



## LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

**Minutes of the ORDINARY (BUDGET SETTING) MEETING OF THE COUNCIL  
held in the Grand Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Thursday 24 February 2022 at  
5.00 pm**

### **PRESENT:**

**The Worshipful the Mayor**  
Lia Colacicco

**The Deputy Mayor**  
Councillor Abdi Aden

### **COUNCILLORS:**

Afzal	Agha
Ahmed	Akram
M Butt	S Butt
Chan	Chappell
S Choudhary	A Choudry
Colwill	Conneely
Daly	Dar
Dixon	Ethapemi
Ezeajughi	Farah
Gbjumo	Georgiou
Grahl	Hassan
Hirani	Hylton
Johnson	Kabir
Kansagra	Kelcher
Kennelly	Knight
Long	Mahmood
Mashari	Maurice
McLeish	McLennan
Miller	W Mitchell Murray
Naheerathan	Nerva
M Patel	Sangani
Shahzad	Ketan Sheth
Krupa Sheth	Southwood
Stephens	Tatler
Thakkar	

#### **1. Mayor's Introductory Statement**

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

## **2. Mayors Statement - Order of Business**

Before consideration of the formal agenda, the Mayor informed members of a change to the order of business. Given the attendance of Paul Dossett (Grant Thornton) as the Council's External Auditor, for the External Audit Annual Report, she advised of the intention to move the order of items so that this report (listed as Agenda Item 7) was considered in advance of the main Budget and Council Tax report for 2022-2023.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

- (1) The business to be considered at the meeting be re-arranged in the following order:
  - Agenda Item 6 – Auditors Annual Report on the London Borough of Brent

The remaining items of business to then follow in the same order as listed on 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 she 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.

As a result it was **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 be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes;
  - (c) The Co-Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group 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, recorded votes on any amendments to the budget proposals and then the final substantive budget proposals be taken in turn with the recommendations taken *en bloc*.

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

The Mayor reported that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Chohan, Crane, Denselow, Donnelly-Jackson, Hector, Lloyd, Lo, Ramesh Patel, Perrin & Shah.

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

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 22 November 2021 be approved as a correct record.

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

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

#### **7. Mayor's Announcements (including Council Statement on Ukraine)**

Prior to her formal announcements, the Mayor drew Members attention to the statement which had been tabled at the meeting seeking, on behalf of the Council, to condemn the actions of the Russian Federation in relation to the disturbing events witnessed in Ukraine immediately prior to the meeting and expressing solidarity with all those affected. Members noted and welcomed the lighting up of the Civic Centre in the colours of the Ukrainian flag, as a further gesture of support and solidarity.

Given the strength of feeling on the issue, the Mayor advised she would be willing to allow a representative from each political group to speak on the situation, starting with Councillor Kelcher on behalf of the Labour Group.

Councillor Klecher began by thanking the Mayor, Chief Executive and everyone else involved for their efforts to ensure it had been possible to table the statement at such short notice for discussion at the meeting. Referring to the full scale invasion of Ukraine which had been launched by Russia, in defiance of international law and the commitments under the Minsk Accord, he welcomed the statement which had been tabled at the meeting condemning the invasion and expressing solidarity with the people of Ukraine. The statement also demanded the immediate withdrawal of Russian military forces, with Councillor Kelcher highlighting significant concern at the previous treatment of Ukraine by Russia and importance in Ukraine, as a sovereign state, being able to maintain its independent status rather than fall under Russian dominance and control. In supporting the demands on the UK Government to impose the harshest possible sanctions on the Russian Federation, Councillor Kelcher ended by highlighting the diverse nature of Brent, which included citizens who had been welcomed from other occupied nations around the world and hoped this would encourage everyone to support the Council's message of solidarity to the people of Ukraine.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Kansagra to speak on behalf of the Opposition Group. Also speaking in support of the statement, Councillor Kansagra highlighted

the longstanding build up of Russian military forces in the region and need for more powerful sanctions to be imposed on the Russian Federation in response to the invasion and violation of international law. Recognising the anguish of all those affected, he advised the Conservative Group also fully supported the Council's message of solidarity with the people of Ukraine and hoped for a peaceful outcome to the conflict.

The Mayor thanked both members for their contribution and as a result it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the following statement tabled at the meeting condemning the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine and expressing solidarity with all those affected living within Ukraine:

"Brent Council:

- recognises that Ukraine is a sovereign, independent state with the right to self determination.
- condemns the Russian Federation's incursion into sovereign Ukrainian territory in violation of international law and their treaty obligations under the Minsk Protocol of 2014.
- demands that the Russian President, Vladimir Putin pull back his forces, desists from a full scale invasion of Ukraine, and withdraws his unilateral and unjustified recognition of the so called People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk.
- sends its solidarity to the people of Ukraine who will be suffering unimaginable anguish and horror at the recent turn of events.
- demands that the UK government imposes the harshest possible sanctions on the Russian Federation to undermine their ability to keep a large army or occupation force in the field."

The Mayor then moved on to make the following announcements:

(i) New Years Honours List 2022

The Mayor began her announcements by congratulating all those associated with Brent who had received an honour in the Queens New Year Honours list for 2022. These included:

- Jennifer Ogle from Bang Edutainment, who had received an OBE for services to young people.
- Jayne Jardine from The Rise Partnership who had received a MBE, for services to Education and SEND.
- Jason Swettenham from the Prison industry who had received an MBE for services to sport.

- Rajesh Makwana (Sufra NW London) and Stephen Chamberlain (St Laurence's Larder and Open Kitchen) who had both received a British Empire Medal for services to the community.
- Willesden Green's Baroness Valerie Amos, a Labour member of the House of Lords, who the Mayor was proud to announce had been the first Black person appointed to the Order of the Garter.

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

(ii) Holocaust and Genocide Memorial Day event 2022

The Mayor advised she had been privileged to attend an online event commemorating Holocaust and Genocide Memorial Day. She urged everyone when remembering the victims to consider how they could stand against hate and discrimination in order to ensure it was no longer tolerated and to prevent such atrocities from happening again in the future. Thanks were extended to all those involved in organising the event.

(iii) Tribute to councillors not standing in the Borough Election

As this was the last scheduled Full Council meeting of the Municipal Year and current Administration, the Mayor took the opportunity to pay tribute to those Members who would not be standing in the local borough elections in May 2022.

Highlighting how being a councillor could be one of the most thankless but also rewarding tasks, she thanked those not standing for their public service, recognising the dedication in serving their communities and commitment to the people of Brent.

The Mayor felt that those Members should all be proud of their achievements, whether having served for one or several terms of office and took the opportunity, on behalf of the Council, to wish them well for the future.

Given the fact that a number of Members would not be standing for re-election, the Mayor advised she had agreed to allow one representative from each political group to speak in tribute to those councillors.

Speaking on behalf of the Labour Group, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) highlighted the commitment and civic duty demonstrated by members in serving and representing their local communities and paid tribute to those Members not standing for re-election for the valued contribution they had made towards the borough along with the legacy created during their time in office. Wishing those members not continuing all the best for the future, it was hoped they would still continue to play an active role within their local communities. In concluding his remarks, Councillor Butt took the opportunity to pay specific tribute and thanks to Councillor Reg Colwill who would be stepping back following many years of service on the Council highlighting his compassion, friendship and the commitment demonstrated to local residents and the communities he had represented whilst serving as a member of the Council.

Councillor Kansagra was then invited to speak on behalf of the Conservative Group and also took the opportunity to thank those councillors not standing for their dedication, commitment and public service with specific tribute paid to Councillor Crane as another long serving member on the Council. Thanking Councillor Butt for his comments in tribute to Councillor Colwill, he echoed the sentiments expressed highlighting Councillor Colwill's role in championing the needs of residents and various organisations he had been appointed to represent during his time in office. He ended by highlighting the privilege he felt at having been able to serve alongside Councillor Colwill and by wishing him well in his retirement.

(iv) Mayor's Charity Gala Dinner

Moving on, the Mayor took the opportunity to remind Members that she would be holding her Charity Gala dinner on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March at Brent Civic Centre. It was hoped that as many Members as possible could attend in support of the Mayors Charities.

(v) Relaunch of Community Grants Schemes

Referring to the range of grants available from the Council to support community projects and organisations, the Mayor drew Members attention to the information pack which had been tabled at the meeting containing specific details and materials relating to the upcoming relaunch of the Edward Harvist and Love Where you Live grant schemes. Members were encouraged to share these details within their communities, which the Mayor advised officers would also be promoting across the borough.

(vi) Petitions

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

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

The Mayor referred members to the list of changes circulated in relation to appointments to Council Committees, Sub Committees and other bodies.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the following changes in the membership of Committee and Outside Bodies:

- (1) Councillor Mili Patel to be replaced as a full member and Chair of the Corporate Parenting Committee by Councillor McLennan (with Council having noted her appointment as Interim Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care).
- (2) Councillor Mitchell-Murray to be replaced as a full member of the Brent Pension Fund Sub Committee by a vacancy. (NB this will be subject to confirmation by General Purposes Committee on 7 March 22).

- (3) Councillor Mitchell- Murray to be replaced as a substitute member on both the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee and Audit & Standards Committee by a vacancy.

## 9. Auditor's Annual Report on the London Borough of Brent

Having agreed to the change in the order of business, the Mayor invited Paul Dossett (Grant Thornton) as the Council's External Auditor to introduce the report from the Chief Executive presenting the External Audit Annual Report on Value for Money (VFM).

In introducing the report, Paul Dossett outlined the revised approach towards the VFM audit introduced by the National Audit Office as part of their new Code of Audit Practice for 2020-21 and drew Members attention to the positive nature of the process and key findings detailed within the Annual Report.

The Mayor then opened the debate inviting other members to speak on the report.

Councillor McLennan (as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources) welcomed the report and felt it was important to recognise the positive nature of the findings identified in relation to the Council's VFM arrangements. In highlighting the forensic and transparent nature of the audit process, she also took the opportunity to thank Paul Dossett and his team for the way in which they had conducted the audit.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak the Mayor then invited Paul Dossett to respond with any final comments prior to consideration of the item being concluded. In responding, Paul Dossett, drew Members attention to the Executive Summary within the Annual Report and confirmed that no significant weakness had been identified in relation to the three main areas reviewed as part of the audit. These had been focussed around the Council's Financial Sustainability; Governance and arrangements for securing and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Whilst a number of recommendations had been identified, these had related to further improvements on which it was confirmed management responses had already been provided. In commending the report to Council, he once again highlighted the positive outcome of the audit and expressed thanks to all those involved in supporting the process.

The Mayor then put the recommendation in the report to the vote and they were unanimously declared **CARRIED**.

Council therefore **RESOLVED** to note the External Auditor's Annual Report on Value for Money as part of the 2020/21 audit of the year end accounts.

## 10. Budget and Council Tax 2022/2023

The Mayor then moved on to receive the report from the Director of Finance setting out the Council's budget proposals for 2022-23. 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, as Leader of the Council, to introduce the report.

Councillor M Butt began by thanking members, officers, the public and other stakeholders for their involvement in the consultation and preparation of the budget. Highlighting that the proposals presented another balanced budget he felt they not only set out a fair and responsible approach but also one that would continue to make a difference for residents across Brent in terms of the aspirations for continued growth and opportunity not only in the coming year but also beyond.

Commenting on the alternative budget proposals presented by the Opposition Group he felt it important to outline the risks identified when compared to the ambitious but responsible budget presented by the Labour Administration, which had been designed to not only provide value for money but also remove the barriers to enable residents to access opportunities and ensure no one was left behind. Referring to the budget proposals set out within the report, Councillor M. Butt highlighted these included no additional reductions beyond the £2.7m approved as part of the 2021-22 budget, along with an unprecedented level of capital investment made possible as a result of the prudent stewardship and commitment of the Administration, despite the challenges of austerity and the pandemic. He was also proud of the additional support being provided through the Council Tax Support Scheme and Resident Support Fund which, as a result of the effective management of the Council's finances, had meant Brent was able to offer one of the most generous packages of support within London for its most vulnerable residents and in order to fill the gaps created as a result of the ongoing funding restrictions being imposed by central government.

In referencing how the budget would support and improve the lives of Brent residents, Councillor M Butt advised of the ambitions included within the budget for the future for Brent residents. These included:

- Work to deliver a £15m programme of investment and repairs on Brent's priority roads and pavements following the winter season with it noted that over 1000 pot holes had already been filled over the last year.
- Continuing the progress being achieved through delivery of the New Council Homes Programme with over 1000 safe, secure and affordable homes already being delivered and additional funding to tackle homelessness and reduce the reliance on temporary accommodation.
- A commitment to rebuild and reimagine local neighbourhoods to create safe inviting spaces that were fit for the future and residents across the borough.
- The roll out of Brent's innovative Digital Strategy, which would include development of the Council's website and the provision of devices and internet access for digitally excluded households along with training and support.

Councillor M Butt continued by highlighting the current administration's track record for leading effective change that had made a positive impact on residents. This included Brent's commitment to decarbonisation, the success of the Brent Black Community Action Plan, Brent Heath Matters and the investment of £44m to expand and upgrade Brent schools that would include the provision of 427 new places for SEN pupils. In order to harness the potential of local people and change lives for the better, he also highlighted the significant level of funding being provided to support local businesses and provide opportunities for Brent residents

to access education, training and qualifications through the Brent Start programme. As the Council emerged from the pandemic he also outlined the Council's evolving plans, as set out within the capital programme and pipeline, which included delivery of an Adult Education Centre of Excellence at Morland Gardens, the commitment to continue building new Council homes, plans to invest further in fire safety across the housing stock and within town centres in order to level up the boroughs high streets.

Turning then to focus on the alternative budget submitted by the Opposition Group Councillor M Butt highlighted his disappointment at what he felt to be the lack of a responsible and reasonable alternative budget and lack of awareness with regard to the current impact of the cost of living crisis on local residents, which had been further exacerbated by the programme of austerity and funding restrictions being imposed by the Conservative Government resulting in a real term funding reduction over the previous four years of £80m. Whilst unwelcome, it had been necessary to propose an increase in Council Tax reflecting that until central government changed the way in which local government was funded, this remained the council's primary source of funding in order to ensure residents were able to continue receiving the services they relied upon. Concern was also expressed in relation to the proposal to remove the funding set aside to cover the payment of the London Living Wage on new contracts within the Opposition's alternative budget which it was felt demonstrated how far the Opposition were out of touch with the impact of the current cost of living crisis.

As an alternative and in summing up, Councillor M Butt advised that the Administration in presenting its budget proposals had recognised and sought to respond to the needs and aspirations of local residents across Brent which would not only fuel ambition but also deliver opportunities and a fairer future for all. On this basis he urged the Opposition Group to consider withdrawing their alternative budget proposals and commended the budget, as set out in the report, to all members for approval.

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

Councillor Kansagra began by thanking the Director and Deputy Director of Finance for their assistance in formulating the alternative budget proposals which had been submitted by the Conservative Group. In presenting the alternative proposals he began by highlighting concerns regarding the basis and fairness of the proposed 2.99% increase in Council Tax included within the budget recommended by the Leader on behalf of the current Labour Administration. Commenting on the impact arising from the increase in Council Tax within Brent since 2016, he advised that the Conservative Group, in maintaining their stance as the party of low taxation, had proposed a lower alternative increase of 1% which would be ring fenced for Adult Social Care and would alleviate the current pressures on household budgets. In order to fund this measure and secure a balanced budget he then outlined the additional proposals being recommended by the Conservative Group, which included:

- Removing the proposed growth to support the London Living Wage, which he advised would result in a saving of £1.5m. In presenting this proposal Councillor Kansagra highlighted that whilst supportive of the National

Minimum Wage the Conservative Group also believed in fair wages for fair work.

- Removal of the landlord incentive scheme to achieve a saving of £1.8m. In commenting on this proposal, Councillor Kansagra highlighted the Conservative Groups concern at the impact of the scheme on the housing rental market and at incentivising landlords to provide accommodation for those who ordinarily would have been unable to afford to live in the borough. Given that many ordinary working households had needed to move out of the borough in order to find somewhere affordable to live, he queried the nature of the scheme in seeking to subsidise landlords in this way and felt that those requiring housing as an alternative to temporary accommodation could, where appropriate, be moved out of borough to areas that were more affordable and where they could be more easily accommodated. Whilst acknowledging the potential risk identified by the Director of Finance in this approach, given the potential impact in higher temporary accommodation costs should it not be possible to secure alternative housing outside of the borough, the Conservative Group felt this would be mitigated by the longer term potential to drive down rent levels across the borough
- The deletion of a Cabinet Member post, saving £20k. In presenting this proposal, Councillor Kansagra highlighted the cross over between certain Cabinet Member remits and current vacancy on Cabinet. As a result it was felt the saving could be achieved by merging the existing Cabinet remits covering Environment, Regeneration, Property & Planning.
- Use of a proportion of the New Homes Bonus to balance and support the General Fund element of the revenue budget.

In commanding and formally moving the Conservative Groups alternative budget proposals, Councillor Kansagra ended by highlighting that the proposals had been assessed as producing a legally balanced budget which he felt would also provide a common sense approach as well as further opportunities for investment in council services. Prior to ending, he also took the opportunity, given the previous rhetoric expressed by the Leader, to remind members about the £40m of support which had been made available to the Council by central government in response to the covid pandemic. These had been in addition to initiatives such as the Furlough Scheme and he queried why the full level of funding provided had not been utilised by the Council along with the approach adopted by the Administration in relation to the overall use of the Council's balances and reserves.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Kansagra for his comments and for moving the alternative budget proposals and then invited Councillor McLennan, as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources, Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care 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 for their efforts and support in preparing the budget proposals, which she advised would not only continue to ensure value for money but would also meet the needs and aspirations of residents across the borough. In recognising the impact of the pandemic, she highlighted her pride at the way Council staff, members, local resident groups and the voluntary and community sector had come together with other key stakeholders in order to support those most vulnerable residents and was pleased that despite the significant difficulties experienced this had also presented opportunities to build

stronger relationships with residents and community support groups. In discussing the budget, Councillor McLennan outlined the carefully planned and prudent approach undertaken in formulating the budget proposals and in terms of managing the Council's finances. As a result, and despite 10 years of Conservative Government austerity, it had still been possible to extend the generous package of assistance being made available to support the most vulnerable residents. Referring to the debate earlier in the meeting, she also reminded members how the robustness of the Council's financial arrangements had been recognised independently through the External Audit process, whilst also commending the balanced nature of the budget which had been recommended given the challenges identified as a result of the Government's current approach towards the funding of local government.

In addressing the proposed increase in council tax, Councillor McLennan expressed regret that an increase would be necessary, however given the cuts in funding received from central government she felt local authorities had little choice but to consider raising Council Tax in order to continue supporting the essential services relied on by so many residents, especially given the impact of the governments approach towards addressing the cost of living crisis.

In commanding the budget to Council, Councillor McLennan ended by reminding members of the detailed consultation and scrutiny which the budget proposals had been subject to, along with the prudent approach adopted by the Administration in relation to the use of balances and reserves in order to protect the provision of essential services to residents. On this basis she also urged members to reject the alternative budget proposals moved by the Conservative Group, with specific concerns identified in relation to their approach towards the landlord incentive scheme and managing the location of households within temporary accommodation.

The Mayor thanked Councillor McLennan for her comments and as the final contribution prior to opening up the debate then invited Councillor Ketan Sheth, as Co-Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group, to present the key themes within the Budget Scrutiny Task Group report, which had been included as an appendix to the Budget and Council Tax 2022/23 report.

Councillor Ketan Sheth began by thanking Councillor Mashari and other members of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group for their support in undertaking the scrutiny review. In introducing the report, he highlighted that the Task Group had, in undertaking the review, recognised the challenging financial environment in which the Council was operating given the long term reduction in Government funding, level of savings already achieved by the Council, social and economic impact of the pandemic and increasing complexity of demand for Council services along with similar pressures on other statutory and voluntary and community sector support.

In considering the second year of a two year budget phase, Councillor Ketan Sheth advised that the Task Group had undertaken extension consultation and engagement in order to seek evidence from a wide range of stakeholders with a number of areas scrutinised in depth. These had included:

- the impact on School finances in relation to the pressure within the Dedicated Schools Grant;

- the Covid Recovery programme;
- the impact of the pandemic on Adult Social Care, particularly in relation to mental health;
- the impact on health inequalities work once Government grant funding had ceased;
- the impact of the pandemic on business rates, Council Tax and Housing Revenue Account rent collection.

As a result the Task Group had made a number of recommendations, as detailed within section 2 of their report, which he was pleased to report had been welcomed and supported by Cabinet for consideration as part of the final budget decision making process.

Councillor Ketan Sheth thanked all the members, officers and other stakeholders who had supported the wide variety of engagement undertaken as part of the review process. He felt that the approach adopted had enabled a more holistic assessment to be undertaken in relation to the impact of the budget proposals at ground level and their context in relation to emerging budget pressures and the future needs of local communities.

In concluding, Councillor Ketan Sheth highlighted that whilst trying to be as objective as possible in the review, it had not been possible to ignore the impact of the Government's programme of austerity over the last decade and piecemeal approach towards the funding of local government which had made it more difficult for local authorities to be able to plan financially. Highlighting concern at the impact and damage being caused by the Government's approach, financial uncertainty in which local authorities were having to operate and extent of savings already delivered, he was supportive of the longer term approach adopted towards financial management within Brent and hoped this would be matched by the Government along with the provision of a fair funding formula. Councillor Ketan Sheth ended by once again thanking all those who had participated and engaged in the review process and commended the Task Group report to Council.

The Mayor advised that this now concluded the opening statements and thanked Councillor Ketan Sheth for his comments. Before moving on to open up the budget for general debate by other Members, she invited the Director of Finance to provide a brief update for members on the recommendations within the report.

Minesh Patel (Director of Finance) advised members that during the course of the meeting confirmation had been received from the Greater London Assembly on the precept set in relation to the Mayor for London's budget (as detailed within recommendation 2.16). As a result this would enable the Council to consider and set the Council Tax for 2022/23 without requiring a meeting of the Council Tax Setting Committee, meaning recommendations 2.17 – 2.19 within the report could now be withdrawn from consideration.

The Mayor thanked the Director of Finance for the update provided and having noted the advice opened up the debate on the budget proposals for comment by other members.

Councillor Tatler, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning opened the debate by outlining her support for the budget proposals introduced by the

Leader and went on to express her pride that despite austerity the Council's effective and prudent management of its budget had enabled continued investment in services making a positive impact on residents. Highlights included the construction of additional social housing, investment in High Streets, support for local businesses and the London Living Wage (LLW) along with the successful programme of grants provided through the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL). In commending the budget to Council, Councillor Tatler ended by re-iterating that despite the government's ongoing restrictions in funding the Council had continued, through its effective approach towards financial management, to deliver a programme of investment providing long term positive outcomes for local residents.

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

Councillor Agha, in expressing his support for the budget, highlighted the need to ensure that the Council continued doing all it could to effectively support residents given the ongoing impact of the government's programme of austerity, current cost of living crisis coupled with the social and economic impacts arising from the pandemic recovery and climate emergency. Supporting the need for the government to provide, a longer term and fairer funding solution for local government he felt the current Administration remained best placed to deliver the long term and stable support required to ensure Brent continued to prosper.

Councillor Mili Patel in supporting the budget felt it was important to recognise the way in which the proposals had been designed to address a range of inequalities currently being faced by Brent residents as specifically highlighted through the pandemic and also current cost of living crisis. Expressing frustration at what she felt to be the lack of impact arising from the Conservative Government's pledges in relation to "Levelling Up" and the piecemeal approach towards their funding of local government, she felt it important to highlight the ways in which the budget proposals had been targeted on the provision of vital services across the borough. These included employment and training support being provided through Brent Works, provision for payment of the LLW, investment in High Streets, the provision of affordable social housing, measures to tackle anti-social behaviour and address digital exclusion, which she felt highlighted the current Administrations difference in approach towards tackling inequality.

Councillor Stephens, Cabinet Member for Schools, Employment and Skills then spoke to share his support for the budget and in so doing outlined the ambitious nature of the proposals in relation to both employment and training as well as in supporting the aspirations of families and young people in Brent. In terms of employment he highlighted the importance in supporting provision of the LLW along with the support for Brent Works, provision of a new Adult Education Centre and local green economy and technology. In terms of families and young people he highlighted the way in which schools had been supported throughout the pandemic which had resulted in them being able to maintain such high attendance, the support in providing holiday activities and food programmes and to the proposals and investment included as part of the budget to increase the number of Special Education Need places within the borough by almost 50%. In summarising, Councillor Stephens highlighted what he felt to be the Administration's clear plan and vision for improving the lives of residents in Brent when compared to the approach outlined by the Opposition group within their alternative budget proposals

and Conservative Government in relation to addressing the cost of living crisis or in supporting the LLW.

Councillor Georgiou advised that he would not be supporting the proposed budget, given what he felt to be the failure, in terms of the Council's strategy relating to use reserves, to support the offsetting of any increase in Council Tax to mitigate against the resulting impact on local residents arising from the cost of living crisis and Governments increase in National Insurance contributions. Highlighting concern at what he felt to be the lack of rigorous scrutiny of the current Administration and budget proposals (which had caused him to resign as a member of the budget scrutiny task force the previous year) Councillor Georgiou ended by re-iterating his concerns regarding the strategy identified in relation to use of reserves and way in which residents views were being taken into account by the current Administration.

Councillor Farah, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, then spoke and in highlighting his support for the budget proposals praised the track record of the current Administration in terms of delivering for the elderly and vulnerable across the borough. This included investing in support for Care Homes across the borough during the pandemic, including the provision of PPE and infection control measures, as well as in a multi-disciplinary team approach towards support. Highlighting his disappointment at the lack of support from the Opposition Group in terms of provision for the London Living Wage (LLW) he felt it important to recognise the impact this would specifically have on home care workers and in increasing pressure on a sector already experiencing significant challenges in terms of staffing. As result he urged members to reject the Opposition Groups alternative budget proposals.

Councillor Kabir then spoke and began by highlighting her opposition to the alternative budget proposals moved by the Opposition Group. Moving on to outline her support for the budget proposals moved by the Leader she praised the approach and funding being provided to address the challenges identified in relation to the increased demand for SEN places within the borough and in managing the associated cost pressures on the High Needs Block Funding provided for schools and as a result of the Health and Social Care Levy. Despite the challenges identified she felt it important to recognise how the Council had continued to offer a high level of support to vulnerable pupils and to celebrate the investment included for the provision of a new school for children with special needs in Brent.

Councillor Mahmood in expressing his support for the budget shared his gratitude to all council officers and elected members for the continued work to support Brent residents despite the challenging financial climate, adding that he was proud to commend the proactive, secure and resident focused budget that the current Administration had proposed.

Councillor Kelcher felt it was important to draw attention to the challenging nature of the budget, in light of the current economic context, increased levels of inflation and the general cost of living crisis. He went on to express concern that the alternative budget proposals moved by the Opposition Group only appeared to compound the struggles being faced by many residents, particularly in relation to those on the lowest incomes given their lack of support for provision relating to the LLW. Councillor Kelcher felt that the alternative budget proposals and contribution from

the opposition in general on the budget offered no credible alternative and in supporting the budget proposals moved by the Leader, expressed disappointment at the approach which had been adopted in this respect by Opposition members.

Councillor Knight, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Engagement in supporting the budget proposals and issues highlighted by previous speakers felt it important to recognise the pressures faced by many local residents as a result of the cost of living crisis. Referring to research undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation relating to the impact of the current crisis on household income, she felt this had been further exacerbated by poor economic management from central government. In terms of the budget, Councillor Knight expressed her support for the approach taken by the Administration, despite the challenges of austerity, in continuing to put in place support for residents to ensure the ongoing delivery of vital services. In drawing attention to the correlation between increased deprivation and crime she ended by highlighting the measures included within the budget to support the continued prioritisation of community safety, including the programme of action to tackle violence against women and girls, which she felt reflected the efforts being made to ensure residents across the Borough felt safe, secure and stable.

Councillor Afzal, as initial context to his comments on the budget, began by highlighting his concern and frustration at the financial challenges faced by Brent as a result of what he felt had been central government's continued underfunding of vital public services, poor handling of the pandemic and indifferent approach to the most vulnerable members of society. Despite the significant challenges faced and scale of reductions already delivered, he felt it important to recognise how hard the Council had worked to fill these gaps and support residents in accessing key services, recovering from the pandemic and tackling the impact of the cost of living crisis making specific reference to the increased support for the Council Tax Support Scheme and Resident Support Fund as examples. In supporting the budget proposals, Councillor Afzal also felt it important to recognise the wider support being provided in relation to the climate emergency, support for the voluntary and community sector and Black Community Action Plan which he felt served to contrast the difference in approach between the Council and Conservative Government in seeking to support local residents and those more vulnerable members of society, despite the constraints in resources.

Councillor Naheerathan also speaking in support of the budget proposals recognised the difficult nature of decisions which had needed to be taken in setting the budget, given the impact of the ongoing reductions in funding imposed by central government over the previous decade and their approach to dealing with the pandemic. Highlighting the injustice in what he perceived to be the failure of central government to support the most vulnerable members of society, Councillor Naheerathan commended the budget proposals which he felt would offer fairness, justice and equality for Brent residents.

Councillor Grahl also commended the proposed budget and in doing so highlighted her specific support for the ongoing programme of community wealth building schemes. In addition, she felt it important to recognise the commitment towards addressing decarbonisation, including the Council's housing stock, air quality, the provision of affordable homes and safeguarding funding for social care. Councillor Grahl ended by expressing her disappointment at the Opposition Groups alternative

budget proposals, including removal of the provision for the LLW and at the stance taken by central government towards the funding of local government and impact on the most vulnerable members of society, which she urged all members to continue challenging.

Councillor Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment began by reflecting on the challenges experienced by the Administration in securing the delivery of key services for residents given the decade of ongoing austerity and funding reductions imposed by central government. Despite these challenges, she felt it important to highlight the approach taken by the Administration in Brent in seeking to continue delivering a programme of investment and infrastructure improvements across the borough. These included improvements made to local parks, town centres, cleaner streets and recycling (including community skip initiatives), highway and footway maintenance and repairs, action to improve air quality and enhance green and more sustainable infrastructure across the borough (including a sustainable procurement policy) and through a retrofit programme of works and increased provision of electric vehicle charging points. In addition, she drew attention to the ongoing support within the budget to deliver the Council's Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy and success of the Brent Environment Network and School Climate Champions Network. In highlighting the success achieved, support for those most vulnerable and ongoing proposals for investment, Councillor Krupa Sheth advised she fully supported the proposed budget.

Councillor Maurice, speaking in support of the Opposition Group's alternative budget proposals, whilst acknowledging the reduction in funding for local government over previous years felt it also important to recognise that when broken down on an annual basis this should not have presented significant financial hardship for the Council to manage. Commenting on what he also felt to be the current Administrations poor financial management, with specific reference to the repairs at the Granville Home Blocks, he also highlighted the extent of financial support provided by central government in terms of the pandemic and concern at the impact of the landlord incentive scheme. For these reasons he advised he would be voting against the budget proposals moved by the Leader and in support of the Conservative Groups alternative budget proposals.

Councillor Southwood, Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform began by highlighting what she felt to be the fair and inclusive nature of the budget proposals moved by the Leader which offered support for all communities, ensuring that no-one was left behind in Brent. In expressing her support for the budget, Councillor Southwood highlighted a number of key successes achieved by the current Administration in Brent which included the delivery of significant numbers of new social and genuinely affordable housing along with measures being taken to reduce the number of households within temporary accommodation. In responding to the Opposition Group's alternative budget and proposal to remove the landlord incentive scheme she felt it important to recognise the level of risk associated with such a move given the impact in terms of tackling homelessness, and potential to increase reliance on more expensive temporary accommodation should it not be possible to secure alternative housing out of borough. In addition concerns were expressed regarding the social impact of relocating those more vulnerable members of society out of borough. Highlighting what she felt to be the Government's ineffective response to the pandemic and current cost of living crisis she ended by outlining her support for the inclusive policies contained within the

budget, including support for the Council Tax Support Scheme and Digital Inclusion Strategy, which had been designed to support all residents moving forward together.

Councillor Ezeajughi, in outlining his support for previous comments and the proposed budget also felt it was important to recognise the impact created by the Conservative Government's programme of austerity and economic mismanagement in terms of the current cost of living crisis on Brent residents. For these reasons he welcomed the approach adopted by the Council's current Administration in prioritising support for Brent residents in managing these impacts including through the Council Tax Support and Resident Support Schemes and increased provision of affordable and social housing. Whilst noting the ongoing work still required he advised he would therefore be supporting the budget given the invaluable and necessary support it would provide for those most vulnerable residents.

Councillor Hirani then spoke and began by commending the current Administration in being able to produce a balanced and fair budget which he believed was in direct contrast to the approach taken by central government in mismanaging the economy, response to the pandemic and current cost of living crisis. In outlining the long term damage caused by the Conservative Government's programme of austerity he also expressed concern at the approach adopted by the Opposition Group in terms of the lack of support for provision of the LLW (given its impact on the lowest paid) within their alternative budget proposals. Referring to his role as London Assembly Member for Brent and Harrow he advised that he would continue to support the approach adopted by the current Administration in seeking to support the most vulnerable residents in society, including refugees, and on this basis commended the budget to all members.

Councillor Nerva, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Culture & Leisure also spoke in support of the budget but felt it important to begin by taking the opportunity to focus on the success of the Covid vaccination programme in Brent and to thank all community groups who had supported its delivery, particularly within those more vaccine hesitant communities. At the same time, members were reminded that Covid had not disappeared, with the pandemic having highlighted the significant health inequalities needing to be addressed across many local communities. Despite the challenges faced in relation to the impact of central government reductions in funding for local services, Councillor Nerva highlighted the response and investment being co-ordinated across Brent in seeking to address the inequalities identified, which had included measures to improve housing, address air quality, poverty and encourage more active modes of travel as well as to establish the Brent Health Matters programme, enhance the availability of diabetes testing and review access to GP services across the borough. In celebrating these initiatives, Councillor Nerva also commended the budget to members, recognising the improvements that would be delivered to support the health and wellbeing of residents in Brent.

Councillor Ahmed echoed his support for what he believed to be a robust and sensible budget that promoted residents prosperity, despite the ongoing impact arising from the Conservative Government's programme of austerity and response to the pandemic and cost of living crisis. In drawing specific attention to the support the Administration had provided in terms of community wealth building and to local businesses, particularly in their recovery from the pandemic and through the

Business Support Fund as well as through the Council's sustainable and ethical Procurement Strategy he also urged all members to support the proposed budget.

Councillor Johnson also spoke in support of the budget, highlighting the importance, given the Conservative Government's approach towards austerity and in managing the pandemic, Brexit and cost of living crisis, of the proposals in seeking to maintain the provision of essential services and much needed support for the most vulnerable in society. In commending what he felt to be the prudent financial management of the Council's resources and support for the actions being taken to tackle poverty, he was concerned at the approach adopted by the Opposition Group in terms of their alternative budget proposal to remove provision for the LLW, having noted that Brent had led the way as a LLW employer and in encouraging local business to seek LLW accreditation, which he felt was an achievement to be proud of.

Councillor Kennelly, in also supporting the budget, felt it important to recognise the way in which the proposals had been designed to stand up for local residents and maintain the provision of essential local services despite the ongoing funding restrictions imposed by central government. Referring to the highway and footway infrastructure improvements within his ward, support for local businesses and investment in the local economy (particularly given the lack of government support for the self-employed during the pandemic), he also went on to highlight the importance of the current Administrations on-going commitment to improving the lives of residents through the Resident Support Fund, support for ending Fire & Rehire employment practices and by tackling air pollution alongside delivery of the Climate and Ecological Strategy and encouragement of more active forms of travel, including the School Streets initiative. As a result he advised he would also be supporting the budget, as moved by the Leader.

As a final contribution to the debate Councillor Sangani ended by also expressing her support for the budget and in so doing praised the aspirations of the Labour Administration in seeking to support local residents and maintain local services despite the financial challenges created through the Conservative Government's approach towards austerity and in managing the cost of living crisis. In commending the proposals to members she highlighted her pride at being part of an Administration that championed equality, diversity and a fairer future for all in Brent.

Having concluded the debate the Mayor thanked all members for their contributions and then invited Councillor M Butt to summarise 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 and support provided to their local residents. In responding to the Opposition Group's alternative budget proposals he expressed concern at the approach and rhetoric adopted in terms of the language used regarding provision of accommodation and placement of those most in need of support within the borough and the lack of what he felt to be a viable alternative budget. He therefore urged all members to reject the alternative proposals moved at the meeting, which it was felt had demonstrated a lack of understanding regarding the need of residents across Brent and impact of the Conservative Government's ongoing approach towards funding of local government and public services.

In contrast, he felt the Administration's budget proposals not only demonstrated an understanding of the challenges faced by residents but also recognised their aspirations for building a positive and fairer future. As such he highlighted how the proposals had been designed to protect and support residents in the borough by delivering affordable housing and reducing reliance on temporary accommodation, investing in digital infrastructure and support for the local economy and business (including provision for the LLW), improving fire safety, providing investment in town centres, providing additional SEN provision, safeguarding vulnerable young people and adults as well as tackling climate change, poverty and inequality. In summing up, Councillor M Butt outlined his pride that despite the challenges highlighted during the debate, the Labour Administration had been able to present a balanced budget that continued to defend and protect services for local residents whilst also seeking to meet the needs and aspirations of communities across the borough. On this basis he ended by once again commending the budget to Council.

Having thanked Councillor M.Butt for his closing comments, the Mayor advised that this now concluded the debate on the budget and she would therefore be moving to the vote on the alternative budget proposals and then (subject to any amendments agreed) the recommended budget moved by the Leader of the Council. As the recommendations to be considered related to the budget setting process she 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 Council **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Agree an overall 2.99% increase in the Council's element of Council Tax for 2022/23, with 1% as a precept for Adult Social Care and a 1.99% general increase.
- (2) Agree the General Fund revenue budget for 2022/23, as summarised in Appendices A and B of the report.
- (3) Agree the savings proposals for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix C of the report.
- (4) Note the report from the Budget Scrutiny Panel in Appendix D of the report.
- (5) Agree the HRA budget for 2022/23, as set out in section seven of the report.
- (6) Agree the Dedicated Schools Grant, as set out in section eight of the report.
- (7) Agree the changes to the existing Capital Programme in relation to additions of new schemes and reprofiling, as set out in section 10 of the report and Appendix E, and note the Capital Pipeline Schemes in Appendix F of the report.

- (8) 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.
- (9) Agree the Reserves Strategy and schedule of reserves, as set out in Appendix K of the report.
- (10) Note the action plan to implement CIPFA's Financial Management Code, as set out in Appendix L of the report.
- (11) Agree the schedule of fees and charges, as set out in Appendix M of the report.
- (12) Note the results of the budget consultation, as set out in section six and detailed in Appendix N of the report.
- (13) Note the advice of the Director of Legal, HR, Audit and Investigations, as set out in Appendix O of the report.
- (14) Agree the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix P of the report.

### **Council Tax recommendations**

- (15) As a result of confirmation having been received on the final GLA precept in advance of the recommendations being put to the vote at the Council meeting it was agreed in relation to the Council Tax for 2022/23:

That the following amounts be now calculated as the Council's element by the Council for the year 2022/23 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended:

- (a) £1,067,562,055 being the aggregate of the amount that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.
- (b) £927,416,795 being the aggregate of the amounts that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
- (c) £140,145,260 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) £1,419.48 being the amount at (c) above, divided by the amount for the tax base of 98,730, agreed by the General Purposes Committee on the 6 December 2021, 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
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
946.32	1,104.04	1,261.76	1,419.48	1,734.92	2,050.36	2,365.80	2,838.96

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 2022/23 the GLA precept issued to the Council on 24 February 2022, 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:

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
263.73	307.68	351.64	395.59	483.50	571.41	659.32	791.18

- (17) That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at (15)(e) and (16) above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of council tax for the year 2022/23 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1,210.05	1,411.72	1,613.40	1,815.07	2,218.42	2,621.77	3,025.12	3,630.14

- (18) That it be noted that the Director of Finance has determined that the Council element of the basic amount of Council Tax for 2022/23 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 alternative budget proposals moved as an amendment to the budget report by the Conservative Group were put to the vote and declared **LOST**.

The voting recorded on the amendment moved by the Conservative Group was as follows:

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

Against the Amendment (45): Councillors Afzal, Agha, Ahmed, Akram, M.Butt, S.Butt, Chan, Chappell, S Choudhary, Choudry, Conneely, Daly, Dar, Dixon, Ethapemi, Ezeajughi, Farah, Gbajumo, Georgiou, Grahl, Hassan, Hirani, Hylton, Johnson, Kabir, Kelcher, Kennelly, Knight, Long, Mahmood, Mashari, McLeish, McLennan, Miller, Naheerathan, Nerva, M.Patel, Sangani, Shahzad, Ketan Sheth, Krupa Sheth, Southwood, Stephens, Tatler and Thakkar.

Abstentions to the Amendment (3): Councillors Colacicco (Mayor), Aden (Deputy Mayor) & Mitchell-Murray.

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

For (44): Councillors Afzal, Agha, Ahmed, Akram, M.Butt, S.Butt, Chan, Chappell, S Choudhary, Choudry, Conneely, Daly, Dar, Dixon, Ethapemi, Ezeajughi, Farah, Gbajumo, Grahl, Hassan, Hirani, Hylton, Johnson, Kabir, Kelcher, Kennelly, Knight, Long, Mahmood, Mashari, McLeish, McLennan, Miller, Naheerathan, Nerva, M.Patel, Sangani, Shahzad, Ketan Sheth, Krupa Sheth, Southwood, Stephens, Tatler and Thakkar.

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

Abstentions to the Amendment (3): Councillors Colacicco (Mayor), Aden (Deputy Mayor) & Mitchell-Murray.

## 11. Brent Local Plan 2022 Adoption

Having concluded consideration of the budget, the Mayor then invited Councillor Tatler, Cabinet Member for Regeneration Property & Planning, to introduce the report from the Strategic Director of Regeneration & Environment, updating members on the key stages undertaken since Full Council had approved the Draft

Brent Local Plan for examination on 19 February 2020 and seeking approval, subject to incorporation of the modifications recommended by the Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State, to formal adoption of the Brent Local Plan 2022.

In introducing the report Councillor Tatler highlighted the significance of the Local Plan in setting a vision for development of the borough and in delivering the aspirations set out in the Council's Borough Plan. Whilst seeking to address the longer term challenges identified as a result of the predicted increase in population within Brent along with changes in the way people lived and worked and impact of the climate emergency, development of the Plan had also been focussed around the more immediate challenges identified. These included the supply of Affordable Housing, creation of jobs, protection of industrial and green space, high streets and associated infrastructure.

Referring to the importance of an up to date, relevant and sound Local Plan as a means of focussing planning and wider development policies over the next 20 years, Councillor Tatler advised members that the Plan was not only focussed on the delivery of the necessary housing and infrastructure developments but included a wider balance in terms of developing and meeting the aspirations of local communities and in seeking to address more fundamental inequalities highlighted through the Black Community Action Plan, Poverty Commission, Inclusive Growth Strategy, work relating to tackling violence against women and girls and the pandemic.

In terms of the detailed process, members were advised that work had started on development of the Plan back in 2017 with its content having been informed by continuous engagement both internally and externally involving local communities, residents and other key stakeholders. This had involved a series evidence gathering session and rounds of public consultation (including a borough wide letter to residents and inclusion of the Neighbourhood Forums) alongside a detailed public examination and inspection process undertaken by independent Planning Inspectors on behalf of the Secretary of State. In concluding her introductory comments, Councillor Tatler advised members she was proud to present the Local Plan for adoption as a means of providing the basis to determine future planning applications that would support good quality developments and delivering not only the level of housing required but also targets in relation to affordable housing and land supply, jobs, sustainable development along with the necessary infrastructure. Reassurance was also provided that adoption of the Plan would not lead to the development of tall buildings or Intensification Corridors throughout the borough or lead to an increase of development in residential back gardens or on protected green spaces but would enable the Council meet its moral and legal obligations in terms of planning to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations based on views expressed from a range of stakeholders across the borough.

Prior to opening up the report for wider debate the opportunity was also taken by Councillor Tatler to thank all members of the Planning Policy Team for their work in developing the Plan which was commended to Council for approval.

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

Councillor Daly began by highlighting a number of specific concerns regarding the functioning of the Neighbourhood Forum along with what she regarded to be the spreading of misinformation within her ward regarding the impact of the Local Plan in terms of the provision for Tall Buildings, compulsory purchase of land and building in and around green spaces. Highlighting her support for the Local Plan presented for adoption, she felt it important to outline her confidence that the policies within the Plan would continue to protect the green spaces and character of her ward.

Councillor Georgiou, in outlining his concerns regarding the Local Plan, highlighted the specific impact of what he felt had been the overdevelopment and intensification of tall buildings within his ward and expressed support for the efforts of organisations such as Sudbury Town Residents Association and the Wembley Central and Alperton Residents Association in also seeking to highlight these impacts and defend the interests of local people. Councillor Georgiou outlined the scale and impact of various large scale developments within his ward along with concerns at what he felt to be the lack of adequate supporting infrastructure to accompany them and as an example highlighted comments expressed by a local resident on the associated impact. As a result Councillor Georgiou urged members to consider deferring adoption of the Local Plan for further consideration given the potential impact on local residents, views expressed about the Plan not addressing the housing needs of the most vulnerable and need to ensure the necessary investment was secured for the provision of associated infrastructure in terms of health, schools, transport and open space in order to match the scale of development proposed.

Following on from the issues highlighted by Councillor Daly, Councillor Maurice also felt it was important to ensure the spreading of misinformation was avoided and challenged in terms of moving forward on any further engagement.

As no further members indicated they wished to speak the Mayor then invited Councillor Tatler to exercise her right of reply.

In summing up and responding to the comments made during the debate, Councillor Tatler began by highlighting that development of the Plan had been the culmination of an extensive five year process of evidence gathering and consultation, ending with a detailed public examination and inspection process which had been open for the public and local representatives to fully engage in. In terms of infrastructure, proposals had been included to ensure the necessary provision and investment was secured working with key stakeholders, including Transport for London with the importance of the Plan also highlighted in terms of the planning required to support future generations. This would not only be in relation to housing supply, but also jobs, industrial land, healthy streets and transport along with the protection of green and open spaces based on a well-planned and evidence based approach designed to meet the needs identified across the borough. On this basis Councillor Tatler commended the report and Brent Local Plan 2022 to Council for adoption.

The Mayor then put the recommendations in the report to the vote and they were declared **CARRIED**.

Council therefore **RESOLVED**, having considered the report of the Inspectors appointed to examine the draft Brent Local Plan, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report:

- (1) To approve the proposed schedule of 'main' modifications recommended as set out in Appendix 2 of the report as necessary by the Inspectors to make the draft Brent Local Plan capable of being found sound.
- (2) To approve non-main modifications to the draft Brent Local Plan as shown in Appendix 3 of the report and modifications to the draft Brent Local Plan Policies Map as shown in Appendix 4 of the report.
- (3) To adopt the Brent Local Plan 2022 as set out within Appendix 5 of the report incorporating the draft Local Plan submitted for examination with modifications set out in Appendices 2 and 3 of the report, and also the associated policies map within Appendix 6 of the report that will incorporate modifications as set out in Appendix 4 of the report.
- (4) To revoke the Brent Core Strategy 2010, Brent Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2011, the Wembley Area Action Plan 2015 and the Development Management Policies Plan 2016 so that they are no longer considered Development Plan Documents for the purposes of determining planning applications within the area that the Council remains the Local Planning Authority and also their associated policies map
- (5) To delegate authority to the Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning to make any further necessary minor modifications and confirm the final format of the printed Brent Local Plan 2022.

## 12. **External Audit Appointment for 2023/24 to 2028/29**

At this stage in proceedings, the Deputy Mayor took over as Chair of the meeting whilst the Mayor took a short break.

The Deputy Mayor invited Councillor McLennan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources, to introduce a report from the Director of Finance detailing proposals for appointment of the Council's External Auditor for the accounts for a five year period from 2023-24.

In introducing the report, Councillor McLennan highlighted the main options available to the Council in terms of the arrangements for seeking to appoint its external auditor as detailed within section 3.1 of the report, with it noted that the Council had currently opted into the 'appointing person' national auditor appointment arrangements established by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA). Having assessed the options available and undertaken discussions with other local authorities, the preferred option identified had been to continue with the sector wide procurement and national collective scheme being administered and conducted by PSAA, which it was felt would continue to provide better outcomes than any more complex procurement arrangements undertaken locally both in terms of mitigating risk and cost. Members were advised that the recommended

approach outlined in the report had also been endorsed for referral on to Council by the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee on 31 January 2022.

As no members indicated they wished to speak and Councillor McLennan had confirmed she did not need to exercise her right of reply the Deputy Mayor then put the recommendation in the report to the vote and it was declared **CARRIED**.

Council therefore **RESOLVED** to accept Public Sector Audit Appointments' invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023.

Following the completion of this item the Mayor resumed as Chair of the meeting.

### 13. **Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2021-2022**

The Mayor then invited Councillor McLennan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources, to introduce the report from the Director of Finance updating members on Treasury Management activity for the first half of the 2021-21 financial year. Members noted that the report had also been considered and agreed by the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee on 7 December 2021 and Cabinet on 17 January 2022 who had agreed to refer it on to Council for consideration in compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

In introducing the report, Councillor McLennan confirmed that the Council was continuing to operate in compliance with the Treasury Management Indicators for 2021/22, as detailed within Appendix 1 of the report.

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 2021-22 Mid-Year Treasury report in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code).

### 14. **Members' Allowance Scheme Annual Review (including changes to Dependents' Carers' Allowance; and Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Sickness Pay)**

Moving on, the Mayor then invited Councillor M Butt, Leader of the Council, to introduce the report from the Director of Legal, HR, Audit & Investigations which sought approval to the proposed Members Allowance Scheme for the 2022-23 financial year.

In introducing the report, Councillor M Butt advised that as agreed for the current year, no annual uplift had been recommended to the level of basic, special responsibility or civic allowances contained within the Members Allowance Scheme for 2022-23. This was on the basis that the level of basic allowances were in line with the suggested rate identified within the most recent Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) review. Whilst no changes had been proposed to the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) payable under the Scheme, members noted these would be subject to further review during 2022-23 following the local election. The

report also detailed the outcome of a review undertaken on the current provisions included within the Members Allowance Scheme relating to Dependents' Carers' Allowance and Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Sickness Pay and changes being proposed as a result. Members were advised that the changes identified had been designed to reflect best practice and ensure the offer in Brent was consistent with that provided elsewhere, provide more clarity and support councillors in being able to participate in the democratic process.

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

Council therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the changes to the Members' Allowance Scheme proposed in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report which updated and clarified the Council's support for councillors with caring responsibilities in relation to a) dependants' carers' allowance and b) maternity, paternity, adoption and sickness pay.
- (2) To make a Members Allowance Scheme in the proposed terms set out in the report for the Financial Year 2022/23.
- (3) To note that a further detailed review of the level of allowances payable under the Scheme would be undertaken by Constitution Working Group following which further changes to the Scheme may be recommended to Council.
- (4) To authorise the Director of Legal, HR Audit & Investigations to comply with the statutory requirements to publicise the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme.

**15. Urgent Business - Council Tax Reduction Scheme Amendment for 2022-23 - Energy Rebate Grant**

In accordance with Standing Order 30(s) the Mayor advised Council that she had agreed to deal with the following as an urgent item of business on the grounds that the Government, as of 12 February 2022, had required Council's to amend their Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2022-2023 in order take account and make provision for introduction of the Energy Rebate Scheme.

**15.1 Council Tax Reduction Scheme Amendment for 2022/23 – Energy Rebate Grant**

Councillor Southwood, Cabinet Member for Housing & Welfare Reform, was then invited to introduce the report from the Strategic Director of Customer & Digital Services outlining the required changes to Brent's Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2022-23, as prescribed by Government.

In introducing the report Councillor Southwood advised that the amendments being sought to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme had been required as a result of the introduction of the Government's Energy Bill Rebate Scheme, which had included provision for most properties in Council Tax Bands A to D to receive a £150 rebate payment. The amendment being sought required the Energy Rebate payment to

be disregarded as income from the scheme as it applied to both residents of working and pension age. Whilst the amendment related to the Council Tax Support Scheme, which only Full Council had the power to make or amend, members were advised that the rebate payment would still be made whether or not a resident was in receipt of Council Tax Support. In addition, the Rebate Scheme had also made provision for local authorities to create a discretionary scheme to support other properties in Council Tax Bands E to H, which Councillor Southwood advised would be subject to separate consideration and approval in due course.

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

Having been accepted as an urgent item, Council therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the amended Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the 2022/23 financial year as set out in Appendix A to the report to take effect from 1 April 2022.
- (2) To note that the change to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the 2022/23 as prescribed by central government was as follows:
  - (a) any payment made under the Energy Rebate Scheme 2022 is to be disregarded in determining:
    - (i) an applicant's entitlement to a reduction under the scheme; or
    - (ii) the amount of any reduction under the scheme.
- (3) To note that the Energy Rebate of £150 would be paid whether or not a resident was in receipt of Council Tax Support.

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

As this was her final Council business meeting as Mayor, Councillor Colacicco ended proceedings by taking the opportunity to thank members for their support and cooperation throughout her time as Mayor, particularly over what had been yet another challenging period for the borough. Members were reminded that the next Full Council meeting would now fall after the local elections, with the Annual Council Meeting having been scheduled for Wednesday 18 May 2022. The Mayor formally closed proceedings by once again thanking and wishing those members not standing in the local elections all the best for the future.

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm

LIA COLACICCO  
Mayor