



## **LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT**

**Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL  
held as an online meeting on Monday 22 February 2021 at 4.00 pm**

### **PRESENT (in remote attendance):**

**The Worshipful the Mayor**  
Councillor Ernest Ezeajughi

**The Deputy Mayor**  
Councillor Lia Colacicco

### **COUNCILLORS:**

Abdi	Afzal
Agha	Ahmed
Akram	M Butt
S Butt	Chan
Chappell	Chohan
S Choudhary	A Choudry
Colwill	Crane
Daly	Dar
Denselow	Dixon
Donnelly-Jackson	Ethapemi
Farah	Gbajumo
Georgiou	Gill
Hassan	Hector
Hirani	Hylton
Johnson	Kabir
Kansagra	Kelcher
Kennelly	Knight
Lloyd	Lo
Long	Mahmood
Mashari	Maurice
McLennan	Miller
Murray	Mitchell-Murray
Naheerathan	Nerva
M Patel	RS Patel
Perrin	Sangani
Shah	Shahzad
Ketan Sheth	Krupa Sheth
Southwood	Stephens
Tatler	Thakkar

## 1. **Welcoming Statement**

Prior to formally opening the meeting, the Mayor took the opportunity to welcome everyone and invited Carolyn Downs, as Chief Executive, to run through the guidance issued in relation to conduct of the online meeting. Having noted the guidance, the Mayor then moved on to the formal agenda for the meeting.

## 2. **Mayor's Statement - Order of Business**

Before consideration of the formal agenda, the Mayor informed members of a change to the order of business. Given the recommendation in the budget report on the establishment of a Council Tax Setting Committee, he intended to move the order of items so that the Appointments to Committees and Other Bodies followed on from Agenda Item 6 (Budget & Council Tax 2021-2022).

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

- (1) The business to be considered at the meeting be re-arranged in the following order:
  - Agenda Item 7 – Appointment to Committees and Other Bodies
- (2) The remaining items of business to follow in the same order as listed in the agenda.

## 3. **Procedural Motion - Conduct of Business**

The Mayor advised that as this meeting had been designated as the Council's formal budget and Council Tax setting meeting he would be inviting Councillor Kabir (as the Majority Group Chief Whip) to move a procedural motion, in accordance with Standing Orders, relating to the conduct of the debate on the budget report.

**RESOLVED** that the following procedural motion be agreed:

- (1) That the Leader of the Council be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes in presenting the report to the meeting and setting out the Cabinet's proposals for the budget, after which, the following arrangements be agreed for the purpose of debating and voting upon the Budget and Council Tax:
  - (a) The Leader of the Conservative Group (or their nominated representative) be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes;
  - (b) The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources of the Council be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes;
  - (c) The Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes;
  - (d) A general debate follow, during which the usual rules for debate will apply as set out in Standing Orders (save as set out in this procedural motion);

- (2) At the end of the general debate, the Leader of the Council be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes to submit his closing remarks;
- (3) Following the close of the debate, voting on each Group's budget proposals shall be taken *en bloc*.

#### 4. **Apologies for Absence**

The Mayor advised that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Aden and Conneely.

#### 5. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 November 2020 be approved as a correct record.

#### 6. **Declarations of Interest**

It was noted that Councillor Hirani had a personal (non-pecuniary) interest in relation to Item 6 (Budget & Council Tax 2021-2022) as he had recently been appointed as Chair of the Metroland Cultures Trust.

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

The Mayor made the following announcements:

##### (i) Barnhill By-Election Result

The Mayor began by informing members that the election petition issued on 4 February 2020, which had sought to challenge the result of the by-election held on 23 January 2020 in the Barnhill ward, had been dismissed by the High Court on 19 February 2021.

He explained that as a result of the High Court ruling, Mansoor Akram and Gaynor Lloyd had been confirmed as being duly elected and correctly returned as councillors of Barnhill ward. Members were advised that in reaching their judgement the High Court had ordered the petitioners to pay the legal costs of the respondents, namely the Returning Officer and the duly elected candidates, in the total sum of £68,000.

Following a request to speak from Councillor Kansagra, the Mayor ruled that he would not be willing to accept any further comments on this matter as part of his announcements.

##### (ii) Queen's New Year's Honours List 2021

Moving on, the Mayor advised it was his pleasure to be able to announce that the following Brent residents and staff had received awards as part of the Queen's New Year's Honours List:

- Lisa Knight - MBE for services to nursing during the pandemic.

- Martine Clark (former Executive Head Teacher of Byron Court Primary School) - MBE for services to education.
- Sasi Srinivasan (Early Years Manager at Brent Council) – MBE for services to education.
- Sanjay Kara (Trustee at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir) - British Empire Award for his voluntary work at the temple.
- Sandra St Louis-Kandapah - British Empire Award for services to diversity, inclusion and charity work.

Members congratulated all those who had been honoured for their awards.

(iii) 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebrations

The Mayor then took the opportunity to pass on belated congratulations to two Brent residents who had recently celebrated their 100<sup>th</sup> birthdays - Keith Routley, who had served in World War Two and Norman Mitchell MBE, who was the founder of the West Indian Citizens Organisation.

With the permission of the Mayor, Councillor Kansagra also took the opportunity to congratulate a further resident Santokben Patel who had also recently celebrated their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

(iv) Holocaust and Genocide Memorial Day 2021

The Mayor advised he had been honoured to attend an online event commemorating the Holocaust and Genocide Memorial Day, the theme of which had been “Be the Light in the Darkness”. He urged everyone when remembering the victims to consider how they could stand against hate and discrimination today and “be the light in the darkness”. Thanks were extended to all those involved in organising the event.

(v) Former Councillor Lawrie Nerva

The Mayor announced it was with much sadness he had to announce that former Councillor Lawrie Nerva had recently passed away. Members were reminded that Lawrie had served as a councillor in Brent in the 1970’s and 80’s and had also helped to found the Brent Council for Community Relations. He had also received a Merit Award from the Labour Party in 2012 for over 50 years of campaigning with his autobiography, ‘A Campaigning Life’ also having been published earlier in the year.

The Mayor advised he was pleased to see Lawrie’s son, Councillor Neil Nerva, continuing his father’s legacy of public service as a member of the Council and in his role as Cabinet Member for Public Health, Culture and Leisure.

The Mayor then invited attendees to observe a minute’s silence in memory of Lawrie.

*The online meeting was then paused to observe a minute’s silence.*

(vi) NHS Vaccination Centre

The Mayor advised he was pleased to be able to report the opening of the large-scale NHS Covid vaccination site in Wembley, which had delivered its first jabs to residents on 18 January 2021. It was pride that he drew members attention to the support provided for the NHS by the Council, local businesses, the local community and Network Homes in establishing the site, which was seen by all members as a positive step forward in tackling the pandemic.

The Mayor encouraged all residents to take up the offer of a vaccination when they were called upon as it would protect them, their friends, work colleagues, family and the wider community from the effects of Covid-19. He then thanked all staff within Brent for their hard work during the pandemic, especially those who had needed to adapt to temporary roles or been working on the front line in order to deliver the Council's response.

(vii) Petitions

The Mayor ended his announcements by drawing members' attention to the list of current petitions along with action being taken to deal with them, which had been tabled at the meeting, in accordance with Standing Order 66.

**8. Budget and Council Tax 2021/22**

The Council received a report from the Director of Finance setting out the Council's budget proposals for 2021/22. Included within the report were the results of the budget consultation, scrutiny and equalities processes along with a summary of the overall financial position, risks, issues and uncertainties facing the Council over the medium term.

In accordance with the procedural motion agreed at the start of the meeting, the Mayor invited Councillor M Butt, Leader of the Council, to introduce the report.

Councillor M Butt began by outlining how he intended to structure his introduction across three interconnected themes - the impact of the pandemic, the prudent approach towards managing the budget and mitigating the challenges created as a result of the pandemic and lastly the plans being delivered to shape the borough as a place of empathy, opportunity and prosperity ensuring everyone had the opportunity to succeed. Beginning with the impact of the pandemic he highlighted the personal cost and expressed his sadness for those who had lost family and loved ones over the last year. The pandemic, he felt, had also served to highlight wider inequalities which successive Government's had failed to address not only in terms of levels of poverty, deprivation and opportunity but also in relation to race and culture. Whilst proud of the boroughs diversity, the pandemic had provided a reminder of the difference in life chances experienced specifically amongst the Black and also other Minority Ethnic communities. As a result, he pointed out, the Council had developed the Black Community Action Plan, which had been designed to address the concerns highlighted through active interventions designed, built and delivered by the community. It was intended these interventions would be enabled and embraced by the Council, with a public commitment to enshrining and investing in them over the long-term having recognised the need to focus on putting things right.

This was also the approach being developed in relation to tackling the climate emergency, with Councillor M Butt highlighting various initiatives such as insulating homes, incentivising green modes of transport and discouraging wasteful behaviour as a means of delivering tangible improvements and addressing the impact on the environment. Turning then to poverty, Councillor M. Butt expressed frustration at the lack of progress being made nationally to tackle the issue and highlighted the Administration's commitment to delivering the poverty reduction strategies recommended by Brent's Poverty Commission.

Councillor M Butt felt these actions could only achieve their desired impact if they had a clear purpose, quantifiable goals and a means of delivery, accompanied by a willingness to adapt in the face of change. He praised residents for the determination shown prior to and throughout the pandemic, and called on them to harness the same energy, passion and determination to help the borough reach its potential.

Turning to the budget proposals, Councillor M Butt advised that he recognised the concerns expressed by residents in relation to the proposed increase in Council Tax of 4.99% which had been recommended within the budget report. There was, however, he felt a need to understand the context within which the proposal had needed to be developed. This had related to the Government's refusal to allocate central funding to support the ongoing delivery of essential services and which, in effect, had imposed the need on Council's to seek a near mandatory maximum uplift in their Council Tax. The whole system of Council Tax, he felt, was deeply unfair outdated and badly in need of fundamental reform.

Councillor M Butt went on to highlight the difficult decisions which the Council had needed to make in developing the budget for the financial year ahead, which had needed to balance between the damage to already fragile and austerity-ravaged services relied on by the most vulnerable and the additional pressure on household finances. On the basis that it was felt essential services would struggle to cope with any further reductions in funding along with the support available through the Council Tax Support scheme, it had been felt that the Council could better mitigate against an increase in Council Tax than in further budget reductions for essential services.

Councillor M Butt then took the opportunity to thank the opposition councillors for submitting their alternative approaches towards the budget and advised he looked forward to them expanding on their ideas and the rationale behind the proposals. Having listened carefully, he assured them that he would respond more fully to the points raised at the close of the debate. Regret was however expressed that despite the time provided to develop these proposals they had not been submitted in time to allow detailed scrutiny as part of the extensive budget consultation process in advance of the meeting.

Councillor M Butt recognised that members were accountable primarily to their constituents, however, he felt it was important to acknowledge that members also had a wider set of responsibilities and obligations in relation to the borough, which he then took the opportunity to focus on. The first issue obligation he highlighted was in relation to tackling the climate emergency, which he pointed out included a range of mitigations many of which would not be popular in the short-term. He felt that members should not shy away from difficult or controversial decisions, as these

obligations often extended beyond the present day and included the hard fought global commitments made in Kyoto, Doha, Paris and expected later during year in Glasgow.

A further example of issues impacting on the borough were housing and homelessness. Given the pressures on what he felt was an increasingly broken housing market there was a need to focus on tackling the increasing dependence on a low quality, high cost private rental market and a troubling rise in homelessness. In response to the housing crisis, Councillor M Butt explained that the Council, as reflected in the budget, was doing everything in its power to increase and improve the quantity and quality of housing supply within the borough, whilst striving to better regulate and, through the likes of i4B and First Wave Housing, directly own and ethically manage an expanded private rental portfolio. He recognised that there was a need to strike a balance between the strategic need to build housing and the personal preferences of those who lived around new developments, but encouraged members to be courageous in striking such a balance.

Before summing up, Councillor M Butt also took the opportunity to remind members of the ability to challenge and scrutinise all decisions made by the Council. In this respect he advised he had written to the Leader of the Opposition, the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee and the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees reminding them of their long-standing invitation to attend Cabinet meetings and speak as required on any agenda item. This offer, he pointed out, had also been extended to Councillor Georgiou, as the sole Liberal Democrat member on the Council whom he advised would be welcome to attend on the same basis.

In summing up, Councillor M Butt advised that the Administration in presenting its budget proposals had recognised the difficult need to strike a balance between the delivery of longer term more strategic aims and more immediate priorities/demands on the Council as a result of the pandemic. He thanked all officers, as well as the staff and contractors involved in the provision of such essential services, for their hard work over the last year and praised their dedication and commitment during the pandemic. Highlighting his pride in working alongside these colleagues and his fellow members he ended by formally commending and moving the recommendations within the report.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Kansagra, as Leader of the Conservative Group, to respond to the budget proposals.

Councillor Kansagra began by highlighting what he felt was the unfair nature of the proposal to increase Council Tax by 4.99%. He felt that the increase would be an unnecessary financial burden on residents who had seen their finances negatively impacted by the pandemic. As a result he advised that the Conservative Group were proposing an increase of only 2.99%, designed to reflect the permitted precept ring fenced for Adult Social Care. In recognising the impact of this proposal on the budget position he outlined a number of the alternative budget proposals being recommended by the Conservative Group in order to produce a balanced budget. These included:

- Removing the proposed growth to support the London Living Wage (LLW), which the Conservative Group believed could be mitigated through application of the National Minimum Wage;
- Removal of the proposed landlord incentive scheme and allocation of a proportion of the New Homes Bonus to the base budget;
- Reducing the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) payable to the Leader and Deputy Leader, including the level of basic allowances, and removing two Cabinet posts.

In concluding, Councillor Kansagra advised that whilst the Conservative Group had recognised the officer advice provided in relation to potential financial risks associated with their alternative budget proposals they did provide the basis for a balanced budget. On this basis, the alternative budget proposals were formally moved and commended to Council. Prior to ending his response, Councillor Kansagra also took the opportunity to comment on the court judgement relating to the outcome of the petition on the Barnhill by-election, highlighting what he felt was the need to ensure appropriate resources were available to manage the conduct of future elections.

The Mayor then thanked Councillor Kansagra for his comments and moved on to invite Councillor McLennan, as Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, to speak as the next stage in the budget debate.

Councillor McLennan began by thanking the Council's Chief Executive and Finance Team along with all other officers involved in preparing the budget for their hard work, innovation, support and effort. She recognised the difficulty in undertaking such a process, and commended the collaboration between the Administration, councillors and members of the public. She then thanked the Budget Scrutiny Task Group for their efforts in reviewing and monitoring the development and delivery of the proposals, recognising the important role it had in the budget setting process.

In response to the key findings and recommendations of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group, Councillor McLennan assured members that the Council would be seeking to undertake cumulative equality impact assessments on key budget proposals to understand their medium and long-term impacts. Whilst supportive of the proposal to undertake a full and independent economic analysis of the borough ahead of the budget setting process, members were assured that the Council did utilise its access to real time economic data and as such all decisions were well informed. The benefits of setting financial proposals focussed over the medium term as well as shorter term were also recognised, however, members were reminded of the requirement on the Council to be able to set a balanced budget and provide a review of its financial outlook on an annual basis. Finally, in light of the financial difficulties experienced elsewhere with local authority owned housing companies, she took the opportunity to assure members about the performance and role of the Council's own housing companies and to highlight how these were being used for the purpose of tackling homelessness and to provide permanent, high quality housing through a reliable landlord.

Councillor McLennan then moved on to reflect on the alternative budget proposals moved by the Conservative Group. She highlighted the current pressures being caused as a direct result of the ongoing reduction in government funding for public services, which meant that local authorities increasingly needed to rely on Council

Tax as a means of income. Concerns were expressed at the proposal to remove growth to support the LLW, given its impact on the most vulnerable residents in the borough. Members were also advised of the aim behind the Landlords Incentive Scheme and New Homes Bonus, which had been designed to support local landlords in providing affordable and high quality housing as part of the Council's commitment to addressing the housing crisis.

In summing up, Councillor McLennan felt it was important to highlight the prudent approach adopted by the Council and commitment shown in the budget setting process to protecting public services, which she felt had proved to be of vital importance during the course of the pandemic, and to ensuring the needs of residents were met. Whilst recognising the challenging nature of the budget proposals, Councillor McLennan felt it was important to recognise the difficult choices that had needed to be made in order to protect essential services for those most in need. On this basis, she endorsed and commended the budget proposals to members for approval.

Before moving on, the Mayor agreed to allow a point of order requested by Councillor M. Butt in relation to the closing comments made by Councillor Kansagra in responding to the budget report. The point of order related to the comments made on the outcome of the election petition for the Barnhill by-election. Councillor M Butt clarified that the challenge to the by-election result had been dismissed with no criticism of the Returning Officer or Council contained in the final judgement and as a result the legal costs of all respondents having been awarded against the petitioners.

The Mayor then thanked Councillor McLennan for her comments and invited Councillor Mashari, as Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee and Budget Scrutiny Task Group, to present the findings of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group.

Councillor Mashari began by thanking the officers, members and residents who had been involved in the budget scrutiny process. She then outlined the challenging context in which it was recognised the budget had needed to be set, highlighting the consecutive and unprecedented reductions made to public services by the government coupled with the sustained growth in demand for such services. She felt it important to recognise that, despite commitments made during the pandemic to cover any extra costs incurred, central government had not done so and had instead forced councils to increase Council Tax and enforce the Adult Social Care precept. She was pleased that the Council recognised that increasing Council Tax would be difficult for some households through its efforts to resource the Council Tax Support scheme as a means of limiting the impact on the most vulnerable households.

She then advised that whilst supportive of the overall budget proposals, the Budget Scrutiny Task Group had identified a number of key findings and recommendations. These included what the Task Group had considered the need:

- to more clearly demonstrate within the budget how funding followed the democratically agreed strategic priorities for the borough;
- to outline how the £1m funding allocated for implementation of the Borough Plan objectives would be spent;

- to ensure a cumulative equality impact assessment of the final decisions made within the budget was undertaken reflecting the severe impact of the pandemic;
- for an in-depth analysis and modelling to be undertaken in order to identify the impact of the UK leaving the EU on residents, funding streams and the local economy; and
- to undertake a full and independent economic analysis of the borough ahead of future budget setting processes in order to better inform decisions.

In summing up, Councillor Mashari expressed her broad support for the budget proposals. In doing so, she ended by highlighting the Budget Scrutiny Task Group's desire to seek further assessments of the budget's impact on frontline services, to hold Budget Scrutiny Task Group meetings in public as a means of ensuring transparency and accountability and for the budget setting process to begin earlier with more focus on how spending would be allocated across the organisation.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Mashari for her comments and advised that as the opening statements had now concluded he would open up the budget proposals for general debate by other Members.

Councillor Shahzad opened the debate by praising the Council's response to the pandemic, feeling that it had set an example to other local authorities across the country. He was pleased to see that the budget included provisions to support those with mental health issues, recognising the increase demand on mental health services as a result of the pandemic. He congratulated all members and officers who had worked tirelessly throughout the year to support vulnerable residents, as well as those within the community who had also provided invaluable aid and advised that he fully supported the budget proposals.

Other members who spoke on the budget proposals were as follows:

Councillor Georgiou took the opportunity to thank those who had supported the rollout of Covid-19 vaccinations, and encouraged residents to take up the vaccine when offered. He advised that he would not be supporting the budget proposals, as he felt the proposal to increase Council Tax by 4.99% was unfair at a time in which many residents were struggling financially due to the pandemic. Referring to the alternative Liberal Democrat budget proposals which, although not included as part of the agenda pack had been circulated separately to all members in advance of the meeting, he highlighted the proposal to reduce the Council Tax increase being recommended by half whilst still funding urgent road safety repairs, enhancing the Council's enforcement capabilities and providing affordable and accessible Wi-Fi across the borough. Councillor Georgiou explained that in order to achieve a balanced budget these proposals would be funded by resourcing:

- the LLW growth from the existing LLW reserve;
- the additional spend on Personal Protective Equipment from the Public Health reserve;
- homelessness measures from the Homelessness Grant reserve;
- road safety repairs and accessible WIFI from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) reserves.

Although not formally submitted in advance of the meeting, the Mayor advised Councillor Georgiou that should he wish to do so, he would be permitted to move his alternative budget proposals as a further amendment to the budget report without notice at the meeting. The alternative budget proposals were not moved as a formal amendment at this stage of the meeting.

Councillor Johnson then spoke, praising the work of members and officers throughout the pandemic whilst recognising how the pandemic had impacted on the way the Council had needed to operate. He highlighted the additional resources that the Council had committed to the response, whilst expressing his disappointment that central government had failed to reimburse local authorities as promised. He felt that this, as well as years of centrally imposed austerity measures, had made the pandemic worse. Moving onto the housing crisis, he expressed concern about the shortfall in quality and affordable housing as well as the rise in homelessness and supported the action being taken by the Council to increase the housing supply and better regulate the private market. Support was also expressed for the commitment towards the LLW and on this basis he advised he would be supporting the budget proposals moved by the Leader.

Councillor Kabir, in also highlighting her support for the budget proposals, focussed on the disproportionate affect that the pandemic had had on disabled people, and criticised central government for cutting funding for related services in recent years. She appreciated the need to increase the allocation for the High Needs Schools Block and praised the proposed increase in employment support for adults with special educational needs.

Councillor Kennelly began by thanking the Leader of the Council, Lead Member for Community Engagement and Safety and the Metropolitan Police for their response to a recent incident in Preston ward and appealed for witnesses to come forward should they have any information. He felt that such instances served to highlight the impact which the Government's austerity measures were having not only on the police but also rehabilitation and mental health services. Turning to the budget proposals, Councillor Kennelly advised he would also be supporting the recommendations given the support they provided for the most vulnerable and lower paid residents within the borough and ended by condemning the actions of major companies in relation to their tax and employment practices and governments failure to address these.

Councillor Kelcher felt it was important to highlight the challenging nature of the budget, in light of a decade of the Government's austerity measures and impact of the pandemic. Concern was also expressed at the Government's failure to fulfil their promises to meet all additional expenditure costs incurred by local authorities arising from the response to pandemic and impact this had on the Council's budget position during 2021 and beyond. This had left local authorities with little choice but to consider raising Council Tax in order to continue supporting the essential services they were responsible for delivering with, as part of the same approach, the Council's well established Council Tax Support scheme designed to reduce the burden on those most vulnerable. Addressing the alternative budget proposals outlined by Councillor Georgiou, he felt that it would be irresponsible for the Council to use its reserves in the way that had been suggested given the financial impact and risks this would create over future years. He therefore felt that the prudent

approach recommended within the budget report was the right one to take and, on this basis advised he would also be supporting the budget proposals moved by the Leader.

Councillor Tatler, Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Property, felt it was important to highlight the excellent work of the Council and public sector in general during a challenging year. She expressed her pride at being a local councillor and in what had been achieved in response to the pandemic. In supporting the budget proposals, she outlined the Council's continued prudent and financially responsible approach despite the unfulfilled promises from Government to cover additional costs incurred due to the pandemic. She was confident that the budget would allow the Council to continue to support its high streets, provide affordable housing, support local businesses and provide affordable workspaces. She also highlighted the use of the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Strategic CIL and Section 106 funding in support of key investment in infrastructure and improving the lives of residents. It was for these reasons, Councillor Tatler advised that she would also be supporting the budget proposals moved by the Leader.

Councillor Nerva, Lead Member for Public Health, Culture and Leisure, began by thanking members for their kind words about his late father Lawrie. He then thanked all those within the community who had provided support to the most vulnerable during the pandemic, and those officers who had responded so well in challenging circumstances. He felt that the pandemic had further exposed existing health inequalities across the country and in so doing highlighted the Council's response to tackling these issues. These had included the Health Matters Programme, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the New Council Homes Programme and the use of the LLW. Concern was expressed at the lack of additional funding provided by central government to support local public health teams, however despite this he remained encouraged by the resilience and way in which local services had responded to the pandemic and continued to deliver wider improvements in public health. He also ended by highlighting his support for the budget proposals, as moved by the Leader.

Councillor Naheerathan, in response to the alternative budget proposals moved by the Conservative Group, highlighted his support for the Council seeking to extend the LLW, acknowledging its impact on those lower paid and more vulnerable local residents. He felt that the Council had no choice but to increase Council Tax in the current financial circumstances, given the vital need to support the continuation of essential services. In supporting the budget proposals, he praised the hard work of members, recognising that many had juggled a range of competing priorities whilst delivering for their residents over the last year.

Councillor Afzal began by criticising the Government for not fulfilling its promise to compensate local authorities for the additional expenditure incurred in leading on the response to the pandemic. He praised local residents for the assistance they had provided within their communities during the pandemic and expressed concern at what he felt had been the Government's failings in this respect. In supporting the budget proposals, he recognised the achievement of the Council during the pandemic which had culminated in Brent achieving the Local Government Chronicle 'Council of Year' award. He felt that the budget proposals continued to support the most vulnerable in society, and that the rise in Council Tax was unfortunately

necessary as a consequence of continued government underfunding for public services.

Councillor Stephens, as Lead member for Schools, Employment and Skills, also felt it was important to recognise how the Council had stepped up to support its residents during the pandemic. This included the provision of food and utility vouchers to disadvantaged children over school holidays, the provision of stable internet connections to ensure disadvantaged children could study from home, Kick-start employment placements for young people, employment-related advice for those who had lost their job during the pandemic, business support grants, works to establish a state-of-the-art adult education centre and targeted employment support for some of the most vulnerable residents in the borough. He felt that these actions should be recognised collectively and reflected the sacrifices across the borough that people had made to ensure an economic recovery was possible. He felt that the tough choices made within the budget were a reflection of central government's refusal to fulfil its promise to financially compensate local authorities for their pandemic-related costs, and showed that the Council was willing to do whatever it took to support residents. It was, he advised, for these reasons he would have no hesitation in supporting the budget proposals moved by the Leader.

Councillor S. Choudhary also spoke in support of the budget proposals, highlighting the need to recognise the unique circumstances in which they were having to be brought forward. There was a need, he identified, to take account of the budget having to be set amidst a worldwide pandemic and also against a decade of government austerity, both of which had greatly impacted the finances of the Council. Despite these concerns he also took the opportunity, as Chair of the Brent Pension Fund Sub Committee to highlight the ongoing positive performance of the Pension Fund given its importance to past and current Council employees. Speaking on the alternative budget proposals which had been put forward, he reminded members of the need to recognise that the financial fallout from the pandemic would be felt well into future years and commended the budget proposals moved by the Leader for having sought to take that into consideration as part of a prudent and well planned approach.

Councillor M Patel, Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care, felt that previous comments had shown the very different approaches of the political groups on the Council, especially in relation to the way they would impact on support for the borough's young people. She felt that the alternative budget proposals which had been put forward were economically unrealistic and did little to support young people. In contrast, the Administration's proposals had been designed to deliver investment in the future of young people. As specific examples, she highlighted how the proposals would enable an expansion of provision at the Gordon Brown Centre, a commitment to work more closely with the NHS to deliver integrated health services and an offer of wraparound support for Brent families through the Wellbeing Centres. She then expressed her commitment to continuing to seek additional sources of funding to support services for young people in the borough, such as through CIL. Councillor M.Patel advised that for these reasons she was also fully supportive of the budget proposals moved by the Leader and highlighting the level of support that they would provide to residents whilst retaining a financially responsible and prudent approach.

In order to enable Councillor Georgiou to clarify the position on the alternative budget proposals he had introduced earlier in the debate, the Mayor then allowed him to raise a point of order. As a result, Councillor Georgiou took the opportunity to formally move (without notice) his alternative budget proposals as he had circulated separately to all members prior to the meeting.

The Mayor then moved on to continue with the debate by inviting Councillor Mahmood to speak, who began by expressing his condolences to those residents who had lost loved ones during the pandemic. He also took the opportunity to thank all council staff who had worked so tirelessly to support those in the community hardest hit by the pandemic and also criticised central government for its handling of the pandemic, specifically highlighting its approach to the procurement of personal protective equipment and its refusal to fulfil its promise to reimburse local authorities for their additional pandemic-related costs. In supporting the budget proposals, he thanked officers and members for their hard-work in bringing them forward and expressed his pride in being part of a Council which he felt always put its residents first.

Councillor Krupa Sheth, Lead Member for Environment, also speaking in support of the budget proposals moved by the Leader, felt it was important to highlight the ongoing work of the Environment team throughout the year, which included pothole, highway and footway repairs along with completing Phase 1 of the footway programme, tackling enforcement and anti-social issues including fly-tipping as well as supporting businesses to ensure they were Covid compliant. She commended officers for the efforts made to continue providing essential services during the pandemic, with specific reference to the borough's mortuary facility. Following on from the comments made by the Leader in opening the debate she also took the opportunity to highlight the importance of the work being led by the Council in terms of development and delivery of the Climate Emergency Strategy, which also served as an example of the joined up working across the Council in order to support residents and commended the budget proposals to members.

Councillor Hylton then spoke and began by highlighting how she felt that the pandemic had exposed a range of inequalities present in society and the gradual erosion of the welfare system. She outlined the additional costs that the Council had incurred to support its vulnerable residents during the pandemic and also criticised the government for its failure to fulfil its promise to cover additional costs incurred by local authorities in leading on the response to the pandemic. With this in mind, she felt the government had not given the Council any choice and had effectively imposed the need for local authorities to seek an increase in Council Tax. She remained pleased, however, that the Council had recognised the regressive nature of Council Tax and in order to mitigate the impact on those more vulnerable residents was also seeking to provide additional resources for its Council Tax Support scheme. In view of the concerns expressed at the alternative budget proposals moved at the meeting she urged members of the Conservative Group to raise these issues with their counterparts in Government to ensure the necessary action was taken to support local authorities in protecting residents moving forward from the full financial impact of the pandemic.

Councillor Ahmed then spoke and began by taking the opportunity to thank the Mayor for his service over the past year, recognising his commitment to the borough and its residents. Moving on to the budget proposals, he felt that it was

important to recognise that the budget was being brought forward in exceptional circumstances. He felt that the Council had acted with speed and decisiveness in preparing the proposals and in its wider response to the pandemic. Councillor Ahmed also commended the Council for their efforts to distribute grants to local businesses and to ensure that essential services remained open throughout the pandemic. He thanked council staff for their hard work, and supported the additional staff payment which had been proposed. On this basis, he advised he would also be supporting the budget proposals moved by the Leader and urged all members to do the same.

Reflecting on the comments already made, Councillor Chohan also took the opportunity to criticise the Government for the budget reductions imposed on public services over the past decade, and what he felt was its failure to deliver on a string of promises to the borough's residents. In supporting the budget proposals, he felt that the Council had done well to reduce costs whilst ensuring essential services remained in place. He also praised the local support to maintain the mortuary facility within his ward and also provided by the Council for local businesses throughout the pandemic, as well as in supporting the development and capacity of Residents' Associations across the borough. He recognised the impact that the pandemic had had on residents, and in commending the budget proposals to Council praised council staff and the community for their support for the most vulnerable.

Councillor Knight, Lead Member for Community Engagement and Safety, also expressed her support for the budget proposals noting that the Administration had chosen not to propose any reduction in services provided within the Community Engagement and Safety team, despite the pressing financial challenges the Council faced. She explained that this meant that the Council would continue to deploy its Neighbourhood Patrol and Enforcement teams to areas of high crime and anti-social behaviour and deliver on key programmes to assist vulnerable residents and ensure holistic support services. In also commending the budget proposals moved by the Leader, she felt they demonstrated that the safety of the community remained a high priority for the Council.

Councillor Maurice was then invited to speak, who began by recognising the challenging time that many local residents had faced throughout the pandemic. Given the pressures created as a result, he felt that it was incumbent on local authorities to mitigate the impact any proposed increase in Council Tax would have on residents' finances. He reminded members that the maximum increase in Council Tax was an upper limit and that local authorities were not compelled to increase it by the full amount. Focussing on the Conservative Groups alternative budget proposals he felt that it would be more sensible to use the Council's financial reserves to pay for essential services rather than increase Council Tax and was pleased the Council had supported the suggestion to freeze members' allowances, which he felt was the right thing to do in light of the financial impact of the pandemic on council staff and residents. Rather than criticise, Councillor Maurice felt there was a need to praise the Government for the grant funding they had provided to support local businesses and those in financial hardship. He also felt there was a need to recognise the level of funding which had been directly provided to the Council by central government to support the response to the pandemic. For these reasons he advised that he was unable to support the budget

proposals moved by the Leader and would be supporting the alternative budget proposals moved on behalf of the Conservative Group.

Councillor Lo spoke next and in response to the comments made by Councillor Maurice felt it was important to remind members that it had been the Conservative Government who had introduced the Council Tax and failed to fulfil its promise to cover any additional costs incurred by local authorities in leading on the response to the pandemic. He also expressed regret at the approach adopted by the Conservative Group within their alternative budget proposals towards the LLW. Following Councillor Georgiou having also moved his alternative budget proposals he also highlighted disappointed at the late notification and limited ability this provided to fully scrutinise and consider their impact when compared to the work undertaken by members and officers to develop and consult on the Administration's proposals over a much longer period. On the basis of an initial review, he felt that Councillor Georgiou's alternative budget proposals were short-sighted and did not appear to be based on sound or prudent financial judgement. Councillor Lo ended by therefore urging all members to reject the alternative budget proposals which had been put forward and to support the budget proposals moved by the Leader.

Councillor Southwood, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform, was then invited to speak and began by recognising the challenging and uncertain circumstances under which the budget proposals had needed to developed and thanked officers for their efforts to bring them forward. Focussing on her portfolio she criticised the Government for its response in addressing the concerns identified in relation to cladding and for the support being provided for leaseholders in this respect. She also highlighted the positive work being undertaken by the Council to bring empty homes back into use and to increase affordable and social housing supply across the borough. In terms of welfare support, she also took the opportunity to highlight the grant funding being made available to those in financial hardship and the efforts to tackle digital exclusion amongst the most vulnerable residents. She then moved on to address the issue of Council Tax. Whilst outlining what she felt was its regressive nature, Councillor Southwood recognised its importance as one of the main sources of funding for local authorities and at the same time praised the Council Tax Support Scheme, which had been introduced and designed by the Council to mitigate the impact of any increase and support those more vulnerable residents. In summing up, she also thanked the Mayor for his work during what had been such a difficult year and also expressed her support for the budget proposals moved by the Leader which she felt showed the Council's commitment towards supporting its residents.

Councillor Dar then spoke, taking the opportunity to praise the volunteers throughout the borough who had supported vulnerable residents during the pandemic, in particular those who had been working to support food banks. He felt that these people had put themselves at risk in order to help those within their community that had been most affected by the pandemic. In supporting the budget proposals, he also ended by thanking all council staff and members for their hard work during what had been such a challenging year.

Councillor Long, also speaking in support of the budget proposals felt there was a need (as highlighted in previous comments during the debate) to recognise the increase being recommended in Council Tax had been required out of necessity. Recognising the regressive nature of the tax, which was not based on an ability to

pay but rather the value of property, she felt there was a need for the Government to consider a more progressive funding system for local authorities which would not financially burden the most vulnerable residents.

Councillor Choudry was then invited to speak. Expressing concern at the alternative budget proposals which had been moved at the meeting he felt neither had presented a meaningful or credible approach to the delivery of a balanced budget, with both failing to address the true issues faced by residents, such as cuts to public services, poverty and inequality. Responding to comments made by the Conservative Group regarding the proposed increase in Council Tax, he highlighted the Council Tax Support scheme as a means of limiting the financial burden on the most vulnerable residents. He reminded members that the Council's reserves were earmarked for specific projects or to mitigate future funding risks, and so felt it would be irresponsible to use them as proposed in Councillor Georgiou's alternative budget proposals. He felt that the Council needed to be prudent in its financial arrangements, and for this reason he advised he would be supporting the budget proposals moved by the Leader.

Continuing the debate, Councillor Chan also highlighted the impact of the Government's programme of austerity on public services over the previous decade, which he felt needed to be recognised as the context within which the budget proposals had been brought forward. He criticised the Government's decision to freeze public sector pay, whilst praising the Council for pursuing the LLW as a standard and at a time when there was a need to encourage a fairer and socially equitable approach to fund the interventions made to provide support throughout the pandemic. In supporting the budget proposals, he ended by highlighting the importance in members continuing to push for the provision of adequate funding from the Government in order to support the most vulnerable in society.

Councillor S Butt was then invited to speak and also took the opportunity to thank all council staff and healthcare workers for their response throughout the pandemic, recognising that many had needed to be reassigned to unfamiliar roles. He outlined how the budget proposals had been developed involving members, officers and residents and criticised the alternative budget proposals put forward at the meeting for not going through a similarly rigorous process. As with previous comments Councillor S. Butt advised he was saddened to note the Conservative Group's opposition to the proposal to pursue the LLW as standard at a time in which many were struggling financially. In summing up, he again expressed support for the budget proposals and commended the Council's response throughout the pandemic which had gained national recognition and, in doing so, paid tribute to the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive for the leadership they had shown.

Following on, Councillor Sangani also took the opportunity to thank members, particularly within her ward, for the help and support provided for local residents during the pandemic along with those residents who had also stepped forward to support one another. She encouraged members to remember how many residents were struggling financially in the borough, and felt saddened to note that the Conservative Group had proposed to remove the growth for the LLW. In supporting the budget proposals, she outlined the Council's commitment to supporting residents through difficult times whilst recognising the scale of the task ahead, and thanked all those involved for the Council's response to the pandemic.

Councillor Mitchell-Murray then spoke and took the opportunity to highlight specific examples of the positive use of Neighbourhood CIL to fund initiatives across the borough, with a particular focus on support for young people. She praised the positive culture that had been fostered between council staff and members, and in commending the budget proposals expressed her pride in the work that the Council was undertaking on behalf of its residents.

As a final contribution to the debate, Councillor Hirani felt it was important to highlight the pressure faced by many local authorities as a result of the impact of the pandemic and also the Governments' programme of austerity over the last decade. Given these challenges, he pointed out that most local authorities were having to consider an increase in Council Tax as a means of securing the funding that would be required to enable the continued provision of essential services. Whilst recognising the impact of this, he also commended the Council Tax Support scheme which had been established and supported by the Council as a means of being able to support those more vulnerable residents and highlighted that a majority of the proposed increase would be ring fenced for adult social care. In concluding his statement, Councillor Hirani felt it was important (prior to any votes being taken) to also seek clarification from the Director of Finance as to whether the alternative budget proposals moved by Councillor Georgiou at the meeting were legal, and would result in a balanced budget for the 2021/22 financial year. This request for further advice was also supported by Councillor Kelcher.

Having been invited by the Mayor to respond, the Director of Finance advised that that whilst the proposed amendments would provide a legally balanced budget for 2021-22 there was also a need to note they would carry a significant ongoing financial risk.

In response to a further request by the Mayor for clarification on the alternative budget proposals being moved, Councillor Georgiou advised that these would only relate to the revenue and not capital proposals he had circulated in advance of the meeting.

Prior to inviting the Leader to sum up and close the debate, the Mayor permitted the following comments to be made on the clarification provided by Councillor Georgiou regarding the alternative budget proposals he had moved.

Councillor M Butt felt it was important to recognise that any claimed reduction in the level of Council Tax would not be entirely within the control of the Council given the need to include the precept set by the Mayor for London.

Councillor Maurice, also felt this element of the alternative budget proposals moved by Councillor Georgiou had been unrealistic, with concern also expressed by Councillor Choudry that the alternative budget proposals were not financially coherent and would carry significant future financial risk.

Having concluded the debate the Mayor thanked all members for their contributions and then invited Councillor M Butt to sum up and respond to the points raised.

In response to the debate, Councillor M Butt began by thanking all members for their contributions at the meeting. In terms of the alternative budget proposals moved at the meeting he expressed concern at the approach adopted by the

Conservative Group towards removal of the proposed growth to support extending the LLW as standard and also at their failure to support the landlord incentive scheme. Moving on to Councillor Georgiou's alternative budget proposals, concern was expressed at their late submission and what was felt to be a lack of understanding regarding the workings of local government finance, use of reserves and ongoing impact they would have on the Council's ongoing financial position.

In contrast, he felt the Administration's budget proposals showed a commitment to protecting and supporting residents in the borough by delivering affordable housing and community spaces and tackling climate change, inequalities and poverty. Whilst recognising the difficult nature of the choices to be made given their impact on local residents and the borough he remained proud that the Labour Administration were seeking to continue defending, protecting and where possible enhancing services for local residents and those most in need and reminded members that the budget proposals had been designed to provide stability following a year of challenge. On this basis he ended by once again commending the budget to Council.

At this stage in proceedings, the Mayor advised that as the remaining time available for the meeting was shortly due to expire he would be moving the suspension of Standing Order 44 (Council Guillotine Procedure) in order to extend the time of the meeting by 30 minutes and enable the conclusion of the budget report and remaining items on the agenda. In accordance with Standing Order 42 (d) the procedural motion was put to the vote without further discussion and **AGREED**.

The Mayor then advised that this now concluded the debate on the budget and he would therefore be moving to the vote on the alternative budget proposals and then (subject to any amendments agreed) the recommended budget moved by Councillor M.Butt. As the recommendations to be considered related to the budget setting process he reminded Members that, in accordance with Standing Order 43, these would all need to be subject to a recorded vote.

On a recorded vote being taken the budget proposals, as moved by Councillor M.Butt were declared **CARRIED**.

Accordingly it was **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Agree an overall 4.99% increase in the Council's element of Council Tax for 2020/21, with 3% as a precept for Adult Social Care and a 1.99% general increase.
- (2) Agree the General Fund revenue budget for 2021/22, as summarised in Appendix A of the report.
- (3) Agree the cost pressures and technical adjustments detailed in Appendix B of the report.
- (4) Agree the budget savings proposals detailed in Appendix C of the report.
- (5) Note the report from the Budget Scrutiny Panel in Appendix D of the report.
- (6) Agree the HRA budget for 2021/22, as set out in section seven of this report.

- (7) Agree the Dedicated Schools' Grant as set out in section eight of this report.
- (8) Agree the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix E of the report.
- (9) Agree the Capital Strategy, the Investment Strategy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement as set out in Appendices G, H, I and J of the report.
- (10) Agree the schedule of reserves, as set out in Appendix K of the report.
- (11) Agree the schedule of fees and charges as set out in Appendix L of the report.
- (12) Note the results of the budget consultation as set out in section six and detailed in Appendix M of the report.
- (13) Note the advice of the Director of Legal, HR, Audit and Investigations as set out in Appendix N of the report.
- (14) Agree the Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22 as set out in Appendix O of the report (including the additional wording set out in paragraph 9.2 of the report) and the payments to which it refers.

### **Council Tax recommendations**

These recommendations only include a provisional Council Tax level for the GLA as its final budget was not agreed when this report was despatched. This means that the statutory calculation of the total amount of Council Tax under Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 cannot be carried out until the final GLA precept has been received.

- (15) In relation to the Council Tax for 2021/22 we resolve:

That the following amounts be now calculated as the Council's element by the Council for the year 2021/22 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended:

- (a) £1,036,468,015 being the aggregate of the amount that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.
- (b) £900,778,354 being the aggregate of the amounts that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
- (c) £135,689,697 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year.
- (d) £1,378.26 being the amount at (c) above, divided by the amount for the tax base of 98,450, agreed by the General Purposes Committee on the 7 December 2020, calculated by the

Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

(e) Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
918.84	1,071.98	1,225.12	1,378.26	1,684.54	1,990.82	2,297.10	2,756.52

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (d) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

- (16) That it be noted that for the year 2021/22 the proposed GLA precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, in respect of the GLA, for each of the categories of dwellings are as shown below. The GLA intends to agree its precept on 25 February 2021.

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
242.44	282.85	323.25	363.66	444.47	525.29	606.10	727.32

- (17) That the Council establishes a Council Tax setting committee, to set the Council Tax for the year 2021/22, in accordance with section 67(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and agrees the terms of reference, size and political composition as set out in Appendix P of the report.
- (18) That the Council appoints Councillors to serve on the Council Tax setting committee and appoints a chair and vice-chair of the Council Tax setting committee (please refer to Minute \*\*\* below).
- (19) That the special Council Tax setting committee meet as soon as possible after 25 February 2021 to allow Council Tax notices to be issued in line with the normal statutory timetable.
- (20) That it be noted that the Director of Finance has determined that the Council element of the basic amount of Council Tax for 2021/22 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

- (a) That the Director of Finance be and is hereby authorised to give due notice of the said Council Tax in the manner provided by Section 38(2) of the 1992 Act.
- (b) That the Director of Finance be and is hereby authorised when necessary to apply for a summons against any Council Tax payer or non-domestic ratepayer on whom an account for the said tax or rate and any arrears has been duly served and who has failed to pay the amounts due to take all subsequent necessary action to recover them promptly.
- (c) That the Director of Finance be and is hereby authorised to collect revenues and distribute monies from the Collection Fund and is authorised to borrow or to lend money in accordance with the regulations to the maximum benefit of each fund.

Prior to the above recommendations being approved, the two alternative budget proposals moved as amendments to the budget report by firstly the Conservative Group and secondly Councillor Georgiou, were put to the vote and declared **LOST**.

The voting recorded on the first amendment moved by the Conservative Group in the form of their alternative budget proposals was as follows:

For the Amendment (3): Councillors Colwill, Kansagra and Maurice

Against the Amendment (54): Councillors Abdi, Afzal, Agha, Ahmed, Akram, M. Butt, S. Butt, Chan, Chappell, Chohan, S Choudhary, Choudry, Crane, Daly, Dar, Denselow, Dixon, Donnelly-Jackson, Ethapemi, Farah, Gbajumo, Georgiou, Gill, Hassan, Hector, Hirani, Hylton, Johnson, Kabir, Kelcher, Kennelly, Knight, Lloyd, Lo, Long, Mahmood, Mashari, McLennan, Miller, Mitchell-Murray, Murray, Naheerathan, Nerva, M. Patel, Perrin, Sangani, Shah, Shahzad, Ketan Sheth, Krupa Sheth, Southwood, Stephens, Tatler and Thakkar

Post meeting note: Councillor R. Patel has subsequently confirmed he also intended to vote against this amendment but was unable to do so due to technical issues experienced on the night.

Abstentions to the Amendment (2): Councillors Ezeajughi (Mayor) and Colacicco (Deputy Mayor)

Having been moved by Councillor Georgiou without notice at the meeting, Council agreed to accept a second amendment for consideration in the form of the alternative revenue budget proposals he had circulated in advance of the meeting. In considering the amendment Council also noted the advice from the Director of Finance that whilst the proposed amendments would provide a legally balanced budget for 2021-22 they would also carry significant ongoing financial risk. The voting recorded on the second amendment was as follows:

For the Amendment (1): Councillor Georgiou.

Against the Amendment (54): Councillors Abdi, Afzal, Agha, Ahmed, Akram, M. Butt, S. Butt, Chan, Chappell, Chohan, S Choudhary, Choudry, Colwill, Crane, Daly, Dar, Denselow, Dixon, Donnelly-Jackson, Ethapemi, Farah, Gbajumo, Gill, Hassan,

Hirani, Hylton, Johnson, Kabir, Kansagra, Kelcher, Kennelly, Knight, Lo, Long, Mahmood, Mashari, Maurice, McLennan, Miller, Mitchell-Murray, Murray, Naheerathan, Nerva, M.Patel, Perrin, Sangani, Shah, Shahzad, Ketan Sheth, Krupa Sheth, Southwood, Stephens, Tatler and Thakkar

Post meeting note: Councillors Hector, Lloyd and R.Patel have subsequently confirmed that they also intended to vote against the amendment but were unable to do so due to technical issues experienced on the night.

Abstentions to the Amendment (2): Councillors Ezeajughi (Mayor) and Colacicco (Deputy Mayor)

The substantive recommendations, as detailed above, were then put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**. The voting recorded was as follows:

For (51): Councillors Abdi, Afzal, Agha, Ahmed, Akram, M.Butt, S.Butt, Chan, Chappell, Chohan, S Choudhary, Choudry, Crane, Daly, Dar, Denselow, Dixon, Donnelly-Jackson, Ethapemi, Farah, Gbajumo, Hassan, Hector, Hirani, Hylton, Johnson, Kabir, Kelcher, Kennelly, Knight, Lo, Long, Mahmood, Mashari, McLennan, Miller, Mitchell-Murray, Murray, Naheerathan, Nerva, M.Patel, Perrin, Sangani, Shah, Shahzad, Ketan Sheth, Krupa Sheth, Southwood, Stephens, Tatler and Thakkar

Post meeting note: Councillors Lloyd and R.Patel have subsequently confirmed that they also intended to vote for the substantive recommendations but were unable to do so due to technical issues experienced on the night.

Against (4): Councillors Colwill, Georgiou, Kansagra and Maurice

Abstain (3): Councillors Ezeajughi (Mayor), Colacicco (Deputy Mayor) and Gill.

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

In accordance with the change in the order of business agreed at the start of the meeting, the Mayor then referred members to the list of changes to be considered in relation to appointments on Council Committees, Sub Committees and other bodies.

As a result, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the appointment of the following members to the newly established Council Tax Setting Committee:

Labour Group: Councillors M Butt, McLennan Krupa Sheth and Stephens to be appointed as full members

Councillor Nerva to be appointed as substitute member

Conservative Group: Councillor Kansagra to be appointed as full member

Councillors Colwill and Maurice to be appointed as substitute members

## 10. **Borough Plan 2021-2022**

The Mayor then moved on to deal with the remaining items on the agenda and started by inviting Councillor McLennan, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, to introduce the report from the Assistant Chief Executive presenting a refresh of the Borough Plan.

In introducing the item, Councillor McLennan advised that the report outlined a refocussed set of strategic priorities and actions against the key objectives and vision originally agreed as part of the Borough Plan. These refocussed priorities reflected the work delivered on each of the priority areas and objectives over the previous year as well as setting out the priorities for the next year. The refresh had also sought to draw on the experience of tackling the challenges over the last year and included actions to address key cross-cutting issues such as homelessness, reducing health inequalities, providing youth opportunities, the climate emergency and delivery of training and support. She also advised that the refreshed plan reflected the draft Equality Strategy Action Plan 2021-22 which had been updated following consultation.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak, the Mayor then put the recommendations in the report to the vote and they were declared **CARRIED**.

Accordingly, Council **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To adopt the Borough Plan attached as Appendix 1 of the report and note the Equality Strategy Action Plan attached as Appendix 2 of the report.
- (2) To refer the Borough Plan to Cabinet for monitoring.

## 11. **Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2020-2021**

The Mayor then invited Councillor McLennan, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, to introduce the report from the Director of Finance updating members on Treasury Management activity for the first half of the 2020/21 financial year. Members noted that the report had also been considered and agreed by the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee on 8 December and Cabinet on 7 December 2020 who had agreed to refer it on to Council for consideration in compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

As part of her introduction, Councillor McLennan drew members' attention to the policy announcement which had been included within the Chancellor's recent Budget statement regarding changes to the Housing Revenue Account borrowing rates. Members were advised this supported the overall approach outlined within the report in terms of the Council seeking to take advantage of lower cost borrowing solutions as part of its strategy in relation to Treasury and Debt management.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak, the Mayor then put the recommendations in the report to the vote and they were unanimously declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to note the 2020-21 Mid-Year Treasury report in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code).

## 12. **Members Allowance Scheme - Annual Review**

Moving on, the Mayor then invited Councillor M Butt, Leader of the Council, to introduce the report from the Assistant Chief Executive which sought approval to the proposed Members Allowance Scheme for the 2021/22 financial year.

In introducing the report, Councillor M Butt advised that in view of the public sector pay freeze announced by the Government for 2021/22 it had been recommended that no annual uplift be applied to the level of basic, special responsibility or civic allowances contained within the Members Allowance Scheme for 2021/22. As a result of the decisions made on the budget, he also reminded members that the Council had now agreed to provide staff with an additional one-off payment of £500 (pro-rata for part time staff) in recognition of their hard work throughout the pandemic.

Having noted that no changes were being recommended to the level of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) during 2021/22 Councillor Kansagra, in responding to the report on behalf of the Conservative Group, was keen to ensure that a further review of SRAs was undertaken by the Constitution Working Group in advance of the next review and Borough elections in May 2022.

As no further members indicated they wished to speak, the Mayor then put the recommendations in the report to the vote and they were unanimously declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To make a Members' Allowance Scheme in the proposed terms set out in the report for the financial year 2021/22.
- (2) To authorise the Director of Legal, HR Audit & Investigations to comply with the statutory requirements to publicise the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme.

## 13. **Changes to the Constitution**

As the final item of business listed on the agenda, the Mayor then invited Councillor M Butt, Leader of the Council to introduce the report from the Director of Legal, HR Audit and Investigations detailing minor changes to the Council's Constitution. Councillor M. Butt in introducing the report advised the changes related to the requisitioning of Extraordinary Council meetings and provisions within the Code of Conduct.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak, the Mayor then put the recommendations in the report to the vote and they were declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the changes to the Constitution as set out within the report which related to the introduction of a protocol for the requisitioning of Extraordinary Council meetings and minor changes to the Members Code of Conduct.

- (2) To authorise the Director of Legal and HR Services to amend the Constitution accordingly, including making any necessary incidental or consequential changes.

#### 14. **Urgent Business**

The Mayor advised Members there were no urgent items of business for consideration.

As this was his final Council business meeting as Mayor, Councillor Ezeajughi thanked members for their support and cooperation throughout his time as Mayor and particularly over what had been such a challenging and unprecedented last year for the borough. He also paid tribute to the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Colacicco for her mayoral support and advised that the next meeting would be the Annual Council meeting. He then closed the meeting and urged all members to take care and stay safe.

The meeting closed at 7:20pm

COUNCILLOR ERNEST EZEAJUGHI  
Mayor