



## LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL  
held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 8 July 2024 at 6.00 pm

### PRESENT:

**The Worshipful the Mayor**  
Councillor Tariq Dar MBE

**The Deputy Mayor**  
Councillor Diana Collymore

### COUNCILLORS:

Aden	Afzal
Ahmed	Akram
Bajwa	Begum
Benea	M Butt
S Butt	Chan
Choudry	Conneely
Crabb	Dixon
Donnelly-Jackson	Ethapemi
Farah	Fraser
Gbajumo	Georgiou
Grahl	Hack
Hirani	Hylton
Kabir	Kansagra
Kelcher	Kennelly
Long	Lorber
Mahmood	Matin
Maurice	Miller
Mistry	Mitchell
Moeen	Molloy
Nerva	J.Patel
M Patel	Rubin
Ketan Sheth	L.Smith
T.Smith	

#### 1. **Mayors Introductory Statement**

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

#### 2. **Apologies for Absence**

The Mayor reported that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Agha, Ahmadi Moghaddam, Chohan, Chappell, Johnson, Knight, Rajan-Seelan, Shah, Krupa Sheth and Tatler.

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

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the of the Annual Council meeting held on Wednesday 22 May 2024 be approved as a correct record.

### 4. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

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

The Mayor made the following announcements:

#### (i) Queens Park By-Election result

The Mayor began his announcements by congratulating and welcoming Lesley Smith as the newly elected councillor for Queens Park ward, following the outcome of a by-election held on Thursday 4 July 2024.

The opportunity was also taken to formally thank the Chief Executive and all other staff involved in the successful delivery of not only the by-election but also the Parliamentary elections held at the same time, recognising the enormous amount of effort to organise both events in such a short timescale.

#### (ii) Kings Birthday Honours List

On behalf of both himself and the Council, the Mayor asked all members to join him in congratulating all those with a connection to Brent who had received an honour in the Kings 2024 Birthday Honours list.

#### (iii) London Youth Games

In concluding his announcements, the Mayor took the opportunity to congratulate Brent Schools Girls FA for making history by winning the girls London Youth Games competition for the first time.

The team from Brent had comprised of girls from all over the borough and had defeated several other boroughs on their way to the final with the squad looking forward to visiting the Civic Centre in order to receive certificates and celebrate their historic victory. Recognising the achievement, the Mayor also thanked the coaches and other volunteers involved for their efforts and dedication in support of the team.

#### (iv) Petitions

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

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

The Mayor advised that there were no appointments to Council Committees, Sub Committees and other bodies which had been received for consideration.

7. **Deputations (if any)**

The Mayor advised that he had accepted the request for a deputation to be presented at the meeting. The request had been received from the Save Byron Court Campaign Group (represented by Tanisha Phoenix & Vina Vekria at the meeting) and related to school communication and the provision of parent representation within community schools.

Unless otherwise indicated by members, the Mayor advised that he intended to allow up to five minutes for presentation of the deputation before then allowing the relevant Lead Cabinet Member up to two minutes to respond.

As no objections were raised on the approach outlined, the Mayor moved on to welcome the deputation.

**Save Byron Court Campaign Group – Parent representation within Community Schools.**

In thanking the Mayor for the opportunity to address the meeting Vina Vekria & Tanisha Phoenix advised they were presenting the deputation on behalf of the Save Byron Court, campaign who had been established as a collective effort by parents, community members and school staff (who had also been taking strike action in support) to oppose the Government's forced academisation of Byron Court Primary School by Harris Federation representing.

Referring to the campaign undertaken to date, it was felt this had highlighted many issues including chronic underfunding, a punitive inspection regime, a national rush to privatise education despite widespread opposition and no opportunity for school improvements to be made along with what was felt to be a worrying lack of transparency and impartiality in terms of decision making regarding the future of Byron Court Primary School.

In recognising and acknowledging the support of the campaign by Barry Gardiner (as local MP), Councillor Grahl (as the Council's Cabinet member for Children, Young People and Schools) amongst other politicians the Campaign Group now hoped the new Labour government would be willing to intervene in order to protect the school and provide a renewed commitment to community schools as a whole.

Addressing the meeting, Vina Vekria advised that one of the issues identified, in relation to Byron Court Primary School had involved membership of the School's Governing Body, which for the current academic year had only included one parent governor representative compared to five in previous years. This followed a reduction in their number without, it was claimed, consultation with the parent community. The Campaign Group had highlighted this as an important issue, given the need for successful Governing Bodies to act as custodians for the school with the necessary links to parents and the wider community. Whilst recognising the

challenges in attracting volunteers, the importance in being able to attract good quality individuals to support the role of the Governing Body outside of the school community was highlighted as necessary to provide a broad range of skills and experience. As such the Campaign Group were calling on the Council to undertake a review of school governing bodies across the borough to ensure that the voices of parents were sufficiently represented and to encourage a more diverse range of experience and knowledge.

Following on, Tanisha Phoenix then spoke to highlight additional concerns regarding the lack of meaningful communication with parents at Byron Court Primary School and the Campaign Group from the school following publication of the Ofsted report. Despite assurances regarding more open communication and a meeting with the Council in April 2024, at which further assurances were provided regarding the prioritisation of improvement initiatives at the school over the academisation process, it was not felt this had been delivered with notice provided in July that the focus on communications moving forward would be in relation to the ongoing strike action. Irrespective of views regarding Ofsted and academisation, the Campaign Group felt there remained a responsibility on the Local Authority and School to ensure that parents and carers were informed about improvement initiatives that were being developed and introduced in response to the schools Ofsted rating as “inadequate”. Whilst recognising that a majority of schools in Brent were rated as “good” or “outstanding” it was pointed out Byron Court’s inspection had been whilst under local authority control with many of the issues identified involving a lack of engagement, communication and transparency between the parent body, school and Local Authority.

As a result, the Campaign Group (through the deputation) were also keen to explore the lessons that could be learnt from the Primary School’s journey post Ofsted inspection including the benchmarking, developing and sharing of best practice around communications to ensure other schools avoided the same issues.

The Mayor thanked Vina Vekria & Tanisha Phoenix for their contributions then invited Councillor Grahl, as Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools to respond.

In response, Councillor Grahl (as Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools) thanked the Save Byron Campaign Group for attending the meeting to present the deputation and for their advocacy to date on behalf of the school community. In highlighting the support already expressed for the campaign, Councillor Grahl recognised the issues and concerns raised in relation to communication and advised that Shirley Parks, Director Education Partnerships and Strategy had written to all parents at the school about the improvements that it was planned to introduce across a range of areas, linked to the inspection assessment.

In regards to parent representation, Councillor Grahl felt it important to refer to the DfE guidance on Governing Bodies, which included a need for at least two parent governor representatives on each Governing Body. As such she ended her response by once again thanking the Campaign Group and advising that the Council would continue to work with them and the school to ensure the necessary representation was in place on the governing body and to ensure that parents had a voice.

Having thanked the Save Byron Park Campaign Group for their deputation and Councillor Grahl for her response the Mayor advised that this concluded consideration of the deputation.

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

### **8.1 Questions from the Public**

The Mayor advised that two questions had been received from members of the public, which were as follows:

Question 1 from James Walerych regarding use of funding generated by the award of the advertising lease for Bobby More Bridge.

Question 2 from Daniela Stuppia regarding the Restrictions it was possible to place on Gambling Shops

Members noted the written responses provided to the questions, which had been circulated with the agenda. The Mayor advised that whilst both members of the public had been invited to the meeting in order to ask any supplementary question both had unfortunately been unable to attend. Members were advised that whilst unable to attend a written supplementary question had subsequently been received from James Walerych, on which a response would be provided outside of the meeting.

Having noted the written responses provided, the Mayor thanked James Walerych & Daniela Stuppia for submitting their questions and then moved on to deal with the question submitted by Brent Youth Parliament.

### **8.2 Questions from Brent Youth Parliament**

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

Question 1 from Brent Youth Parliament to Councillor Farah, Cabinet Member for Public Safety & Partnerships, relating to the support available for Brent Youth Parliaments local crime and safety campaign.

The Mayor thanked Brent Youth Parliament (BYP) for their question, with members noting the written response provided, and advised that representatives from the Youth Parliament had also been invited to attend the meeting in order to ask a supplementary question. As a result, the Mayor welcomed Kenechi Ezeajughi (BYP Deputy Chair), Reem Mustafa (BYP Deputy Media & Communications Lead) and George Main Sin (Youth Parliament member for Brent) to the meeting who asked the following supplementary question.

**Question 1 Supplementary Question from George Main Sin & Kenechi Ezeajughi to Councillor Farah, Cabinet Member for Public Safety & Partnerships regarding practical measures in support of the Youth Parliament campaign.**

Having thanked Councillor Farah for his written response and advising that they welcomed the support highlighted for BYPs local crime and safety campaign, further details were sought on progress with implementation of the practical measures being developed to reflect the overall strategic objectives included as part of the Safer Brent Community Safety Strategy. Amongst the specific measures on which details were sought were the introduction of safe spaces for young people along with the reestablishment of a boroughwide youth service, with the Youth Parliament highlighting how keen they were to continue working with the Council on the campaign and development of these measures.

In response, Councillor Farah thanked Brent Youth Parliament for the question and work they were undertaking to represent young people across the borough. In commending the Youth Parliaments local crime and safety campaign he reiterated the Council's commitment to continue supporting and engaging with young people in relation to the campaign, which included identifying key activities aligned with the wider community strategy. This included the development of safe spaces for young people in Brent on which the Council was continuing to work with key stakeholders and would be keen to engage with the Youth Parliament, prior to sharing the proposals once finalised.

Councillor Farah ended his response by confirming that both he and the Community Safety Team would also be happy to meet with the Youth Parliament to discuss how they could ensure their ongoing engagement in the development of these measures.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Farah for his response and with no further questions to be considered, advised that this now concluded the public question session.

## 9. **Petitions (if any)**

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

## 10. **Motions**

Before moving on to consider the motions listed on the summons, the Mayor advised members that a total of 40 minutes had been set aside for consideration of the four motions submitted for debate, based on an initial allocation of 10 minutes per motion. Should the time taken to consider the first motion be less than 10 minutes he advised that the remaining time available would be rolled forward for consideration of the remaining motions.

### **10.1 1<sup>st</sup> Motion (Conservative Group) – Action to address dockless e-bike parking within Brent.**

The Mayor invited Councillor Mistry to move the first motion which had been submitted on behalf of the Conservative Group. Councillor Mistry began by providing context to the motion and thanking Councillor Long for her support in relation to the amendment submitted, on the basis it was seeking to highlight many of the same concerns. In highlighting the increase in number of dockless e-bikes being abandoned in parks and streets across the borough, Councillor Mistry (as ward councillor) highlighted specific issues being experienced within Queensbury

with the Conservative Group motion (supported by the amendment) seeking stronger action in relation to management of the scheme by the bike operator given the problems and safety issues being experienced. In acknowledging the support within the amendment to the five actions which had been identified within the Conservative Group motion and discussions which had now commenced between the Council and operator to address concerns regarding management of the current scheme across the borough, Councillor Mistry advised that the Conservative Group would also be willing to support the amendment moved.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Mistry for moving the motion and then drew members' attention to an amendment submitted by Councillor Long on behalf of the Labour Group, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

In moving the amendment, Councillor Long thanked Councillor Mistry for highlighting the issues raised within her motion. Whilst acknowledging the popularity of the dockless e-bike scheme across the borough and supporting the efforts being made to reduce pollution and encourage more active modes of travel, there was, she felt, a need to address the current management and operation of the scheme recognising the problems being created by those not using it as they should and abandoning or dangerously parking bikes in parks and streets across the borough negatively impacting on pedestrians. As such, it was felt better regulation and management of the scheme was required, including a review and update of the Memorandum of Understanding and Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) governing operation of the scheme in Brent, which it was pointed had been agreed prior to the pandemic and was subject to regular and ongoing breaches. As an example, reference was made to the need, if parking was to be allowed on pavements, for the impact on pedestrians to be reflected within the EIA which currently only included reference to cyclists. In terms of improvements being sought, the amendment had also been designed to seek the necessary protection for pedestrians, recognising walking as an important mode of active travel and to call for not only better management of the scheme but also the provision of marked parking bays and the impounding of bikes that had been abandoned. In addition, the amendment was seeking to ensure that necessary enhancements were made to IT systems with measures introduced to prevent the hacking and improve the tracking of bikes operated under the scheme to ensure the scheme was able to continue operating effectively across the borough. Whilst supportive of the introduction of e-bikes Councillor Long, in urging members to support the amendment, felt management of the scheme required improving in order to safeguard pedestrians and address the wider concerns highlighted in relation to its operation. The amendment moved by Councillor Long was therefore as follows:

To add the wording underlined and delete the wording indicated:

**“Action to address dockless e-bike parking within Brent”**

Whilst we support and recognise that dockless e-bike schemes were introduced across London in an effort to reduce pollution and get more people active, and that the majority of users are using the service as they ought to, there is ~~an annoying trend of e-bikes supplied~~ work to be done by Lime+ Uber under the scheme in Brent to tackle the small number of bikes being parked in dangerous locations, as well as bikes from schemes operated in other boroughs being dumped in our parks and streets. ~~No action appears~~ Stronger action needs to be taken against those

~~selfish~~ users who leave their e-bikes in locations causing immense danger, obstructions and annoyance to residents walking on our streets.

Lime+ Uber e-bikes are found across most wards in Brent obstructing busy streets and road crossings, with a small number of riders inconsiderately parking anywhere and blocking pavements and pedestrian crossings, impacting particularly on the disabled and parents with buggies leaving little remedy except to move them out of their path or manoeuvre around them. This has generated a large number of complaints to both the scheme operator and Council which, ~~to date, appears to have resulted in little effective action being taken~~ has been brought to the immediate attention of the operator for future term negotiations.

We understand that Brent Council are contacting the current operator to see what can be done but ~~there appears to have been little response~~ the Council continues to be in ongoing negotiations with the operator before a substantial operational update can be given. We also understand that Transport for London ~~appears not to be taking any responsibility for this problem~~ are involved in similar negotiations in Brent and across other London boroughs.

As a result of the concerns highlighted this Council therefore resolves to call on the Cabinet:

- (1) ~~To work with the support of other London boroughs, in seeking to include a~~ uphold our powers within a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) that would enable the Council to lawfully impound bikes that are abandoned on our streets, and store them in a secure place, for example, at the boroughs car pound and not release them until a fine is paid by the operator.
- (2) To require that any dockless bike operator in the borough should be required to electronically chip all their bikes ~~and allow end-of-ride parking only in designated areas,~~ such as with Transport for London's official hire e-bike service.
- (3) To ~~ensure~~ increase data sharing with the operator so that when reported, obstacles and hazards caused to pedestrians and the disabled by the inconsiderate parking or dumping of hired e-bikes are addressed and cleared with the Council continuing to raise concerns with the scheme operator and ensure the necessary enforcement action is taken.
- (4) To consider, in any future contract, the introduction of additional measures such as "parking bays" in busy locations and further line markings to be funded by the operator, that would encourage riders to leave their hired bikes in certain areas. ~~Whilst aware there is no legal requirement and the bikes can, in theory, still be parked anywhere,~~ This would encourage and promote a discipline in riders to behave responsibly and leave these bikes in a safe place.
- (5) To ensure that when large number of e-bikes at one location or badly parked e-bikes are reported to the operator by residents, councillors or the Council, the e-bikes should be immediately collected."



The Mayor thanked Councillor Long for moving the amendment and then opened the debate for contributions from other members in relation to both the original motion and amendment.

In opening the debate, Councillor Lorber expressed support for the concerns highlighted within the motion and subsequent amendment regarding the management and current operation of the dockless e-bike scheme within Brent. Reference was made to the successful operation of other schemes across London, which demonstrated how their operation could be managed including the provision of docking stations which enabled better planning and were able to take account of the impact on the surrounding area. Councillor Lorber advised he was also keen to ensure that the concerns identified were raised with the current operator of the scheme in Brent and necessary measures taken in response to enable their continued operation of the scheme in Brent.

Also speaking in support of the motion, Councillor Hirani took the opportunity to highlight specific concerns regarding criminal activity and anti-social behaviour involving use of the bikes within her ward as well as safety concerns regarding the way in which bikes were being abandoned on pavements, creating hazards for pedestrians, including those with disabilities. In outlining the number of complaints received from local residents on these issues, Councillor Hirani advised that she would also be supporting the motion (and subsequent amendment) and called upon the Council to ensure that the operator of the current scheme was held accountable and forced to address the concerns highlighted.

As no other members had indicated they wished to speak, the Mayor then invited Councillor Mistry (as mover of the original motion) followed by Councillor Long (as mover of the amended) to exercise their right of reply.

In exercising her right of reply, Councillor Mistry welcomed the cross-party support expressed in terms of the need to address the concerns highlighted regarding the current management and operation of the dockless e-bike scheme across Brent and on this basis hoped that all members would be willing to support the motion, including the amendment moved by the Labour Group.

On the basis of the comments made and cross-party supported expressed for the amendment, Councillor Long advised that she did not wish to exercise any further right of reply so the Mayor, having thanked councillors for their contributions, then moved to the vote on the motion starting with the amendment moved by the Labour Group. The amendment, as set out above, was then put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

The Mayor then moved on to put the substantive motion, as amended and set out below, to a vote which was declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to approve the following motion:

**“Action to address dockless e-bike parking within Brent”**

Whilst we support and recognise that dockless e-bike schemes were introduced across London in an effort to reduce pollution and get more people active, and that the majority of users are using the service as they ought to, there is work to be

done by Lime+ Uber under the scheme in Brent to tackle the small number of bikes being parked in dangerous locations, as well as bikes from schemes operated in other boroughs being dumped in our parks and streets. Stronger action needs to be taken against those users who leave their e-bikes in locations causing immense danger, obstructions and annoyance to residents walking on our streets.

Lime+ Uber e-bikes are found across most wards in Brent obstructing busy streets and road crossings, with a small number of riders inconsiderately parking anywhere and blocking pavements and pedestrian crossings, impacting particularly on the disabled and parents with buggies leaving little remedy except to move them out of their path or manoeuvre around them. This has generated a large number of complaints to both the scheme operator and Council, which has been brought to the immediate attention of the operator for future term negotiations.

We understand that Brent Council are contacting the current operator to see what can be done but the Council continues to be in ongoing negotiations with the operator before a substantial operational update can be given. We also understand that Transport for London are involved in similar negotiations in Brent and across other London boroughs.

As a result of the concerns highlighted this Council therefore resolves to call on the Cabinet:

- (1) To uphold our powers to lawfully impound bikes that are abandoned on our streets and store them in a secure place until a fine is paid by the operator.
- (2) To require that any dockless bike operator in the borough should be required to electronically chip all their bikes, such as with Transport for London's official hire e-bike service.
- (3) To increase data sharing with the operator so that when reported, obstacles and hazards caused to pedestrians and the disabled by the inconsiderate parking or dumping of hired e-bikes are addressed and cleared with the Council continuing to raise concerns with the scheme operator and ensure the necessary enforcement action is taken.
- (4) To consider, in any future contract, the introduction of additional measures such as "parking bays" in busy locations and further line markings to be funded by the operator, that would encourage riders to leave their hired bikes in certain areas. This would encourage and promote a discipline in riders to behave responsibly and leave these bikes in a safe place.
- (5) To ensure that when large number of e-bikes at one location or badly parked e-bikes are reported to the operator by residents, councillors or the Council, the e-bikes should be immediately collected."

## **10.2 2<sup>nd</sup> Motion (Liberal Democrats Group) - Dealing with increasing rubbish on Brent streets**

The Mayor then invited Councillor Georgiou to move the second motion which had been submitted by the Liberal Democrats Group. In moving the motion, Councillor Georgiou began by outlining the extent of concern being raised by local residents

regarding the cleanliness of streets across the borough, which he felt were now dirtier than ever. In highlighting Brent had been placed at the top of a list produced by the BBC for instances of reported fly-tipping across the country, he felt the recent changes to the contract with Veolia had made things worse with the new contract having reduced the need for regular cleaning of all streets across the borough and introducing an intelligence led approach to the targeting of resources, which he believed had not worked. As a result, it was felt further action needed to be taken to prioritise keeping streets clean and to enhance the enforcement and prosecution of fly tipping. Given the concerns highlighted, Councillor Georgiou advised that the motion had outlined five practical measures which it was felt would achieve these aims. These included the reintroduction of regular street cleaning in all roads and areas across the borough, scrapping the intelligence led approach towards the targeting of resources, enhancing enforcement activity, working with other London boroughs, such as Newham, in seeking to identify best practice and adapt the approach towards tackling fly tipping and finally to work more closely with relevant stakeholders to ensure they took the necessary action to keep the land they owned across the borough well maintained and free of rubbish and dumping. In summing up, Councillor Georgiou hoped all members would support the motion recognising the importance of the issue local residents.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Georgiou for moving the motion before inviting other members to speak, with the following contributions received.

Speaking in support of the motion, Councillor J.Patel opened the debate by highlighting concerns which had been expressed by residents regarding overall cleanliness and frequency of fly-tipping across a number of streets and areas within his ward. Whilst these were being dealt with when reported through the "Fix my Street" app it was felt more action was required to tackle repeat offending in these locations, including the use of CCTV to monitor, enforce and prosecute those involved. The opportunity was also taken to express support for the Community Skip initiative with a call for the dumping of litter around the children's play area in Roe Green Park to also be targeted and addressed.

Councillor Matin, also speaking in support of the motion, expressed further concern at the introduction of the intelligence led approach towards the targeting of resources under the new contract with Veolia, which she also felt was not working highlighting the increasing number of complaints being received from residents regarding the build-up of rubbish and levels of fly-tipping across her ward. As a further measure, Councillor Matin advised she would welcome the introduction of additional street bins across the borough with concerns also expressed (from a personal perspective) at the detrimental impact the build-up of rubbish (including broken glass) on streets was having on blind or partially sighted individuals and their support animals. In noting the practical nature of the measures outlined she hoped all members would support the motion, as moved.

As a further speaker in support of the motion, Councillor Mistry also outlined her concerns regarding operation of the new street cleansing contract which she felt was not working in relation to the levels of rubbish and fly-tipping across her ward. Highlighting the importance in maintaining healthy and clean spaces, concern was also expressed at the accumulation and dumping of rubbish in long grass on verges and within open spaces, with particular issues reported around the Eton Grove

outdoor gym facility which, it was felt, demonstrated the need for a review of the existing street cleansing contract arrangements.

In response to the issues raised during the debate, Councillor Muhammed Butt (who, following her apologies for absence, advised he was speaking on behalf of Councillor Krupa Sheth in her role as Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement) thanked members for their contributions and felt it important to start by recognising the commitment within the Borough Plan towards ensuring a Cleaner and Greener Brent. In addressing the concerns raised he felt it important to highlight how, rather than neglecting the need to keep Brent's streets clean, the new street cleansing contract had been able to deliver a more strategic, effective and cost-efficient approach by targeting and focussing the resources available in areas where they were most needed on an intelligence led basis supported by data analysis and a process of continual monitoring and inspection. In terms of the enforcement strategy, this had also been enhanced with a zero-tolerance approach being taken in relating to littering and fly tipping. This had been supported by an enforcement regime designed to ensure that investigations and prosecutions were successfully pursued with Fixed Penalty fines also having been increased to a maximum of £1,000 as an additional deterrent supported by the introduction of a new campaign "Don't mess with Brent". In summing up, given the measures and approach outlined, Councillor Muhammed Butt advised that the Labour Group would not be supporting the motion.

As the time limit for debate had been reached and there were no other members who had indicated they wished to speak the Mayor then invited Councillor Georgiou to exercise his right of reply. In summing up, Councillor Georgiou once again highlighted what he felt was a need to recognise the extent of concerns being highlighted by local residents and impact of the current approach in terms of the reduction in frequency and failure of the intelligence led approach towards street cleansing across the borough. Having outlined what were felt to be a number of practical measures to tackle the concerns highlighted he ended by urging all members to support the motion.

Having thanked members for their contributions the Mayor then moved on to put the motion, as set out below, to a vote which was declared **LOST** and not therefore approved.

### **"Dealing with increasing rubbish on Brent streets**

#### **This Council notes:**

Brent streets are filthier than ever. It is hard to walk by any road, whether residential or close to a busy shopping area or High Road, in the borough, without coming across a fly tip or a pile of dumped rubbish. Sadly, even the BBC have noticed and place Brent at the top of their list of dirtiest boroughs in the country!

Recent changes made by the Administration to the contract with Veolia have made things even worse. Rather than prioritising the need to keep Brent clean, the new contract has in fact reduced the need for Veolia to regularly cleanse local streets and made it harder for the Council to hold them to account when the contractors are not doing a good enough job.

Residents are not happy. Over the course of the last few weeks, councillors have been out speaking with local people. The message from them is clear. It is time Brent Council got to grips and dealt with increasing rubbish on our streets.

**This Council therefore believes that:**

1. Keeping local streets clean and free of rubbish and illegal fly tipping must be a priority.
2. We need urgent action to address the rubbish problem and redouble our efforts to prosecute those who continue to illegally fly tip in our area.
3. The new modified contract with Veolia, which scraps regular street cleaning on all streets in the borough, both residential and close to busy shopping areas, and the introduction of the 'intelligence-led' approach, is not working.

**This Council therefore calls on Cabinet to:**

1. Seek a variation in the current contract with Veolia to:
  - *Reintroduce regular street cleaning on all roads and in all areas of the borough.*
  - *Scrap the 'intelligence-led' approach which is not working.*
  - *Ensure the contractor can be held to account better, when they are not fulfilling their set out obligations. Particularly in relation to the length of time it takes to clear fly tips and accumulated rubbish.*
2. Beef up enforcement, by employing more officers (apprentices) to assist Neighbourhood Managers in their activities on the ground across the borough.
3. Adapt our approach to tackling fly tipping in our borough by working with other London boroughs who have similar issues and are achieving better results.
4. Prioritise enforcement and the collection of evidence, to better guarantee successful prosecution of those who continue to illegally dump rubbish locally.
5. Request that the Mayor of London and other stakeholders, including TfL, Housing Associations, local businesses, take responsibility for land that they manage and ensure it is free of rubbish and dumping. This will ensure a joint up approach to dealing with this growing issue in our area and feed into the wider objective to keep Brent clean and tidy at all times."

**10.3 3<sup>rd</sup> Motion (Labour Group) – The path we choose with a new government**

The Mayor then invited Councillor Hack to move the first motion submitted on by the Labour Group. In moving the motion, Councillor Hack began by welcoming the outcome of the recent General Election and by-election result in Queens Park ward which he felt provided a much needed opportunity to start addressing the decline in public and health services, increased levels of child poverty and living standards being faced by residents as a result of the cost-of-living crisis and approach of the previous Conservative government. In seeking to reverse these declines and breath life back into public services Councillor Hack, whilst recognising the ongoing

challenges faced giving the increasing demand on services and financial pressures faced across public sector, highlighted the focus within the motion on the opportunity now available to rebuild in order to address inequality and poverty and deliver the change required by residents across Brent. As such he commended the motion to Council for approval.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Hack for moving the motion before inviting other members to speak, with the following contributions received.

Councillor Maurice in opening the debate felt it important, whilst acknowledging the result of the General Election, to also reflect on the fact that Labour's share of the vote nationally had increased by less than 2% and even less in Brent. He then moved on to highlight an amendment which the Conservative Group had submitted in relation to the original motion which he advised had been rejected by the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer. This had sought to amend the wording of the original motion relating to the conflict in Gaza to call for the immediate release of all hostages taken by Hamas on 7 October 2023 and the brokering of a bilateral ceasefire.

At this stage in proceedings, Kim Wright (as Chief Executive) intervened to advise that as the amendment had already been rejected (following consideration by herself and Debra Norman as the Monitoring Officer) the debate should continue based solely on the wording of the original motion. Prior to moving on Councillor Georgiou, as a Point of Order, sought further details on the basis of the decision given the inclusion of reference to the conflict in Gaza within the wording of the original motion. In response, Debra Norman referred to the provisions within Standing Order 41 which enabled a motion (or amendment) to be rejected if it was not felt to relate to a matter on which the Council had responsibility or which was felt to affect the area as a whole. The reference to seeking a resolution of the conflict in Gaza within the original motion had been accepted on the basis of its link to the impact on residents in Brent and in terms of addressing increased tensions within the community whilst the focus of the amendment it was felt had been related to foreign policy issues, on which the Council had no remit. The amendment had therefore been rejected on that basis.

Whilst noting the advice provided, Councillor Maurice ended his contribution by highlighting what he felt was the inconsistency in approach given (as an example) the lack of reference to the conflict in Ukraine within the same motion given its similar impact on communities across the borough.

Moving back to the content of the original motion, Councillor Grahl continued the debate by highlighting what she felt to be the hope offered through the new Labour government and opportunity to unite the country and reform those public sector institutions failed by the previous Conservative government. In highlighting the extent of issues faced in terms of inequalities and increase in poverty, particularly in terms of the impact on children and young people, arising from the previous Conservative governments mismanagement and infighting, it was felt the new Labour government provided an opportunity to rebuild trust. As part of the approach outlined within the motion it was recognised that local government would be a key partner in seeking to address many of the challenges, which would require not only a fairer long term funding settlement but also a need to tackle the housing crisis as well as develop, recognising the wider impact on community tensions, a

foreign policy focussed on building a consensus to create a long-lasting peace in the Middle East. On this basis, Councillor Grahl advised she would be supporting the motion.

Councillor Georgiou then spoke and whilst pleased to have seen the end of the previous Conservative government felt it important to recognise that the Labour victory in the General Election had been achieved with only 34% of the vote highlighting what he regarded as the unfairness of the current electoral system and need for electoral reform, including the introduction of Proportional Representation as a means of preventing further disenfranchisement of the electorate. The opportunity was also taken to celebrate the number of Liberal Democrats MPs returned to Parliament given the important role it was felt they would play in seeking to hold the new Labour government to account on delivery of its green pledges and additional investment and reform of health services along with the social care system, including support for carers.

As a final contribution, Councillor Afzal concluded the debate by welcoming the demise of the previous Conservative government given what he regarded as their record of economic mismanagement and the impact created by the cost-of-living crisis and austerity on public services across the UK. In highlighting the increased levels of inequality and deprivation experienced during the Conservative governments time in office with, as an example, the increase and reliance on foodbanks across all parts of the county Councillor Afzal believed this had directly contributed to the rise of the Far Right with the need for deep rooted structural and institutional change required. In highlighting his support for the motion, he ended by recognising the importance in the Council seeking to work in partnership with the new Labour government to reverse the devastation caused by the Conservative government legacy, ensure necessary funding provision for essential local services and the introduction of a more progressive taxation system (including the establishment of a windfall and wealth tax) in order to continue the support of a welfare system for those most in need.

As the time limit for debate had been reached the Mayor then invited Councillor Hack to exercise his right of reply. In summing up Councillor Hack advised that he was pleased to have been able to move the motion and urged all members to consider their social conscience in terms of supporting Brent's participation in contributing towards a bold new vision for government.

Having thanked members for their contributions, the Mayor then moved on to put the motion, as set out below, to a vote, which was declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to approve the following motion:

**“The path we choose with a new government**

**This Council notes:**

There has never been a more difficult time for local government. Rising demand, increasing costs and reductions in funding have left councils with impossible choices, between cutting one essential service and another.

Wages, living conditions, and opportunities have stalled and entered serious decline for over a decade now. 1 in 3 children are now living in destitution.

The challenges any new government will face will take a long time to put right. From the collapse of Thames Water, flat-lining public sector pay, a crisis in prisons and both universities and local government in financial crisis. Councils now face an overall deficit of £4bn over the next two years, and more councils issued bankruptcy notices last year than in the previous 30 years.

We have always argued the only limit to our ambition is the golden thread of funding. With the right resources, we stand ready to help rebuild alongside a new government after fourteen lost years; and truly bring about the change Brent deserves.

**This Council further notes:**

Now is the time for a brighter future for Brent and for the country. Local government is the key to solving some of our national challenges, rooted in a democratic mandate in the heart of our communities; delivering tailored services for our residents. But this task requires a strong partnership with a bold new government, and a mutual understanding of the shared obstacles we face.

We call on the new government to:

1. Set out a fair, multi-year funding settlement for councils, reforming Council Tax once and for all.
2. Extend the Household Support Fund for at least another 12-months or introduce a new scheme.
3. Fix the housing and homelessness crisis, supporting shovel-ready schemes and new developments.
4. Invest in fixing public infrastructure like schools, the NHS, police and councils.
5. Transform life chances by reversing the decline in living standards and rising poverty across the country.
6. Make Britain a clean energy superpower to cut bills and deliver security with cheaper, zero-carbon electricity.
7. Push for an urgent ceasefire and resolution to the conflict in Gaza, particularly in recognition of those Brent residents with family and friends trapped in Gaza and who continue to be impacted by increased tensions in the community.
8. Put prevention and the health of the nation at the heart of all future plans.
9. Unlock funding for the Mayor of London to fulfil transport commitments such as the Bakerloo upgrade and extension, the West London Orbital, and the electrification of the Chiltern Railway Line.

**This Council resolves:**



- (1) To work with the new government on their missions to improve the country and to deliver for Brent.
- (2) To continue using the limited resources we have in the best way possible to protect life-saving services and those affected by the cost-of-living crisis.
- (3) To continue working in partnership with organisations such as the LGA, London Councils and our new MPs on lobbying opportunities to strengthen Brent's voice on the national stage."

#### **10.4 4<sup>th</sup> Motion (Labour Group) – Brent - A Borough of Sanctuary**

The Mayor then invited Councillor Benea to move the second and final motion submitted by the Labour Group. In moving the motion Councillor Benea, began by highlighting her support for the commitment involved in seeking to continue working to provide a welcoming environment and support as a Borough of Sanctuary. This involved not only providing access to essential services but also a process in fostering cultural understanding and celebrating the strength of diversity across the borough, recognising that everyone had the fundamental right to pursue a life of dignity, health and happiness regardless of their background or immigration status. The motion had also been designed to recognise the importance and collaborative effort of schools, businesses, faith-based organisations and residents in seeking to stand against what Councillor Benea felt had become the increasing hateful rhetoric in political discourse supported by policies that had sought to exclude and discriminate against migrants, immigrants and refugees which had no place in Brent. In concluding Councillor Benea also took the opportunity to recognise and commend the work undertaken by Brent Multi-Faith Forum, who had endorsed the City of Sanctuary Charter along with other community groups across the borough for the work undertaken to support those who have been displaced and were seeking sanctuary, with all members urged to support the motion on this basis.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Benea for moving the motion before inviting other members to speak, with the following contributions received.

Councillor Kansagra in opening the contributions, felt it important to recognise and acknowledge Brent's longstanding role as a Borough of Sanctuary, which had included many families displaced from Uganda and seeking refuge in the 1970's. Whilst outlining his broad support for the motion, Councillor Kansagra rejected the specific criticism of the previous Conservative governments Rwanda scheme which he felt had represented a legitimate attempt to address increasing levels of illegal immigration and highlighted a need for the new Labour government to be clear on how they planned to deliver the necessary controls. Whilst not able to support the preamble in the motion he advised that the Conservative Group were supportive of the outcomes being sought in seeking to recognise Brent's longstanding role as a Borough of Sanctuary.

Councillor Lorber then spoke taking the opportunity to outline his personal experience as a refugee and the Liberal Democrats support for the motion. Highlighting a need for urgent action to be taken by the new Labour government in addressing the issues with the current operation of what he felt to be a broken asylum and immigration system, he also sought to challenge use of the term 'illegal'

when referring to those seeking asylum and hoped that any changes introduced were designed to produce a more sympathetic, fairer and effective system that would resolve unnecessary bureaucracy and confusion and create a system that people would accept.

In view of the remaining time available within the block allocated for consideration of motions, the Mayor advised that it would not be possible take any further contributions and with Councillor Benea advising that she did not wish to exercise her right of reply he moved straight on to the vote.

Having thanked all members for their contributions, the Mayor put the motion to a vote which was declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to approve the following motion:

### **“Brent - A Borough of Sanctuary**

#### **This Council notes:**

- That Brent is proud of its diversity, and its history of welcoming refugees and displaced people from around the world fleeing conflict, climate change, discrimination, and violence.
- That, as a Council, we will stand up for those travelling to this country to make a better life for themselves, and champion the contribution of refugees to our Borough.
- That this Council and our communities have worked hard to provide homes and support to refugees – including rehousing **14** Syrian refugee families in London since 2016, **23** Afghan families arriving since 2021 and now supporting **571** Ukrainian individuals through Homes for Ukraine.
- That this Council is committed to supporting refugees, from ESOL classes in our libraries to direct support in our hubs.
- That this Council has consistently condemned the Rwanda resettlement scheme as an economically illiterate and morally reprehensible failure in statecraft; with our borders no more secure, while also simultaneously failing in our international obligations to refugees.
- Failings by the Home Office have a direct impact on both the council and the people of Brent. This includes a record backlog of cases awaiting a decision, a de facto ban on working, and increased homelessness in the borough.
- This Council’s previous support of Refugee Action’s ‘Lift the Ban’ campaign, allowing refugees to work while awaiting an asylum decision.

#### **This Council welcomes:**

- The work of our residents and community partners to provide services, support, care and advice to refugees and displaced people arriving in our

Borough. Brent Council could not provide an effective welcome and support offer to refugees without the active support and participation of countless community organisations.

- The growing movement of Boroughs across London and the country becoming Boroughs of Sanctuary, as a rebuke to anti-refugee rhetoric.

**This Council celebrates:**

- Our refugees' contributions to making Brent the dynamic and diverse place that we call home.
- The resolve of the Council's elected members to provide a welcoming civic community and home for refugees in Brent.
- The previous work undertaken by the Brent Multi-Faith Forum, who have endorsed the City of Sanctuary Charter and who work tirelessly with organisations throughout the borough to support those who have been displaced.

**This Council resolves to:**

- (1) Build on our existing commitment and work with partners to provide real sanctuary and support to refugees in Brent.
- (2) Join the network of cities and towns which promote the inclusion and welfare of people who are fleeing violence and persecution and become a recognised Borough of Sanctuary.
- (3) Work with key partners, commissioned services, and our voluntary sector to achieve Borough of Sanctuary accreditation, celebrating the contribution of those seeking sanctuary.
- (4) Stand ready to provide any support needed and open our arms to innocent people displaced because of the conflict in Gaza.
- (5) To write to the Secretary of State, to encourage the UK to join other nations and bring children injured in Gaza, Sudan and other conflicts around the world to sanctuary in the UK, in order to receive urgent and lifesaving medical treatment."

**11. Reports from the Leader and Cabinet**

The Mayor then invited Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Leader of the Council, to introduce the report updating members on the work being undertaken across each Cabinet portfolio in order to provide ongoing support and services to meet the needs of residents across the borough.

Following on from approval of the motion outlining the Council's commitment to work with the new government, the opportunity was taken to remind members of the work already being undertaken in this respect and to deliver for Brent. This

included lobbying for a fairer funding formula and financial settlement for local government, the development of further employment and skills opportunities, the measures being taken to enhance community safety and tackle anti-social behaviour, the ongoing support being provided for schools and young people and (working in partnership with local providers) the delivery of health services and adult and children social care; the provision of financial support for those residents most in need through the Resident Support Fund, work to address the climate emergency and manage the public realm along with the Council's heritage assets whilst also seeking to deliver an extensive programme of regeneration and growth across the borough, including the provision of affordable and social housing. As such he felt the Council, in line with its core strategic priorities was well placed to continue working to take advantage of any opportunities identified to strengthen Brent's voice on the national stage.

As part of the update, members were also asked to note that no Executive decisions had been taken under the Council's urgency procedures, since the previous update provided for the Council meeting in July.

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

## 12. **Questions from the Opposition and other Non-Cabinet Members**

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

The Mayor advised that five written questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting for response by the relevant Cabinet Member and the written responses circulated within the agenda were noted. The Mayor then invited supplementary questions on the responses provided:

11.1 Councillor Kelcher thanked Councillor Nerva as the Cabinet Member for Community Health & Wellbeing, for the written response to his question about the measures being taken to support Brent in becoming an age friendly borough. In welcoming the detailed nature of the response and progress being made in seeking to secure age friendly status alongside work being led by Dr Tony Burch to help shape the approach further details were sought on the progress of the Planning Group in developing the approach and any experience gained from other boroughs.

In response, Councillor Nerva, in welcoming the interest shown advised that he had invited the Planning Group to present to the Health and Wellbeing Board in the Autumn to help engage other public sector partners in seeking the development of a joined-up approach to ensure Brent (along with key stakeholder and partners) continued to play an active role in developing its own response towards ensure age friendly status for the borough.

- 11.2 Councillor Begum thanked Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, for the written response to her question on the work underway to address the increase in homelessness and work being undertaken through the “Built for Zero” programme and as a supplementary question sought further details on the steps being taken during the 2024-25 financial year to support vulnerable households at risk of homelessness and rough sleepers.

In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt, having highlighted the ongoing pressures in relation to the increase in homelessness advised that in addition to the programme of work and overall strategy already established to address the challenges identified the Council were also set to launch a new communications campaign which aimed to raise awareness of the deepening homelessness emergency in Brent and the practical realities and life changing consequences this had for homeless households. The *Find a place you can afford* campaign would also seek to break the perceived link between homelessness and social housing. In addition, support continued to be provided to those residents seeking alternative accommodation within the private rented sector through a Deposit Guarantee Scheme, with the Council also continuing to work closely with organisations such as St Mungo’s and Advice for Renters in relation to the provision of support, advice and guidance for those households living within temporary accommodation or at risk of homelessness. In order to support the work being undertaken a count of rough sleepers across the borough was also in the process of being undertaken with the Council also seeking to work with a broad range of stakeholders across Brent to ensure that the homeless crisis was more fully understood. As a final issue, Councillor Muhammed Butt also highlighted the importance of work continuing on a regional basis and with the new Labour government to ensure a coordinated and more holistic approach was adopted towards the way in which homelessness pressures were being addressed, including the support available for refugees and asylum seekers.

- 11.3 Having thanked Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Cabinet Member for Environment and Enforcement, for the response provided on her question seeking details on the measures being taken to tackle fly tipping and enforce and educate around the dumping of rubbish Councillor Kabir, as a supplementary question, sought confirmation on the planned continuation of the Community Skip initiative.

In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (who, following her apologies for absence, advised he was speaking on behalf of Councillor Krupa Sheth in her role as Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement) thanked Councillor Kabir for her question and in recognising the positive impact of the measures outlined within the written response assured members of the plans to continue the Community Skips programme as a much valued initiative by residents. This would, he highlighted, also include a focus on the recycling and reuse of items disposed of through the skips. The additional focus on enforcement activity and increase in fines for fly-tipping outlined within the written response would also, he pointed out, be supported by the launch of a new campaign “Don’t Mess with Brent” which would include enhanced targeted communications to residents and businesses educating them on

their responsibilities in relation to waste management and seeking their support in the identification of persistent fly-tipping offenders.

- 11.4 Whilst noting the written response provided by Councillor Muhammed Butt, Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, to his question regarding the rationale for Wembley Park ward not having been included within the Private Sector Landlord Licensing Scheme Councillor Maurice, as supplementary question, sought further details on the data supporting the decision with, he felt, that ward experiencing many of the same issues as other surrounding areas included within the scheme.

In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt highlighted what he felt to have been the comprehensive nature of the written response setting out the basis on which the Private Rented Sector Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme had been implemented. He confirmed this had included extensive research looking at the Private Rented Sector (PRS) and factors that could be taken into account when selecting the areas for its introduction which had included as key factors housing conditions and significant and persistent problem caused by anti-social behaviour. Highlighting the availability of supporting data within the Fix My Street App, Councillor Muhammed Butt advised the supporting data had identified no grounds supporting the introduction of selective licensing within the Wembley Park ward which had therefore been excluded from the designation. He advised that he would, however, be willing to provide further details on the supporting data should Councillor Maurice identify the specific details required with members also advised of the benefits of the Landlord Licensing Scheme in terms of improving living standards and safeguards for residents within the Private Rented Sector.

- 11.5 Councillor Georgiou in noting the written response from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Growth to the question submitted regarding the impact of any increase in large scale events permitted to be hosted at Wembley Stadium highlighted the importance of the issue for local residents with the response being clear that no further consultation or detailed impact assessment was due to be undertaken by the Council prior to the planning application being considered seeking approval to the change. In outlining what he felt was the need for consideration of the application to be informed by a detailed consultation process with local residents and assessment of the wider impact any increase in the number of event days would have, further details were sought as supplementary question, on why (given the pre application meeting between the applicant, Leader and Chief Executive and favourable outcome reported as a result) it would not be possible for the applicant to also meet with local residents who would be directly impacted by any increase in events hosted at the Stadium.

In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (who following her apologies for absence, advised he was speaking on behalf of Councillor Tatler in her role as Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Growth) whilst highlighting the successful way a majority of large-scale events hosted by the Stadium were delivered also recognised the impact on local residents. As a result, he highlighted the efforts being made to ensure that the planning application submitted by the Stadium seeking approval to increase the permitted number of events contained the necessary supporting mitigations and struck a

healthy balance in terms of seeking to minimise the impact and disruption for the local community and wider benefits for the borough. The issues and concerns identified in relation to transport provision, such as capacity issues highlighted by Chiltern Railway, were also acknowledged with the Council committed to continue working in partnership with the Stadium and other partners to ensure that these were addressed and efforts to engage with local residents were continued moving forward.

Having thanked members for their written questions and Cabinet Members for the responses provided to the supplementary questions, the Mayor then advised that the remainder of time available would be used for an open question time session to the Cabinet. Questions relating to the following issues were raised and responses provided, as set out below:

- (i) Councillor Chan regarding efforts being made to address the harm associated with the increase in Adult Gaming Centres within the borough and specifically across Harlesden and Kensal Green, given the detrimental impact on local residents and benefits being created by wider investment and regeneration in the town centres and the high streets affected.

In response Councillor Nerva, as Cabinet Member for Community Health & Wellbeing, recognised the concerns raised given the social, economic, and public health impacts of gambling but highlighted that the Council did not currently have the powers required to prevent these type of premises from seeking to operate across the borough. Work was ongoing in seeking to lobby the new Labour government on the need for reform of the current Gambling Act including the introduction of a public health approach with Councillor Nerva advising that he would be willing to work with local councillors on the issue and visit any sites of ongoing concern.

- (ii) Councillor Jayanti Patel regarding the increase in developments that included basement design works without seeking the necessary planning and building regulation permissions with specific reference made, as an example to sites in Barnhill ward and a request for enforcement action to be taken.

In response Councillor Muhammed Butt (responding on behalf of Councillor Krupa Sheth as Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement) advised that if details were provided he would ensure the issues raised were investigated.

- (iii) Councillor Choudry who, in commending the more collaborative approach and work already undertaken by the new Labour government in relation to proposals for planning and infrastructure, energy and transport reform, was keen to explore how the Council would be seeking to engage and work with the new government to ensure Brent was also able to engage and take advantage of the opportunities identified.

In response, Councillor Mili Patel, as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources also commended the progress being made by the new government to deliver economic stability and growth, particularly through planning and infrastructure reform, which she felt was in direct contrast to the

approach taken by the previous Conservative government. An assurance was provided that the new proposals and reforms being introduced would be carefully studied to identify any opportunities available to support the continued delivery of housing and infrastructure across the borough, with the Council also keen to work with the new Energy Secretary to explore ways in which energy bills could be reduced through investment in greener technology. The new governments more collaborative approach with the regions and regional Mayors was also welcomed, especially in relation to proposals seeking wider devolution of powers relation to employment skills and training.

- (iv) Councillor Mistry regarding concerns and issues being raised by businesses around Queensbury Station Parade in relation to a rough sleeper currently using the roundabout. Whilst St Mungo's and the Neighbourhood Manager were aware of the situation it was felt action was required to ensure the individual was provided with the necessary support and the impact on neighbouring businesses was addressed.

In response, Councillor Farah, as the Cabinet Member for Public Safety and Partnerships, advised of the need to recognise the person involved as an individual for whom he would ensure the necessary engagement and support was offered.

- (v) Councillor Lorber regarding concerns about the planning and coordination of recent road works being undertaken at the same time along Harrow Road and East Lane which had gridlocked areas across the borough, including parts of Northwick Park, Preston and Sudbury wards and caused wider transport delays. As a result, the relevant Lead Member was asked to ensure that when future requests were made by utility companies for these types of works ward members were consulted in advance so they were aware and could highlight any potential issues in an attempt to minimise disruption and the impact on local residents and the surrounding areas.

In response Councillor Muhammed Butt (responding on behalf of Councillor Krupa Sheth as Cabinet Member for Environment and Enforcement) advised that he recognised the concerns raised, which had also been highlighted by a number of other ward councillors facing the same issues along Harrow Road. Confirming it was current practice to inform ward councillors of these types of road works, where planned in advance, some had involved the need for emergency works for which more limited notice was available. Work would, however, continue to ensure that as far as possible future works were coordinated with advance notice continuing to be provided via the Council's website and via social media recognising the current level of infrastructure upgrade works being undertaken by utility companies across the borough.

- (vi) Councillor Miller regarding the difficulties he was experiencing in being able to support a family who had been placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation within his ward (with issues relating to mould, poor ventilation and lack of space) by another local authority.

In response Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing, felt this highlighted the ongoing challenges



being experienced by local authorities across London as a result of the current housing crisis and limited supply of temporary accommodation available. In issues, such as the case highlighted involving safety concerns, he advised that these should be raised with the Council's Private Sector Housing team so they could investigate and, if necessary, take the necessary enforcement action. As a further measure, he also highlighted the introduction of the Private Sector Landlord Licensing Scheme as a means of safeguarding tenants and ensuring landlords were aware and maintained necessary standards in terms of the quality and safety of their accommodation through which enforcement action could also be taken, as required.

- (vii) Councillor Georgiou in also recognising the scale of the current housing crisis and need to increase the supply of affordable and social housing units sought details on the reasons for the 523 properties currently identified as vacant across Brent and measures being taken to bring them back into use.

In response Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing, felt it important to recognise that the total number of vacant properties referred to had included the decanted units within the South Kilburn development that had been scheduled for demolition which, he pointed out, had been clarified within the response to a recent Freedom of Information Request. Recognising the different reasons why properties may be vacant (including issues such as probate) he advised members the Council had introduced various schemes designed to incentivise landlords to bring vacant properties back into use. This had included an increase in the Council Tax charge on empty properties, with the need to take all available measures to increase the supply of housing recognised, given the 33,000 people currently on the housing waiting list.

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

### **13. Report from Chairs of Scrutiny Committees**

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

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

- The Chair took the opportunity to thank those members who had stepped down at the end of the previous Municipal Year for the support provided during their time on the Committee and also to welcome those members who had subsequently joined the Committee.

- The work being undertaken to finalise the Committee’s work programme for 2024-25 which, recognising its flexible and broad ranging nature, had already included engagement with Brent Youth Parliament to ensure the views of young people across the borough were included and planned engagement with a range of other key stakeholders including local health providers, housing, social care and the local community.
- The significant work already undertaken by the Committee, since the start of the 2024-25 Municipal Year which had included a focus on the Annual School Standards and Achievement report, implementation of the Brent Carer’s Strategy and update on the Brent Reablement Service with options also being considered to provide a more localised focus for future scrutiny meetings and review activity.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Ketan Sheth for his update and then invited Councillor Conneely as chair of the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee to introduce the update report on the work being undertaken by that Committee. The following issues were highlight as part of the update:

- The work also being undertaken to finalise the Committee’s work programme for 2024-25 which, again recognising its dynamic and broad ranging nature, the Chair was keen to ensure included engagement with relevant stakeholders and also input from the local community.
- The wide-ranging nature of scrutiny activity undertaken by the Committee since the last update, with key issues highlighted as an outcome of this work including:
  - the need identified to address and provide a consistent methodology across London for assessing viability in relation to the delivery of affordable housing alongside stricter building standards and quality measures and more stringent targets for the delivery of affordable social housing;
  - the work being undertaken to develop a ‘Public Health’ approach towards delivery of the Safer Brent Community Safety Strategy, involving work with key partners to act earlier, identify wider support needs and improve interventions to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, with a particular focus on knife crime aligned with regional and national strategies.
- The ongoing focus and work of the Committee in seeking to encourage, where identified as required, change and improvements in the way services were being delivered for local communities across the borough involving all relevant stakeholders.

The Mayor thanked Councillors Ketan Sheth and Conneely for presenting their updates and it was **RESOLVED** that the contents of both reports be noted.

Following the updates provided, the Mayor advised that the remainder of time available would be open for questions from non-cabinet members to the Scrutiny Chairs. As no questions were raised, the Mayor thanked the Scrutiny Chair’s for their contribution and moved to the next item.

#### 14. **Annual Report from the Chairs of the Audit & Standards Advisory and Audit & Standards Committees**

The Mayor invited Councillor Chan, as Vice-Chair of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee and Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee to introduce the joint annual report from both Committees, updating members on the work undertaken during the 2023-24 Municipal Year.

Prior to introducing the report Councillor Chan welcomed David Ewart to the meeting in his role as Independent Chair of the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee and in terms of issues highlighted drew members' attention to the important role and work undertaken by the Committee in relation to monitoring and advising on various governance matters relating to audit activity, the Council's finance, accounting and regulatory framework as well as members standards of conduct.

Members were advised that the approach adopted towards the work undertaken had also included consideration of the Council's risk management structure and strategic risk management process with an increasing focus not only on the effectiveness of governance processes relating to the first but also "second line" of defence in terms of the monitoring and reporting of information and data. Other key areas of focus highlighted in terms of risk had included the challenges linked to the ongoing uncertain economic climate in which the Council was having to operate, including the current rate of inflation and high interest rates, along with the Council's financial forecast position and medium-term financial outlook given the current £13m overspend forecast and unprecedented nature of demand driving these pressures in relation to the rise in homelessness, cost of temporary accommodation and reduction in the supply of suitable alternative accommodation. In recognising these were pressures being experienced on a national and regional basis, and not unique to Brent, the Councillor Chan advised the actions being taken in seeking to address and mitigate against the risks identified would continue to be monitored as part of the efforts being made to maintain a financially resilient, balanced and sustainable budget position.

In concluding, Councillor Chan thanked David Ewart and the other members of the Committee along with officers for their support over the year and advised that both Committees were looking forward to continuing their work with members and other key stakeholders to ensure the necessary focus was maintained in relation to compliance and control of the Council's key governance arrangements.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Chan for the update provided and it was **RESOLVED** to note the Joint Annual Report provided by the Chairs' of the Audit & Standards and Audit & Standards Advisory Committees outlining the work undertaken by both Committee's during 2023-24.

#### 15. **Non Cabinet Members' Debate**

In accordance with Standing Order 34, the Mayor advised that the next item on the agenda was the non-cabinet member debate, with the subject chosen for consideration being the Declaration of a Housing Emergency.

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

The Mayor then invited Councillor Dixon to introduce the motion which had been submitted as the basis for the Non-Cabinet Member debate. In moving the motion, Councillor Dixon began by recognising the ongoing pressures being experienced by the Council given the 150 families currently presenting as homeless each week and number of households needing to be supported in temporary accommodation by Councils across London and the country as a whole. In highlighting the way in which her casework was currently dominated in seeking to advocate and provide support for residents in housing need, Councillor Dixon took the opportunity to provide some specific examples of the impact on individuals and families relating to their health and wellbeing, attainment and employment. In welcoming the pledges made by the new Labour government the motion, in seeking to support the declaration of a housing emergency and delivery of the necessary interventions following what was felt to be the failure of the previous Conservative government in this respect, had been designed to highlight the Council's support for the changes proposed in relation to the National Policy Planning Framework (including restoring mandatory housing targets) and work to reform Local Plans and strengthen the planning presumption in favour of sustainable development alongside tackling Section 21 no fault evictions. As a result, Councillor Dixon hoped all members would support the motion submitted as the basis for the debate.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Dixon for introducing the motion on behalf of the Labour Group and then opened the debate for contributions from other members.

In opening the contributions, Councillor Kelcher began by paying tribute to Councillor Dixon for the way in which she had introduced the debate and recognised that the approach required to address the housing emergency in terms of encouraging affordable and social housing development would not always be easy and would require strong leadership as, he felt, had been demonstrated in Brent. The support already identified by the new government had also been recognised and welcomed in terms of the reintroduction of mandatory housing targets, consultation on a new growth-focused planning system, creation of a new task force to accelerate the delivery of new housing sites and programme of funding to increase capacity across planning departments as well as proposals to open up grey belt sites for new housing. Taken together he felt the benefits arising from the proposed reforms in relation to planning and infrastructure planning reform would help to stabilise and grow the economy delivering wider social benefits. Support was also expressed for the approach adopted by the new government and intervention by the Deputy Prime Minister in relation to the delivery of major infrastructure projects, including new data centres in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire and for more of these type of decisions to be brought under the remit of the critical infrastructure process in order to ensure they were delivered at pace and encouraged further investment. As part of the new government's approach, the lifting of restrictions on the development of in shore wind facilities within the UK was also supported and whilst recognising that some of the decisions needing to be made would attract opposition he hoped members, in support of the motion, would recognise the need for action to deliver the necessary changes in seeking to address the challenges outlined.

As a further contribution to the debate, Councillor Maurice highlighted what he felt was a need to address the lack of family sized dwellings being delivered within housing schemes being approved across the borough and also the failure of many schemes being able (based on current viability) to meet the required target for

provision of affordable housing units, which he felt also needed to be considered as an approach towards alleviating the current housing crisis. Concern was also expressed at the proposal within the motion seeking to suspend the right-to-buy discount, which Councillor Maurice advised he did not support given what he felt were the wider benefits in seeking to encourage home ownership including, as an example, the way in which properties were maintained. In outlining further concerns relating to the motion, it was also felt further clarification was required in relation to the proposal focused on the provision of financial support to purchase more homes from private landlords and how that would be delivered.

As a further contribution in support of the motion, Councillor Molloy also highlighted the frustration being faced by ward councillors in seeking to support families in housing need, including those where the only solution involved an out of borough placement moving them away from their extended families and other support networks. Reflecting on the scale of the crisis (including the associated financial pressures) he hoped all councillors would support the motion in seeking to recognise and declare a housing emergency and endorse the actions and approach being sought in response.

Following on, Councillor Mahmood also spoke to highlight the extent of issues being raised at his ward surgeries, in relation to housing need and suitability of available accommodation. The current level of households presenting to the Council as homeless was also felt to represent an indictment of the previous Conservative government's housing policy with Councillor Mahmood outlining his hope that the policies being developed by the new Labour government would be able to assist and support local authorities in tackling the crisis including the ability and support to prioritise the delivery of more affordable housing.

Councillor Ethapemi, also speaking in support of the motion, was keen to support the pledge made by the new Labour government to get Britain building again and actions being introduced to support this including the restoration of mandatory housing targets, especially within the context of the financial pressures being faced by local authorities in relation to the cost of temporary accommodation. As part of the approach outlined, he was keen to ensure the housing being built was genuinely affordable with a focus on increasing the supply of good quality temporary as well as permanent accommodation and on this basis hoped all members would support the motion recognising the pledges made by the government as a means of seeking to tackle the housing crisis.

In highlighting his support for the principle and sentiments expressed within the motion, Councillor Georgiou also felt there was a need to reflect on the ongoing number of households who continued to present to the Council as homeless each week and challenging and often very difficult nature of housing need related casework being received by all councillors. Whilst supporting the need for action to address the crisis, he felt the motion had failed to focus on an important issue in relation to the need to increase the supply of genuinely affordable and also social housing in order to assist in reducing the Council's growing housing waiting list, with some residents facing a wait of 10-15 years for a suitable property. In highlighting specific examples, reference was made to the limited level of social housing being provided within the development of the Council owned site at Cecil Avenue and also at the delay in delivery of the Morland Gardens scheme, given the planned inclusion of social housing on that site. Concern was also expressed at the number

of development schemes being approved which contained less than the required level of genuinely affordable and very little or no social housing with a need identified, he felt, for more ambition in seeking to press developers to meet the 50% target for provision of affordable housing within any schemes being approved.

As a final contribution, Councillor Fraser spoke briefly to outline her concerns at the comments made by Councillor Maurice earlier in the debate relating to the interest of Council tenants as opposed to home owners in maintaining their properties believing that respect needed to be given to all residents irrespective of their housing tenure.

As there were no further contributions, the Mayor then invited Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, to summarise and close the debate.

In drawing the debate to a close, Councillor Muhammed Butt thanked Councillor Dixon and members for their support in recognising the ongoing challenges and pressures faced by the Council in relation to the housing crisis along with the impact on those residents and households directly affected. As a Council, Councillor Muhammed Butt felt it important to recognise the efforts being made to deliver as much social and affordable housing as possible within the borough, with the Council having received one of the highest levels of New Homes Bonus (£7.8m) in the country. Comparing this to the lack of action and support provided by the previous Conservative government he assured members of the Council's commitment to work alongside the new Labour government in support of their plans to build 1.5million new homes and in continuing to demonstrate Brent's ambitious approach in terms of the ongoing delivery of affordable and social housing within developments across the borough. In addition, he also highlighted the advice, guidance and support being provided to residents which he pointed out would also need to include a focus on use of the private rented sector (supported within the borough through the landlord licensing scheme) as a means of maximising the supply of available and suitable properties to address current levels of housing need. Taken together it was felt the approach outlined within the motion would best serve the borough in terms of addressing the current housing emergency which he hoped all members would support, as a final outcome of the debate.

Having thanked members for their contributions, the Mayor then moved to the vote on the motion moved as the basis for the Non-Cabinet Member debate which was declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to approve the following motion as the outcome of the non-cabinet member debate:

#### **“Declaration of a Housing Emergency**

##### **This Council notes:**

- London is the epicentre of the country's housing crisis, with a quarter of Londoners living in poverty after paying for their homes.

- In one of the wealthiest cities in the world, more than one child in every classroom is homeless and living in temporary accommodation, while rough sleeping is up 50% over this decade.
- Councils in London are spending £90m per month on temporary accommodation for homeless people - up almost 40% on last year.
- The dream of homeownership is out of reach for young people. The government have failed to act despite the housing crisis acting as one of the country's biggest barriers to growth.
- The government has spent billions of pounds on housing benefit every year, which goes into the pockets of private landlords without creating any new assets.
- Without intervention, the number of new affordable homes built will fall sharply in coming years thanks to high interest rates and runaway construction cost inflation.

**This Council further notes:**

- The Housing Needs Service in Brent has seen a 12% increase in homelessness approaches in 2023/-24 (7,300) compared to 2022/-23 (6,529). The total number of homeless families living in B&B and Annexe accommodation has risen to 485.
- Many Councils are being forced to book rooms in commercial hotels to meet statutory duties. In Brent this has driven a £13.4m overspend. These issues are not unique to Brent and have impacted the whole of the country – but especially London.
- There are 5,688 households in A-C banding on the waiting list. At Band C, the average waiting time for a 2-bed home is 8 years, with a 4-bed home rising to 24 years.
- GLA grant funding per unit of affordable housing is approx. £195k, with typical build costs per average unit in the region of £450k. Brent Council has planning permission ready or has submitted applications for 423 more affordable units, but many face a significant funding gap, and will not be viable without an increase in available subsidy.

**This Council welcomes:**

Pledges made during the current election campaign:

- To update the National Policy Planning Framework, including restoring mandatory housing targets.
- To get Britain building again, creating jobs across England with 1.5 million new homes over the next parliament.

- To work with local authorities to reform Local Plans and strengthen the planning presumption in favour of sustainable development, supported by additional planning officers.

**This Council resolves to:**

- (1) Work with other local authorities in London that have declared a housing emergency to calling on the incoming government to unlock the funding needed to deliver the affordable homes Brent desperately needs.
- (2) Write to the Secretary of State to recommend the following steps:
  - The suspension of the right-to-buy discount.
  - A new Housing Revenue Account funding settlement to increase the supply of housing, improve standards and support retrofitting.
  - Financial support to immediately purchase more homes from private landlords.
  - To review the Local Housing Allowance available for Temporary Accommodation.”

**16. Maternity and Paternity Arrangements for Councillors - Allowances, Leave and s85 Local Government Act 1972**

The Mayor invited Councillor Mili Patel, as Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, to introduce a report from the Corporate Director Law & Governance outlining changes in the maternity/paternity policy within the Members Allowances Scheme and also, as part of the changes for which approval was being sought) to absence on the ground of approved maternity leave being agreed as a reason for non-attendance by a member under the requirements within s.85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

In introducing the report, members were advised that the proposals outlined for consideration had been based on a review of current provisions in the Members Allowances Scheme which had included feedback from Members who had undertaken maternity or paternity leave, as well as benchmarking across other London boroughs. In highlighting the importance of parental leave in terms of the support available for members and in ensuring the role of local councillor was able to continue retaining and attracting as diverse a range of individuals as possible, it was hoped all councillors would support the proposals outlined.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Mili Patel for introducing the report and then opened the debate for contributions from other members.

In supporting the proposals outlined, Councillor Miller took the opportunity to highlight (based on his personal experience) the importance, value and benefits provided through the parental leave provisions in relation to the family unit as a whole. These comments were echoed by Councillor Afzal (also speaking from a personal experience as a new parent) who hoped all members would support the proposals outlined.



Councillor Mitchell (highlighting the benefits provided from her personal experience) also spoke to outline her support for the parental leave provisions given their importance as a means of ensuring inclusivity and also the wider benefits in relation to care provision, which she was keen to ensure included a wider and more holistic approach.

As a final contribution, Councillor Kelcher (again highlighting his personal experience) also felt it important to reflect on the importance in ensuring the provision of parental leave remained as accessible and wide as possible in terms of supporting councillors in being able to maintain and fulfil their roles. He was therefore keen to ensure that the provisions remained subject to ongoing review with it made clear, when members were on parental leave, of the reason for them being unable to engage in their role as councillor during that period.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak the Mayor thanked members for their contribution and invited Councillor Mili Patel to exercise her right of reply. In closing the debate, Councillor Mili Patel thanked members for their support and advised of the intention to ensure that the provisions for parental leave remained subject to ongoing review and feedback. Whilst welcoming the proposal to include approved maternity leave as a permitted reason to waive the requirement within s.85 of the Local Government Act 1972 for councillor attendance at meetings, she advised the need had also been recognised to ensure that when members were unable to engage in their role as councillor due to parental leave this was clearly communicated.

Having thanked Councillor Mili Patel for closing the debate, the Mayor then put the recommendations in the report to the vote and they were unanimously declared **CARRIED**.

Council therefore unanimously **RESOLVED**:

- (1) In accordance with s.85 of the Local Government Act 1972, to agree (in relation to each and every relevant member) absence on approved maternity leave as a reason for non-attendance at any meeting of the Council, Cabinet, Committee or Sub-Committee from 8th July 2024 onwards.
- (2) To adopt the changes to the Members Allowance Scheme in relation to the maternity & paternity provisions contained in the appendix to the report.
- (3) To authorise the Corporate Director of Law & Governance to amend the Constitution accordingly if required, including making any necessary incidental or consequential changes.

## 17. **Representation of Political Groups on Committees**

The Mayor advised that as a result of the outcome from the Queens Park by-election not having affected the previous overall balance of membership on the Council there would be no requirement to undertake a further review of the existing representation of political groups on committees. As a result, members were informed the item listed had been withdrawn from consideration on the agenda.

18. **Urgent Business**

There were no urgent items of business raised at the meeting so the Mayor, in closing the meeting, thanked all members for their co-operation and support and advised that he looked forward to seeing everyone again in person at the next Full Council which would be held at 6pm on Thursday 19 September 2024

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

COUNCILLOR TARIQ DAR MBE  
Mayor