters due to the increased risk of legal challenge. Whilst acknowledging the Council's obligation to implement the changes, Councillor Jayanti Patel urged the Council to make representations to Government regarding the impact of their reforms on local decision-making and community engagement in the planning process.

Speaking next Councillor Georgiou reminded members that the requirement to hold an Extraordinary Council meeting had arisen from concerns previously expressed by opposition groups regarding the impact of the government-imposed planning reforms and the need for additional time to scrutinise and consider their implications for the borough. Whilst acknowledging the engagement that had taken place with officers and other Group Leaders since the previous Council meeting, he advised that significant concerns remained regarding the effect of the proposals on the ability of elected members to scrutinise planning matters and represent residents' interests. Councillor Georgiou expressed disappointment that the amendments submitted by the Liberal Democrat Group had not been allowed to come forward for debate given the way he felt they would have strengthened the proposed arrangements and provided additional safeguards within the planning process. Referring to his own experience of attending and speaking at Planning Committee, he emphasised the importance of maintaining opportunities for local ward councillors to speak on behalf of residents and to raise concerns about planning applications affecting their communities. He remained concerned that the new arrangements would reduce those opportunities and further limit member involvement in planning decisions. Concluding his remarks, Councillor Georgiou reiterated his opposition to the reforms and suggested that further consideration should be given to the alternative proposals developed by the Liberal Democrat Group, advising that he would continue discussions with officers regarding the possibility of bringing those proposals forward for future consideration by Council.

In support of comments made during the debate, Councillor Mishra also spoke to highlight concern at how it was felt the changes outlined would reduce opportunities for public oversight of planning decisions and transfer greater decision-making authority away from local elected representatives, resulting in a lack of transparency in the planning decision process. Whilst acknowledging that the Council was required to implement the changes in order to comply with national legislation, he maintained that the reforms represented a significant erosion of local democratic control and called on the Council to continue advocating for the restoration of greater member oversight and local involvement in the planning process.

As a final contribution to the debate, Councillor Harshadbhai Patel felt it important to highlight the importance of constitutional arrangements in supporting democratic governance and public accountability. Whilst acknowledging that the changes were required in order to comply with national legislation, he queried whether the reforms would improve decision-making or governance arrangements within the Council, feeling that the proposals would reduce opportunities for members and residents to influence planning decisions and expressed concern that the revised referral process would provide less certainty that applications could be considered by

Planning Committee. The opportunity was also taken to challenge the necessity of the changes, given the Council's existing strong performance in determining planning applications and the relatively small proportion of applications affected by the reforms. For these reasons, he remained concerned about the impact of the proposals on democratic oversight and local accountability within the planning process.

As there were no further members who had indicated they wished to speak, the Mayor having thanked members for their contribution then drew the debate to a close and invited Councillor Muhammed Butt (as mover of the original report) to exercise his rights of reply.

In responding to the debate, Councillor Muhammed Butt acknowledged the concerns that had been raised regarding democratic oversight and member and resident involvement in planning decisions but reminded members that the Council was obliged to implement the changes as a consequence of national legislation. In view of the concerns outlined when the proposals had first been submitted for consideration at the previous Council meeting, he again highlighted the amendments that had been made to facilitate member referrals under the new arrangements but, in recognising the concerns that remained, indicated a willingness to continue discussions with officers regarding any further measures that could be considered within the limitations of the statutory framework.

The Mayor then moved to put the recommendations in the report to the vote on an individual basis, which were both declared **CARRIED**.

Council therefore **RESOLVED** having reviewed the changes to the Constitution set out in the report and accompanying appendices:

(1) To approve the changes to the Constitution set out in this report and the appendices relating to planning delegations in accordance with the council's duty and to authorise the Interim Director of Law and Monitoring Officer to amend the Constitution, accordingly, including making any necessary incidental or consequential changes.

(2) To approve that the Members' Allowance Scheme (in Part 6 of the Constitution) be amended so that the remuneration payable to the Independent Chair of the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee was increased from £1,561pa to £5,332pa.

With no further business to be considered the Mayor once again thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 5.45 pm

COUNCILLOR AMER AGHA MB BS, MSC, PHCM
Mayor