



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Thursday 19 September 2024 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Tariq Dar MBE

COUNCILLORS:

Aden	Afzal
Agha	Ahmed
Akram	Bajwa
Begum	Benea
M Butt	S Butt
Chan	Chappell
Chohan	Choudry
Conneely	Crabb
Dixon	Donnelly-Jackson
Farah	Gbajumo
Georgiou	Grahl
Hack	Hirani
Hylton	Johnson
Kabir	Kelcher
Kennelly	Long
Lorber	Mahmood
Matin	Maurice
Miller	Mistry
Moeen	Molloy
Nerva	J.Patel
M Patel	Rajan-Seelan
Shah	Krupa 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 Ahmadi Moghaddam, Collymore, Ethapemi, Fraser, Kansagra, Knight (currently on maternity leave), Mitchell, Rubin, Ketan Sheth and Tatler.

In raising a Point or Order on the apologies received, Councillor Georgiou felt that a statement should be made clarifying the reasons for the Deputy Mayor's absence at the meeting. In response, Debra Norman (Corporate Director Law & Governance) clarified that there was no requirement for any reason or statement to be provided in relation to the Deputy Mayor having submitted her apologies for absence and on this basis the Mayor moved on to the next item.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the of the previous Council meeting held on Monday 8 July 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) 999 Emergency Services Flag Raising

The Mayor began his announcements by paying tribute to all those who worked and volunteered across the emergency services.

In order to recognise and celebrate their dedication and contribution he advised he was honoured to have hosted a flag raising ceremony for Emergency Services Day on the 9 September 24 which had also commemorated over 7,500 members of the UK emergency services who had tragically lost their lives in the line of duty over the last 200 years.

(ii) Death of Bishop Ann Roberts

The Mayor advised it was with much sadness he had to inform members about the recent death of Bishop Ann Roberts.

In paying tribute to Bishop Ann Roberts, the Mayor recognised the vital role she had played within local communities across Brent, including having started the Young Mum's project, now known as Brent Family Support, over 47 years ago. In acknowledging her tireless work and effort to support young mothers and disadvantaged families the Mayor highlighted how much she would be missed and on behalf of the London Borough of Brent, ended by offering heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Bishop Ann Roberts.

Before moving on, all members were asked to join the Mayor in observing a minutes silence in memory of Bishop Ann Roberts.

All present at the meeting then stood to join the Mayor in observing a minutes silence.

(iii) 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 no requests had been received for the presentation of any deputations at the meeting.

8. **Questions from Members of the Public**

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

Question 1 from Smita Patel regarding the role of Adult Social Care & the CQC in monitoring the placement and quality of care of vulnerable adults (particularly those affected by mental health issues) by private care providers in small converted residential care facilities

Question 2 from Carol McKoy regarding Investment in street cleaning & grounds maintenance

Question 3 from Andy Brommage regarding highway maintenance in South Kenton

Question 4 from Martin Francis regarding progress on delivery of the Bridge Park & Morland Garden development schemes

Members noted the written responses provided to the questions, which had been circulated with the agenda. The Mayor advised that those members of the public who had submitted questions had also been invited to attend the meeting in order to ask any supplementary question. Whilst he was pleased to welcome Ashleye Gunn (on behalf of Carol McKoy) and Martin Francis members were advised that Andy Brommage had not been able to attend with the written responses provided in relation to his question therefore been noted. Members were advised that whilst also unable to attend a written supplementary question had subsequently been received from Smita Patel, on which a response would be provided outside of the meeting.

The following supplementary questions were then addressed by those members of the public present to the relevant Cabinet Member(s).

Question 2 supplementary Question from Ashleye Gunn (representing Carol McKoy) to Councillor Krupa Sheth, Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement.

In thanking Councillor Krupa Sheth for the written response provided to the original question submitted by Carol McKoy, Ashleye Gunn sought further details on the approach taken in terms of the frequency of street cleans along Malvern Road compared to Malvern Place, given the location of shops, take aways, a park and schools on Malvern Road (which was currently cleaned twice a month) compared to Malvern Place receiving two cleans per week. In addition, whilst highlighting a recent deep clean of Malvern Road, it was pointed out that the grass verges had not been cut and the pedestrian section between the two schools appeared to have been missed as part of that work with a request made for this to be reviewed and completed.

In thanking Ashleye Gunn for attending in order to highlight the issues raised, Councillor Krupa Sheth advised she would arrange a review of the cleaning scheduled in that location and any outstanding work needing to be completed, on which a further direct response would be provided following the meeting.

Question 4 supplementary question from Martin Francis to Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council responding on behalf of Councillor Tatler Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Growth)

In thanking Councillor Tatler for the written response provided, Martin Francis in asking his supplementary question began by taking the opportunity to highlight that it had been nearly 10 years since former Councillor Dan Filson had warned against dealing with General Mediterranean Holdings (GMH) and 7 years since the Conditional Land Sale Agreement relating to Bridge Park had been approved. Referring to the latest accounts from Stonebridge Real Estate Development Ltd (subsidiary of GMH registered in Luxembourg) he pointed out these had shown a reduction in valuation of the company from £36m to £29.5m. Members were also reminded of the aim outlined within the Council's original decision notice relating to the agreement back in 2013 which, he pointed out, had been for the council pursue the option of GMH (and its subsidiary company) developing the Unisys and Bridge Park sites for residential and commercial development to fund a new Bridge Park sports centre with the site value of Bridge Park put at £4m and the cost of a new Sports Centre at £9m and the difference made up from the GMH agreement and Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL). Given the financial update provided he therefore asked whether Bridge Park was still felt to be financially viable and if an update was available on the timeline for completion of the financial viability assessment of the GMH plans and when they were expected to go to planning.

In responding on behalf of Councillor Tatler, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council), thanked Martin Francis for his question and attendance at the meeting along with the reference to former Councillor Dan Filson. In terms of the current position, he advised that the Council were still in discussions with GMH as part of the process in reviewing the plans for Bridge Park so could not give a precise date, at this stage, as to when final design proposals were likely to be submitted to planning. Confirmation was, however, provided on the Council's intention to undertake consultation regarding the general principles of the development at Bridge Park in order to gauge views, with the Council remaining committed to realising the wider opportunities and potential available through the Bridge Park development recognising the commitment of key stakeholders in seeking to progress the original development proposals. In terms of more detailed

timescales, the Leader advised he would be willing to provide these once they had been finalised.

The Mayor thanked Ashleyle Gunn and Martin Francis for their attendance and supplementary questions along with the Cabinet Members for their responses 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 he had accepted a request for a petition to be presented at the meeting. The petition, containing a total of 1210 signatures, had been submitted by the Brent & Harrow Palestine Solidarity Campaign (with Sheila Guhadasan as lead petitioner) and was related to a Divest for Palestine campaign.

Unless otherwise indicated by members, the Mayor advised he intended to allow up to five minutes for presentation of the petition before then providing Councillor Mili Patel (as Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Finance & Resources) up to two minutes to respond.

As no objections were raised on the approach outlined, the Mayor welcomed Sheila Guhadasan to the meeting and prior to inviting her to present the petition took the opportunity to remind everyone present at the meeting that one of the things he was most proud about as Mayor was the diverse nature of the borough and peaceful relationships that existed between its many different communities enabling them to live side by side in peace and harmony. Whilst advising that his heart went out to all those affected by the conflict in Israel and Gaza and recognising the different ways in which people expressed their solidarity with those affected, the Mayor was keen to ensure the efforts to foster community cohesion within the borough were maintained during consideration of the item for which he thanked everyone for their support.

The Mayor then invited Sheila Guhadasan to present the petition, who began by thanking the Mayor and advising she was being supported in her presentation by two Brent residents one of Palestinian and the other of Jewish heritage. Highlighting the current number of signatures received (totalling over 2000 including 773 via an e-petition) it was pointed out these included residents from all faith and backgrounds and the petition calling on the Council to recognise what were felt to be its legal and moral responsibilities and join the growing number of Councils, public bodies and institutions divesting for Palestine

Referring to the thousands of Palestinian lives lost during the current Israeli assault on the Gaza strip, almost half of whom had been children, Sheila Guhadasan felt it important to recognise the impact in terms of 90% of Gaza's population having also been displaced, many on multiple occasions, and nowhere being safe to shelter with families also facing famine due to the ongoing blockade and targeting of key infrastructure. This was on top of what the petitioners felt to be the illegal settlement of the West Bank and ongoing occupation and oppression of Palestinians in Gaza, which it was felt required a stand to be taken and everything possible to be done in an attempt to bring the suffering to an end.

Referring to an interim ruling in January 2024 by the International Court of Justice, Sheila Guhadasan felt the UK as a state party to the Genocide Convention had a binding obligation to employ all means reasonably available to prevent and deter what those in support of the petition regarded as further genocidal acts with UN experts having issued a statement demanding that states and companies stop arms transfers to Israel, and that financial institutions (including banks and pension funds) should cease investing in arms companies supplying Israel in order to avoid what the petitioners advised had been described as repercussions for complicity. Highlighting that the International Court of Justice in July 2024 had also confirmed that Israel's treatment and occupation of Palestinian land was illegal and was felt to amount to systematic discrimination on racial and ethnic grounds, the maintenance of which should not be supported, it was also pointed out the UN General Assembly had now overwhelmingly passed a resolution demanding that Israel end without delay what was described as its unlawful presence in the occupied Palestinian territory and should do so within 12 months. As a result, the petitioners outlined what they felt to be the clear legal basis and responsibility on the Council to take immediate action in seeking to avoid complicity.

In terms of the specific action being sought, Sheila Guhadasan advised the petition was therefore calling on the Council:

- To divest all funds administered by the Council, including local government pension scheme funds from companies complicit in Israel's stance against the Palestinians. This included arms companies supplying Israel with weapons, military technology, companies providing infrastructure for Israel's military occupation of Palestinian land as well as companies conducting business activity in Israel's settlement on Palestinian land.
- To use its influence as part of the London Collective Investment Vehicle (LCIV) to publicly lobby for divestment from companies complicit in supporting what were felt to be abuses being undertaken by Israel; and
- To commit to ending procurement contracts with companies complicit in the same action.

In terms of wider action, it was pointed out that the London Borough of Waltham Forest had already made a commitment to divest with similar petitions also being presented to a number of other London Council's and the same campaign happening in many other parts of the country. In summing up, Sheila Guhadasan felt it important to recognise Brent's pride in being one of the most diverse boroughs in London and the opportunity now available in seeking to support the divestment campaign to demonstrate the importance in the way its values relating to equality, diversity and justice were being upheld. In advising that the Brent and Harrow Palestine Solidarity Campaign would also welcome the opportunity to meet with the Brent Pension Fund Sub Committee in order to continue the discussions and secure what it was hoped would be a commitment towards divestment as soon as possible Sheila Guhadasan ended by quoting the words of poet Bex Thomas; "Years from now when your child asks what did you do? Will you tell them I looked away...or will you tell them I wrote, I marched, I listened, I heard, I helped, I bore witness, used my power, used my privilege".

Having thanked Sheila Guhadasan for presenting the petition, the Mayor then invited Councillor Milli Patel, as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, to respond.

In responding, Councillor Milli Patel began by echoing the sentiments expressed by the Mayor in advance of the petition being presented and reaffirmed that Brent remained a proudly diverse and welcoming community with the Council's thoughts remaining with all those affected by the conflict in the Middle East.

In terms of the actions being sought within the petition, the opportunity was taken to outline the way in which the Council was already seeking to deliver an ethically responsible Pension Fund investment strategy. Whilst working hard to deliver this approach it was pointed out this also needed to be balanced against a fiduciary duty to ensure the fund performed well, providing long term stable returns for the scheme members who relied on it with an assurance provided, however, that the Council did not actively invest directly in UN considered occupied territories or actively in arms companies. Turning to the specific requests made by the petitioners, Councillor Mili Patel advised that she had already asked the Council's Chief Finance Officer to conduct a full audit of the Council's and Pension Fund allocations in line with the UN's Principles for Responsible Investment.

In terms of the action being sought in relation to procurement, the petitioners were advised that this approach would need to reflect the requirements within Section 17 of the Local Government Act 1988, which placed restrictions on the considerations local authorities could take into account when procuring goods or services. This included the Council being unable to exclude potential contractors due to trading connections they may have with particular countries or territories. As was the case with all London Boroughs, Brent's Pension Fund was required to have a well-diversified investment strategy and continued to follow best practice by investing in a diverse range of funds. It was noted that the Brent Pension Fund also invested through the London Collective Investment Vehicle with whom Councillor Milli Patel advised she had also been in recent discussions regarding how best to update the Ethical Investment Policy on which lobbying efforts would continue, working alongside counterparts across London, in order to consider the lessons learnt from other Councils on the same issues.

In concluding, Councillor Mili Patel hoped the response provided demonstrated the steps already being taken to review the Council's investments and commitment to the ongoing work that it was recognised was required.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Mili Patel for her response and advised as this concluded consideration of the petition he would move on to the next item.

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 1st Motion (Conservative Group) – Council's participation in the Brent River Catchment Area

The Mayor invited Councillor Hirani to move the first motion, which had been submitted on behalf of the Conservative Group. Councillor Hirani began by referring to several documents dating back a number of years documenting the management of flood risks impacting on a range of locations across Brent, with the Council's Flood Risk Management Strategy making a clear case for the need to prioritise flood alleviation measures. Highlighting similar documents and strategies developed by both the London Boroughs of Harrow and Barnet, Councillor Hirani outlined how this had led to all three boroughs to come together and create the Brent River Catchment Partnership to support the joint development of schemes designed to alleviate and protect against potential flood risks, recognising benefits given the interconnectivity of waterways across all three boroughs. With this as background, she advised the motion was seeking to clarify why it appeared the decision had been taken within Brent to withdraw from the Partnership given the nature of works that continued to be developed in Harrow and Barnet that would directly benefit the residents of Brent and loss of access to associated funding for schemes.

Highlighting reference made within the motion to the types of specific schemes being developed, including flood attenuation works in Byron Recreation ground in Harrow designed to alleviate flooding risks in Wealdstone Brook and surrounding streams, river works in Chandos Park involving the restructuring of the Edgware Brook that fed into the River Brent alongside work in partnership with Thames 21 to undertake river restoration work in Watling Park to address flood alleviation in the Edgware/Burnt Oak area, Councillor Hirani criticised what she felt to be Brent's distancing from these projects not only terms of flood alleviation measures but also in contributing towards the Council's climate ambitions and improved biodiversity. As a result, Councillor Hirani ended by advising that the motion was not only seeking an explanation for the approach adopted within Brent but also calling for the Council to re-engage with the Partnership for the benefit of all those impacted by potential flood risks across the borough.

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

In responding to the motion, Councillor Krupa Sheth began by querying the basis on which the motion had been presented given that officers had confirmed Brent had not withdrawn from the Partnership agreement and, in fact, was continuing to work with both Barnet and Harrow in relation to the delivery of flood alleviation schemes. In highlighting the Council's ongoing commitment to creating a cleaner and greener future, Councillor Krupa Sheth assured members that the delivery and maintenance of cleaner waterways remained an integral part of this approach with, as an example, the Council having been allocated £80k of Levy Funding working with the Environment Agency to deliver a flood alleviation scheme in Wealdstone Brook on which consultants were currently engaged in preparing a design.

As there were no other members who had indicated they wished to speak the Mayor then invited Councillor Hirani to exercise her right of reply. In summing up, Councillor Hirani felt that the response provided was not accurate with the evidence clear, she felt, that Brent had pulled out of the partnership and as a result missed out on access to up to £6m worth of funding. As such she commended her motion to members for support.

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

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

“Council’s participation in the Brent River Catchment Area

In recognising the impact of Brent having withdrawn from the 3 Borough agreement to help improve the Brent River Catchment Area, this Council welcomes:

- The river restoration works being jointly undertaken by Harrow and Barnet Councils to improve the waterways in their boroughs which will not only help with flood alleviation but also contribute to improving biodiversity.
- The proposed flood attenuation works in Byron Recreation ground in Harrow which will hold back up to 20,000 litres of potential flood water from the Wealdstone Brook and surrounding streams and welcomes the river works in Chandos Park involving the restructuring of the Edgware Brook which runs into the River Brent. Further, we applaud the decision of Barnet Council in partnership with Thames 21 to undertake river restoration work in Watling Park to help with flood alleviation in the Edgware/Burnt Oak area.
- All of the proposed river project works in Harrow and Barnet which will directly benefit the residents of Brent. Council since these flood alleviation projects will help reduce the likelihood of flooding from the River Brent and its tributaries in Brent.

Whilst welcoming the volunteer work of Thames 21, CURB (Clean up the River Brent) and LagerCan in helping to keep our waterways clear of illegally dumped fly-tipped waste, this Council regrets the termination of Brent’s partnership with Harrow and Barnet Council’s under the River Brent Catchment Area Partnership.

This Council therefore resolves:

That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Enforcement commence negotiations seeking the Council’s return to the River Brent Catchment Area Partnership before the end of 2024.”

10.2 2nd Motion (Liberal Democrats Group) – Stop the betrayal of Brent’s elderly residents

The Mayor then invited Councillor Georgiou to move the second motion, which had been submitted on behalf of the Liberal Democrats Group. As context for the motion, Councillor Georgiou began by highlighting the recent national election campaign fought by all political parties including Labour’s focus on change and in seeking to address the previous Conservatives Government’s mismanagement of the economy. Despite no reference made during the election campaign, he highlighted that the first decision made by the newly elected Labour Government had been to cut the £300 Winter Fuel Allowance for thousands of pensioners and elderly residents impacting (by his Groups calculation) over 20,000 residents in Brent. Given the direct attack this was felt to represent on the ability of elderly people to keep their homes warm, Councillor Georgiou highlighted that the motion

called on the Labour Administration to ensure the Government was aware of the unfair and unjust nature of the cut and concern at the targeting of elderly members of society as a means in seeking to fill the black hole in public finances left by the previous Conservative Government and to lobby for their reversal in support of elderly residents across Brent.

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

In opening the debate Councillor Jayanti Patel advised that whilst in agreement with the general principle of the motion, the Conservative Group rejected the assertion that the current macroeconomic situation had been due to mismanagement of the economy by the previous Conservative Government with members also reminded of the Liberal Democrats record during their time as part of the coalition government.

In views of a reference made to his age during the previous contribution, Councillor Georgiou sought to raise a Point of Order seeking to challenge the comment on the basis of its relevance to the debate with the Mayor deciding to move on and continue the debate without further comment.

Following on, Councillor Grahl felt it was important to recognise the context and importance of the wider initial actions undertaken by the new Labour Government which had included reaching agreement on pay increases for key public sector workers including teachers and doctors designed to address the previous stance of the Conservative Government and ensure fair pay across key areas of the public sector.

As a further contribution, Councillor Lorber (speaking in support of the motion) also took the opportunity to criticise the approach taken by the new Labour Government highlighting that neither the Prime Minister or Chancellor had mentioned plans to cut the Winter Fuel Allowance as part of their recent election campaign and now appeared to be betraying elderly residents across Brent and the rest of the country. In outlining an interest in the issue, as someone likely to benefit from any reversal in the policy, he ended by outlining what he felt was a need for honesty, decency and fairness in dealing with the challenges left by the previous Conservative Government as opposed to any further pursuit of austerity.

As a final contribution to the debate, Councillor Miller felt that the approach adopted by the new Labour Government had been designed to reflect the dire financial position inherited from the previous Conservative Government with means testing of a universal benefit, especially one involving energy payments, making sense and ensuring those most in need continued to receive support. In terms of the comments made in relation to manifesto pledges he ended by also reminding members of the Liberal Democrats record and approach taken in this respect as part of the last coalition government.

As 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 felt it deeply hypocritical that the Labour Party had spent the last decade criticising the Conservative Government for their stance in relation to austerity but now appeared to be continuing the same policy with elderly

residents as their first target and felt this should be an issue considered by all members when deciding whether to support the motion.

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

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

“Stop the betrayal of Brent’s elderly residents

The new Labour Government has launched an attack on the ability of elderly people to keep their homes warm over this and future winters, at a time when gas and electricity prices are rising yet again.

Sir Keir Starmer and his Chancellor made no mention of scrapping the Winter Fuel Allowance during the recent election campaign and are now betraying thousands of Brent residents who voted for them in good faith.

The current macroeconomic situation is dire, after years of Tory mismanagement and incompetence, however, it is cruel to be targeting elderly members of society to fill the black hole in our public finances - of which all parties were warned about prior to the election.

Last week, 100% of Liberal Democrat Members of Parliament voted to reject the government’s cruel plans, because elderly residents should not be the first target of Labour’s austerity.

Once again it is now down to local authorities to pick up the mess created by the Labour Government and assist the most vulnerable residents as best we can.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- Write to the Prime Minister and Chancellor to make them aware of the number of Brent residents who will lose out as a result of their actions.
- Lobby the Labour Government to provide additional funding for local Councils and Citizens’ Advice Bureaus to carry out targeted outreach work to help elderly residents claim what they are entitled to.
- Lobby the Labour Government to change the current system so Pension Credit is paid automatically to eligible residents, without the need to apply.
- Work with the Department of Works and Pensions to identify residents in receipt of Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, for a targeted campaign to ensure that all those entitled to receive help in claiming Pension Credit get it, so they can heat their homes this winter.”

10.3 3rd Motion (Labour Group) – Cracking down on gambling harms

The Mayor then invited Councillor Kelcher to move the first motion submitted by the Labour Group. In moving the motion, Councillor Kelcher began by highlighting his ward (Harlesden & Kensal Green) as one of the areas most blighted by the location of adult

gaming centres and gambling premises across the borough leading to one national newspaper having referred to the area as the “Las Vegas of London”. Highlighting how the clustering of gambling premises had become a significant issue in Brent, Councillor Kelcher felt it important to outline the significant and harmful social, economic, and public health impacts of gambling with residents having long been campaigning to prevent the opening of further premises and for more powers to be made available for local authorities to control their operation. Referring to numerous studies which had highlighted links between gambling and poor physical and mental health concern was also expressed at the addictive nature of the different types of gambling machines available and harm identified as a result with the premises often being placed in areas of high deprivation with the most vulnerable residents. As an example, it was pointed out that approximately a quarter of residents in the Harlesden and Kensal Green ward were living at or below the poverty threshold with the placement of six gambling premises along a 600 metre stretch of the Hight Street in Harlesden felt to represent an increasingly insidious epidemic. Expressing concern at the limited powers currently available for local authorities to restrict the opening of gambling premises and their clustering in specific areas along with the resources available to operators seeking to appeal against any attempts to oppose or challenge new applications Councillor Kelcher ended by outlining the focus within the motion in seeking the necessary powers for local authorities to be able to reject premise license applications if they were felt to place the Statement of Gambling Principles at risk and for enhanced regulation of the gambling sector to protect vulnerable residents, which he hoped all members would join him in supporting on a cross party basis.

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

Speaking in support of the motion, Councillor Lorber opened the debate by highlighting one of the initial actions he had undertaken as previous Leader of the Council in seeking to oppose and reverse proposals for the development of a Las Vegas style casino in Wembley Park. In highlighting the need for reform of the current Gambling Act he felt it important to recognise the impact of decisions made by the previous Labour Government (under Tony Blair’s leadership) in terms of deregulation of the gambling sector, which he hoped the new Labour Government would seek to reverse in order to protect vulnerable residents and recognise the social, economic, and public health harm being caused by gambling.

Also speaking to highlight the Conservative Group’s support for the motion, Councillor Maurice outlined the role also played by the Conservative Group in coalition with the Liberal Democrats in opposing the Wembley Park casino and also expressing concerns at the social and economic harm caused by gambling. In supporting the calls for a ban on gambling advertising he advised he would also be supportive of the introduction of a windfall tax on gambling companies Councillor Maurice was also keen to recognise the social and public health impact of gambling and as such advised he would be supporting the motion.

Also speaking in support of the motion, Councillor Kupa Sheth took the opportunity to thank Councillor Kelcher (supported by Councillor Chan) for moving the motion on such an important subject recognising the level of concerns being raised by local communities on the clustering of gambling premises within the borough and their impact. Highlighting the struggle faced by local authorities under the permissive ‘Aim to Permit’ she outlined the restrictions this had placed on Council’s in seeking

to limit the number of betting shops, gaming centres, and bingo halls in any one area despite significant levels of local community opposition to them. In noting that the areas in which these clusters of gambling premises were located tended to experience higher levels of deprivation, poor public health and community safety issues the need to protect those most at risk and be able to reflect local concerns and opposition to them was strongly supported, which would include the necessary power to be able to reject premise licence applications, where felt necessary as part of wider reform of the Gambling Act. As such it was hoped that all members would support the motion and work to progress discussions with the new Labour Government in seeking ways to better protect residents from the harm caused by gambling.

In recognising and supporting the concerns highlighted within the motion, Councillor Choudry also highlighted the impact in relation to the additional clustering of gambling premises across the Willesden Green area with the balance of power needing to be adjusted in favour of being able to better regulate and restrict their operation in line with local Statements of Gambling Principles. As such he also supported the need for urgent reform of the current Gambling legislation especially in relation to the “Aim to Permit” and in support of ensuring the protection of residents and local communities.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Chan highlighted the significant effort made to oppose the proliferation of gambling premises in Harlesden and Kensal Green and frustration at the difficulties created as a result of current legislation in seeking to prevent new premises from being able to open. In referring to the existing clusters of gambling premises as engines of social and economic misery he also expressed concern at their social and public health impact and hoped that on this basis all members would support the motion.

As a final contribution, in view of the remaining time available for debate, Councillor Chappell supported a focus on the concerns highlighted as a significant public health issue and need to address the current permissive approach within legislation under the “Aim to Permit”, also outlining the impact along Willesden High Road which residents felt powerless to address. Recognising the extensive level of research demonstrating the social and public health harm caused by gambling to families and across local communities he supported the need to provide local authorities with the power to be able say no to these types of establishments.

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 Kelcher to exercise his right of reply. In summing up, Councillor Kelcher thanked who those who had contributed to the debate for their support and welcomed the consensus expressed in seeking to treat the concerns highlighted as a social and public health crisis and for reform of the current Gambling legislation and associated planning regulations to prevent further proliferation and clustering of gambling premises and centres in areas where they created the most harm.

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

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

“Cracking down on gambling harms

This Council notes:

- The clustering of gambling premises and Licensed Betting Operators (LBOs) has become a significant issue across all councils, including Brent.
- In Harlesden, on a 600 meter stretch, six gambling premises exist. Residents have long been campaigning to prevent the opening of further premises.
- The social, economic, and public health impacts of gambling are well documented. Numerous studies have highlighted links between gambling and suicidality, depression, anxiety, and poor physical health.
- Online gambling harms are an increasingly insidious epidemic. Research has found 60% of the profits from online gambling come from the 5% of consumers experiencing harm, with half of more than £6 billion online gambler losses attributable to slots.

This Council further notes:

- While the previous government’s Gambling Act Review white paper sought to amend our gambling laws so they are fit for a digital age, they did not afford sufficient Parliamentary time to formalise the legislation while in office.
- Various delays to the review – namely five different ministers overseeing the legislation since 2020 – has meant outdated and insufficient laws failing to protect vulnerable gamblers.
- The statutory ‘Aim to Permit’ policy restricts local authority powers required to prevent the opening of LBOs and the subsequent clustering of premises.

This Council supports the following reforms:

- The introduction of limits to stakes, prizes and speed of play online, as already exists on venue-based machines. Online slots should be capped at £2 a spin, in line with Fixed Odds Betting Terminals.
- A standardised threshold at which enhanced affordability checks take place for all licensed online gambling operators - the Social Market Foundation’s suggests these checks should take place when a person’s losses exceed £100 within a month.
- The introduction of a statutory levy on gambling operators for research, education and treatment that should be administered through an independent public body. This levy should initially be set at 1% of gross revenue but should be increased in line with need, in accordance with the ‘polluter pays’ principle.
- An end to gambling advertising, promotion, and sponsorship. Children should not be exposed to gambling advertising at all, given the degree of harm which arises from online gambling.

- The creation of a dedicated Gambling Ombudsman to ensure consumers who have been treated unfairly by gambling operators are able to access a means for redress.
- Reform to the statutory 'Aim to Permit', so local authorities have the power to reject premise license applications if the Statement of Gambling Principles were put at risk.

This Council resolves to:

- (1) Write to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, to inform them of our priorities for reform and ask the government to consider gambling a public health issue, as well as wider reform of the Gambling Act.
- (2) Support implementation of a revised Statement of Gambling Principles (pending public consultation). Tightening our policy will ensure applicants and operators whose premises are used for gambling have taken stringent steps to prevent gambling becoming a source of crime and disorder and protect people from gambling related harm.”

10.4 4th Motion (Labour Group) – End the 21-hour rule for young adult carers

The Mayor then invited Councillor Long to move the second and final motion submitted by the Labour Group. In moving the motion Councillor Long, began by outlining what were felt to be the unfair restrictions on young carers being able to claim Carer's Allowance if they studied for more than 21 hours per week which it was highlighted often meant the opportunities to pursue further learning and work were limited. Remembering the legacy created by the late former Councillor Lesley Jones in relation to the focus and support on the role of young carers, tribute was paid to the number of young adult carers providing unpaid care on a regular basis across Brent. Whilst recognising the commitment within the new Brent Carers Strategy to support all carers, including young adult carers, and to establish the necessary support within schools the motion sought to highlight the difficulties and unfairness created by the current rules restricting young carers in being able to claim Carer's Allowance as a result of them studying given the harm and risk in limiting their chances to progress to higher education and resulting longer term impact on their employment prospects and financial independence. Recognising the estimated level of unpaid care being provided and wider impacts identified, Councillor Long advised that the motion was seeking support in calling on the new Government to consider exempting young adult carers from the 21-hour rule along with a more ambitious programme for social care reform which she hoped all members would join her in supporting.

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

In opening the debate, Councillor Mistry highlighted her support for the motion acknowledging the heartbreaking situation young carers faced, potentially missing out on educational and employment opportunities and supporting the need for unpaid carers to be recognised and prioritised by the Council and new Government in their approach towards addressing social care provision. The new government

had not given details on its national care service and so Councillor Mistry believed it was vital that Brent continued to support young carers within the borough given the invaluable role they played and increasing level of financial challenges faced including rising energy bills and the cost-of-living. In ending, Councillor Mistry advised she was pleased to see reference to the estimated costs involved in removing the restrictions in provision of Carer's Allowance to all eligible young carers in further education and highlighted the contrast with the costs involved in providing recent pay awards to the rail unions with the provision of financial security and well-earned support to all young carers she felt to represent more of a deserving priority.

Councillor Nerva also thanked Councillor Long for moving the motion recognising the unfairness in the current rules preventing young carers (aged 16 - 24) being able to claim Carer's Allowance if they studied for more than 21 hours per week and impact this had not only in relation to their chances in terms of educational attainment and longer term employment prospects and financial independence but also to their health and well-being, with many of those currently impacted typically from low income households and often living in poverty. In commending the need to recognise the needs of young carers as a priority within Brents Carers Strategy and six key commitments identified in response relating to access to information, partnership working, supporting wellbeing, carer awareness, reaching into communities and supporting young carers at the start of their journey it was felt these along with support of the motion would help to improve the lives of carers and young carers with the change being sought long overdue.

Also speaking in support of the motion, Councillor Moeen was keen to recognise the focus and support that young carers deserved which she felt would lead to a more inclusive and supportive society.

As a final contribution to the debate (in view of the time remaining) Councillor Georgiou also outlined his support for the motion, highlighting his personal experience as a carer for a family member. As a result, he empathised with the experiences faced by young carers and was keen to ensure everything possible was done to ensure those providing care (especially when unpaid) were provided with all necessary support, thanking Councillor Long for bring the motion to Full Council.

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 Long to exercise her right of reply. In summing up, Councillor Long thanked members for the cross-party support expressed in support of the motion taking the opportunity, at the same time, to highlight the opportunities available to the previous Conservative Government to have amended the restrictions and hoped that the support being provided for young carers was also an issue that the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee would continue to keep under review going forward.

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

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

"End the 21-hour rule for young adult carers

This Council notes:

Young adult carers aged 16-24 provide unpaid care to someone, usually a family member, on a regular basis. The 2021 Census identified 272,731 young adult carers in England and Wales – at least 171 of whom live in Brent. Around 37,000 young people provide over 50 hours of care each week. That's over £3.5bn of unpaid care per year.

Young adult carers often give up their childhoods to care for others. Yet, through no fault of their own, they consistently miss out on opportunities in learning and work (29)

- Young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE, the equivalent to nine grades lower overall than their peers.
- 24% of young carers in school say they cannot afford to go to college or university.
- Young carers are three times as likely to be NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).
- Young carers are four times more likely to drop out of college and university than non-carers.
- Young carers are 38% less likely to gain a degree qualification than non-carers. This is magnified for those providing high levels of care, with those caring for 35+ hours per week 86% less likely to gain a degree.

This Council further notes:

Current rules mean young carers cannot claim Carer's Allowance if they study for more than 21 hours per week. This limits their ability to study 'gold standard' qualifications, like A-levels and T-levels, risks limiting their chances to progress to higher education; and could harm their long-term employment prospects and financial independence.

No young adult carer should miss out on learning because they care for their families. The Scottish Government has recently announced that this change will be implemented from 2024. Urgent action should be taken to ensure that young adult carers in England and Wales are not left behind.

The Learning and Work Institute estimates that the cost of providing Carer's Allowance to all eligible young carers in further education would be £54m per year. To extend this to all young carers, studying at any level, would be £85m per year.

Therefore this Council resolves:

- (1) To write to the Secretary of State, calling on the Government to exempt young adult carers from the 21-hour rule; to ensure that young carers' educational outcomes are being regularly reviewed alongside other vulnerable groups; and to ask that ambitious social care reform becomes a priority from day one.

- (2) To support the Carer's Trust and the Learning and Work Institute in their provision for young carers across the board, regardless of employment or education status.
- (3) To continue supporting the crucial work of Brent Carers Centre, who deliver a holistic range of support services to address the social, emotional and financial issues that carers experience; our Early Help service; and the Brent Gateway Services, who offer guidance on benefit eligibility to our carers.
- (4) To support a holistic place-based approach to healthcare and social care, where integrated services will improve the care patients receive and will be rooted in communities."

11. **Annual Report on the Borough from the Leader of the Council**

The Mayor then invited Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Leader of the Council, to present his Annual Report on the work of the Council and State of the Borough.

Councillor Muhammed Butt opened the Annual Report by reflecting on the role of politicians and challenges faced in being able to uphold the principles and fulfil their responsibilities and duties in relation to public service. In recognising the role played by all local councillors in seeking to make the borough the best it could be he also took the opportunity to personally reflect on the previous year and remember those former councillors who had sadly passed away for their public service in seeking to make things better, including Ruth Moher and Ramesh Patel.

Moving on, the Leader then took the opportunity to welcome and highlight the decisive change delivered following the recent General Election in the form of the first new Labour Government in 14 years, which he felt could not have come soon enough given the previous Conservative Governments record in office. Whilst highlighting the previous Government's failure to address the investment needed in health and public services along with the water network and energy security Councillor Muhammed Butt felt the most significant issue had been their failure to address the housing crisis and deliver as a priority the level of affordable homes required. Outlining the challenging nature of the issues inherited by the new Labour Government, including NHS waiting times, growing housing demand and increasing reliance on foodbanks he was pleased to now be able to focus on supporting the aims of the new Labour Government in seeking to restore belief in politics as a force for good and in working to renew public services in order to support local residents, particularly those identified as more vulnerable.

In outlining the work being undertaken by the Council to support this approach the Leader commended the efforts being made to support Byron Court Primary school in seeking to oppose forced academisation as well as invest in the health prevention and screening programmes being delivered through Brent Health Matters. Specific reference was also made to the progress in delivery of new Social and Affordable housing schemes and developments across Brent with further schemes and investment in new neighbourhoods to be delivered in areas including Northwick Park (working in partnership with the NHS) and Neasden in an effort to attract more first-time buyers. Whilst welcoming this progress, the Leader felt it was also important to acknowledge the fact that wealth inequality still persisted and significant challenges needing to be addressed in relation to the housing and

homelessness crisis, including ongoing pressures in the supply and costs associated with the use of Temporary Accommodation (TA) to meet current levels of demand with Council's across London currently spending £90m per month on TA just in order to meet their legal obligations and stand still. In being clear about the ongoing financial impact on the Council, the need was identified for a fundamental change in approach to the way local government was funded, given the constraints of the current system. Whilst the environment in which the Council was now having to operate had become more challenging he was pleased to note this had not prevented the Council from continuing to deliver in seeking to protect public services and local residents. As examples, he referred to launch of the Don't Mess with Brent Campaign and provision of additional enforcement activity and powers to address the dumping of rubbish and fly tipping; the work being undertaken to future proof Brent's libraries and champion the Community Wellbeing Project as a means of providing wraparound support for more vulnerable residents facing real hardship; the continuation of the popular Community Skip initiative along with the unlocking of investment in renewable energy schemes (including Willesden Sports Centre) and planned relaunch of the Council's Climate Emergency Strategy and work (supported by the Raheem Sterling Foundation) to tackle knife crime and remove weapons from the street through the provision of knife bins, roll out of bleed control kits and defibrillators supported through investment secure from the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit to provide support for grassroots organisations in developing a "whole village" approach to community safety, providing more youth outreach, sport and training to our young people.

In commending the work of each Cabinet Member in support of the Council's objectives, Councillor Muhammed Butt concluded by recognising the extent of work still required to mitigate against the damage caused through the actions of the previous Conservative Government but outlined the commitment of the new Labour Government and Council in seeking to address the challenges identified and continue improving the lives of residents and to make the borough an even better place to live and work.

The Mayor thanked the Leader for his Annual Report and then advised that he would open up the debate for contributions from other members, starting with a response from the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Group.

In responding to the Annual Report, Councillor Maurice (speaking on behalf of the Conservative Group) began by challenging the basis of the £22m black hole in public finances identified by the new Labour Government and highlighted the significantly worse fiscal position inherited by the coalition government when they had taken over from the last Labour Government in 2010. Referring to the progress made by the previous Conservative Government in relation to the changes in schools, standards of education house building programme and delivery of Brexit he felt this needed to be contrasted with the new Labour Governments approach in terms of cutting Winter Fuel Payments for the elderly, the early examples of cronyism and inflated pay rises in support of Trade Unions highlighting the struggle faced by many small business in comparison. On this basis he expressed concern at the approach which appeared to have been adopted by the new Labour Government and impact on residents and businesses across Brent.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Georgiou to respond on behalf of the Liberal Democrats Group. In referencing the Leaders comments regarding the decisive

nature of Labour's victory in the recent General Election he felt it important to note this had been delivered with one of the lowest turnouts in recent history and assisted by what he felt to be one of the worst performing Conservative Governments on record. Highlighting, in contrast, the performance of the Liberal Democrats he felt this meant they were now best placed to offer meaningful opposition in seeking to hold the new Labour Government to account on issues such as social care, NHS, investment in schools and action to address the climate emergency. Whilst keen to continue working with the Council's Labour Administration and new Government, Councillor Georgiou pointed out this would involve them continuing to push as hard as possible for the change needed in order to address the significant challenges faced by the country and also local residents across the borough as a whole.

Having thanked Councillors Maurice and Georgiou for their contributions, the Mayor then moved on to open up the debate and invite contributions from other members.

Referring to the comments made by the Leader when presenting his Annual Report on the privilege in being able to serve as a local councillor, Councillor Lorber expressed concern at the fact no statement had been made regarding the current position of the Deputy Mayor, given the outcome of the recent standards investigation in relation to her conduct was due to be reported to the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee. Debra Norman (Corporate Director of Law & Governance and the Council's Monitoring Officer) intervened at this stage in proceedings to remind members that this was not an item included for consideration on the Council agenda with the matter due to be reported to the next Audit & Standards Advisory Committee. On this basis the Mayor was advised to continue with the debate without any further consideration of a request made by Councillor Lorber for the suspension of Standing Orders to enable further consideration of the matter.

As a final contribution to the debate, Councillor Mistry also spoke to highlight her concerns at the approach adopted by the new Prime Minister and Labour Government in relation to the way they had conducted themselves since gaining power in relation to the receipt of gifts and hospitality and cutting of Winter Fuel payments for the elderly. The basis of the extent of the black hole in public finances which the Labour Government claimed to have inherited was also queried with reference to an independent assessment and also use of funding to provide inflated pay rises for supporters within the Trade Union movement which Councillor Mistry felt provided a more accurate reflection of the stance to be taken by the new Labour Government.

As no further members indicated that they wished to speak, the Mayor then invited the Leader to sum up and close the debate on the Annual State of the Borough Report.

Councillor Muhammed Butt began his response by reminding members of the ability for politicians to serve as a force for good in changing people's lives and welcomed the resounding nature of the electoral victory achieved, both in terms of the re-election of the Mayor for London and change in Government, which he felt highlighted the strength of public feeling and desire for change. Focussing on Brent, he was keen to demonstrate how the Labour Administration intended to continue matching their ambition with actions including working with partners and key

stakeholders to secure the necessary investment in the ongoing delivery of new homes, creation of jobs and support for local businesses. This was alongside the work being undertaken to improve community safety, education, health and social care provision and the local environment in order to ensure the best possible outcomes for local residents and those needing support and address what he felt remained the stark inequalities across the country. Although recognising the difficult nature of challenges faced, Councillor Muhammed Butt ended by expressing hope at what he felt to be the start of a new political era.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Muhammed Butt for his response and advised that this concluded the debate. As a result, it was therefore **RESOLVED** to formally note the Annual State of the Borough Report.

12. **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 his Annual Report the opportunity was taken to remind members of the work being undertaken across all Cabinet portfolios, within the challenging nature of the ongoing financial pressures faced, to ensure the Council able to continue supporting and safeguarding local residents in line with the Council's core strategic priorities.

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.

13. **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:

13.1 Councillor Long thanked Councillor Nerva as the Cabinet Member for Community Health & Wellbeing, for the written response to her on the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection Improvement Plan and as a supplementary question sought details on how useful the Council had found

the CQC inspection and how unregulated services in Brent were also monitored and assessed.

In response, Councillor Nerva felt that the CQC inspection had been a valuable process, with Brent having been assessed on their ability to ensure the safety of adults and to provide effective leadership at both a political and officer level. Recognising the review of the CQC inspection and decision already made to remove one-word judgements in relation to the Ofsted inspection process, he felt it was essential that any inspection process was focussed on a wider assessment of the service being delivered rather than based on one-word judgments. As a result of the current inspection the Council had developed an improvement plan, which covered not only adult social care but also the work being undertaken in partnership with health partners and the voluntary and community sector to supporting adults across the borough which had included launch of the carers strategy. In relation to unregulated services, members were advised these include a range of commissioned care services which the Council would have responsibility for regularly monitoring.

- 13.2 Councillor Hylton thanked Councillor Rubin, as Cabinet Member for Employment, Innovation and Climate Action, for the written response to her question on the outcome and plans for future Job Fairs. As a supplementary question, details were sought regarding any plans to extend the "Back to Work" events on a wider basis across the borough, including within Preston ward.

In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (who, following his apologies for absence, advised he was replying on behalf of Councillor Rubin) took the opportunity to highlight and welcome the success of the recent Jobs Fair event and advised that officers were currently exploring what other events could be held across the borough to further support residents, including within Preston Ward.

- 13.3 Having thanked Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement, for her written response on the success of the Don't Mess with Brent campaign Councillor Mahmood, in recognising the positive impact and progress being achieved advised he was keen to explore (as a supplementary question) the potential to invest the revenue being generated through enforcement action towards increasing the number of enforcement officers available to tackle fly tipping and promote stronger enforcement within the Borough.

In thanking Councillor Mahmood for the question and comments in relation to progress being made, Councillor Krupa Sheth confirmed that officers were currently reviewing potential options to secure additional investment for the recruitment of new enforcement officers in the coming months.

- 13.4 Whilst noting the written response provided by Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement, to his question regarding the enforcement and prosecution of fly-tipping, Councillor Jayanti Patel, was keen to focus on the potential to extend the deployment of mobile CCTV cameras as a means of supporting enforcement activity. As a

supplementary question he therefore sought further details on the expansion of this activity particularly in recognised “hotspots” (including a number across Queensbury ward) with the use of publicity to identify those individuals subject to prosecution also supported as a further initiative to reinforce enforcement efforts and discourage individuals engaged in dumping rubbish and fly tipping.

In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth highlighted that the launch of the “Don’t Mess with Brent” had included a range of enhanced enforcement activity with the proposal to publicise those prosecuted currently being developed as a further campaign in support by officers. As the “Don’t Mess with Brent” campaign progressed she assured members of the ongoing focus on wider enforcement activity to ensure those responsible for dumping litter and fly-tipping were identified and caught in order to ensure Brent remained green and clean.

- 13.5 Following on from the written response provided by Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, regarding the turnaround of a void housing property in Sudbury Councillor Lorber (highlighting that the property still remained vacant) sought further clarification as a supplementary question on why (given the costs) the Council would have considered purchasing the property in the dilapidated state or repair it was acquired in. Given the fact it had now taken over 15 months to bring the property back in use, he also queried how decisions over the acquisition of these type of street properties were being taken and scrutinised, given the wider impact on costs and the ability to address the supply of accommodation to meet current levels of housing demand.

In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt referred to the detail provided within the original response which had clarified the reasons for delay in being able to bring that specific property back into use, with the Council actively working with the utility companies involved to secure installation of the individual and communal electric meters that would enable the property to be bought back into use. As further context, the opportunity was also taken to remind members of Brent’s record as one of the most proactive councils in the delivery of housing development schemes, despite objections often received, with the Planning Committee ensuring that developers were held to account and required to deliver the maximum level of affordable and social housing in seeking to address ongoing challenges in relation to their supply across the borough. Wherever opportunities arose to deliver more housing development, the Council would continue to pursue them whilst also working with property owners to encourage vacant or underused properties to be bought back into use highlighting, he pointed out in summing up, the Council’s ongoing commitment to building homes that people needed.

Prior to moving on, Councillor Lorber queried the nature of the response provided on his supplementary question, which he felt had not addressed the specific issue raised.

Having thanked members for their written questions and Cabinet Members for the responses provided to the supplementary questions, the Mayor advised that he intended to move on with the remainder of time available being 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 Georgiou, in referring to the outcome of the review undertaken on the Council's financial forecast and Medium Term Financial Strategy at the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on 17 July 2024 highlighted that this had included a discussion on the potential to seek greater flexibility in the use of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding as a means of supporting the Council in addressing the financial pressures identified. Whilst this had initially been identified as too simplistic an approach, with it suggested that focus should instead be aimed at lobbying for a longer-term funding solution and reform of the local government finance system, it was noted that the Leader had subsequently written to the Government asking them to consider easing current restrictions on the use of SCIL to allow a more flexible approach, with details therefore being sought on the rationale behind the change in approach, any response received as a result and further plans to lobby for the relaxation in SCIL restrictions.

In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt, as Leader of the Council, advised that the initial response had been designed to reflect the reliance on the generation of CIL receipts around deliver of future development schemes, which had also been impacted by current economic uncertainty. In taking pride at the efforts being made to continue delivery of regeneration schemes and increase the supply of Affordable Housing across the borough this was supported by the ability to collaborate with developers in seeking to ensure these schemes were accompanied by the maximum contribution towards supporting infrastructure with the Council one of the most successful in generating and collecting SCIL contributions. Taking the opportunity to highlight the importance in use of CIL to support wider community initiatives the Leader outlined how these contributions had been used to fund key infrastructure provision including school, GP, community and health facilities with the Council therefore supportive of measures being sought to maximise the ability to utilise SCIL more flexibly.

In response to a Point of Order raised by Councillor Georgiou in relation to the extent of the response provided on his question Debra Norman (Corporate Director Law & Governance) advised that as the Leader had provided a response the Mayor should move to the next question.

- (ii) Councillor Long regarding the action being taken with Lime as the dockless e-bike provided within Brent to address the technology required to prevent the hacking of their bikes, which it was noted accounted for a significant proportion of complaints regarding their use.

In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth as Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement, advised of discussions recently held between the Council and Lime in an effort to address the concerns raised (including technology) in relation to their operation across the borough. This had included a warning that if not addressed and a suitable plan provided to ensure performance was improved moving forward the operator would be required to cease operating and remove their bikes from the borough by the end of October 2024 with details now awaited on their response.

- (iii) Councillor Maurice regarding the possibility of securing access to the Harrow Recycling Centre in Wealdstone for residents across the northern part of the borough rather than them having to make longer journeys across the borough in order to access the Abbey Road Recycling Centre.

In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement, advised that despite the Council having been involved in ongoing negotiations with Harrow Council it had not yet been possible to secure the necessary agreement that would allow local residents in the northern part of the Borough to use the facility.

- (iv) Referring to the recent decision made by Cabinet to approve the Council's new Property Strategy Councillor Lorber highlighted a number of concerns relating to the impact on community organisations (many operating as charities) as tenants given the notices now being issued relating to market rent reviews and significant increase in rents proposed as a result. As a result, further details were sought on the approach taken by the Council as freeholder towards those organisations to whom premises had initially been leased at a peppercorn rent and whether this would also involve a shift to market based rents.

Councillor Mili Patel, as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, responded by reminding members that the draft Property Strategy had been subject to detailed pre decision scrutiny by the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee earlier in 2024 where the challenges faced by the Council in relation to supporting tenants in their recovery following the pandemic had been acknowledged around the approach involving lease renewal and rent reviews. In recognising the balance needing to be achieved in relation to income generation required to maintain a sustainable property portfolio and social value, particularly for voluntary and community sector tenants, the Committee had felt the proposed change in approach to be justified with the new strategy now designed to move away from the provision of highly subsidised rents and leases, as they came up for renewal, reviewed to ensure the use continued to align with social value criteria and priorities within the Borough Plan.

- (v) As an additional question, permitted by the Mayor, Councillor Georgiou sought further details on the action taken by the Council since signing the Memorandum of Understanding with Lime to address the significant level of issues regarding their operation across the borough including the increasing level of obstruction being caused by the abandonment and improper parking of their e-bikes and also to increase the number of designated parking bays that were felt to be urgently needed.

In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement, advised that whilst supportive of the benefits arising from the use of dockless e-bikes she had also understood the increasing level of frustration regarding the way in which the scheme was currently being operated and managed across the borough. This had been why the Council had met with Lime in seeking to hold them to account and deliver a

comprehensive plan designed to address the various concerns highlighted the deadline for delivery of was the end of October 2024.

- (vi) Councillor Mistry regarding the increase in level of fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour across Queensbury Ward and action being taken as a result to address the concerns as a priority moving forward to ensure the solutions were sustainable and effective over the long term.

In response, Councillor Farah, as Cabinet Member for Public Safety & Partnerships, highlighted the opportunity available to focus on these issues at the local Safer Neighbourhood Panel meetings. Emphasising the importance of partnership working and participation in discussions to address community safety concerns he also advised he would be willing to visit the area with local ward councillors as an opportunity to focus these discussions and review any action required.

- (vii) Councillor Hirani regarding measures being taken to address the misuse of Lime bikes including their use in criminal related activities and subsequent abandoning in parks, on highways and waterways across the borough given concern being raised by local residents.

In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth, as Cabinet Member for Environment & Enforcement, reiterated that the Council was actively seeking to hold Lime to account for their performance to date, with the Council having imposed a strict deadline for delivery of their comprehensive action plan in response at the end of October 2024. In support of the need identified to avoid classifying all users of the scheme as potential criminals Councillor Krupa Sheth advised that she had not been made aware of specific reports regarding the use of Lime bikes for criminal activity but advised that should this be identified Councillor Farah (as Cabinet Member for Public Safety & Partnerships) would seek to coordinate the necessary action with the local police to ensure the issues were effectively addressed.

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.

14. 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.

As Councillor Ketan Sheth had given his apologies for the meeting, the Mayor advised that the report on the activity of the Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee would be noted as submitted.

The Mayor 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 highlighted as part of the update:

- The work undertaken to finalise the Committee's work programme for 2024-25 recognising its flexible, dynamic and broad ranging nature and engagement of relevant stakeholders and the local community in its development.
- 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 ongoing monitoring of Brent's overall financial position based on detailed updates regarding the financial outturn position for 2022-23, current financial forecast and the medium-term financial outlook with the Council continuing to operate in a challenging financial environment with an uncertain funding outlook and the potential for significant ongoing spending pressures in demand-led services such as social care and homelessness. As a result, the Committee had recommended the continuation of lobbying efforts for the urgent reform of local government finance in order to provide local authorities with greater options for how they raised and spent resources (e.g. fiscal devolution options leading to more freedoms over local revenues such as 100% business rates retention and flexible use/spend of community infrastructure levy (CIL) monies) along with calling for an end to the privatisation of Children's social care services and greater co-ordination between local authorities in the commissioning of services designed to curb profiteering by private companies and create new insourcing opportunities.
 - The review of the initial year of operation of the new Grounds Maintenance Contract which had included contributions from local stakeholder groups and the Committee keen to encourage greater communication and collaboration between the new contractor and these groups as a result. Other issues highlighted had been the need to provide a clearer outline of expected standards, performance, key achievements, challenges and priorities within the Grounds Maintenance contract along with improved coordination between the verge cutting and street cleaning operations across the borough.
 - The review of the contribution being made through i4B Holdings Ltd (i4B) and First Wave Housing Ltd towards delivery of the Council's strategic housing objectives and in contributing towards the provision of affordable housing. This had resulted in the Committee highlighting a need to explore further opportunities for i4B/First Wave Housing Ltd to reduce temporary accommodation costs and expand the supply of affordable housing in a non-risk adverse manner as well as the potential to revise the viability assessment criteria to account for factors like temporary accommodation cost avoidance in order to support the delivery of more affordable housing whilst also carrying out targeted work to source/purchase specific properties for households wishing to downsize and relocate.
- 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 including a focus in the new Year on the Safer Brent Partnership Annual Report.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Conneely for presenting the update and it was **RESOLVED** that the contents of both Scrutiny Update reports be noted.

Following the updates provided, the Mayor advised that the remainder of time available would be open for questions from non-cabinet members to the Scrutiny Chairs. The Mayor reminded members of the need to ensure that questions raised were focused on the updates provided or the work being undertaken by the relevant Committee.

As a result, Councillor Kelcher took the opportunity to highlight the suggestion made at a recent Planning Committee, following consideration of an application to extend the number of events hosted at Wembley Stadium, that scrutiny be asked to consider undertaking a wider review of the efforts being made to engage with local residents and local ward councillors in seeking to review the impact of event days on the borough. In response, Councillor Conneely advised that she would be willing to consider the issue as part of the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee work programme pointing out this had been a matter previously identified by the Committee.

As no further questions were raised the Mayor advised that he would move to the next item and thanked all members for their contribution.

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

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

In terms of issues highlighted, Councillor Chan 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 and members standards of conduct. The importance of the Committee's role was also highlighted in terms of the wider financial challenges, risks and pressures being faced by the Council with a focus provided in relation to delivery of the Internal Audit Plan and Council's risk management structure and strategic risk management process including not only the effectiveness of governance processes relating to the first but also "second line" of defence and Council's financial resilience given the ongoing financial pressures faced which continued to be closely monitored. Councillor Chan concluded his update by reminding members of the Committee's continued focus on the adequacy of the Council's governance, risk and control arrangements in order to provide assurance and confidence on compliance and control of the Council's key governance, financial management and accounting arrangements.

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

16. **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 Cutting the Winter Fuel Payment.

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 Jayanti Patel to introduce the motion which had been submitted as the basis for the Non-Cabinet Member debate. In moving the motion, Councillor J.Patel began by outlining the impact of the proposed cut in the Winter Fuel Allowance on pensioners and vulnerable elderly residents not only nationally but also across Brent given the 30,000 pensioners in the borough. Highlighting this cut had been introduced without any reference to it being made by the new Labour Government during their election campaign, Councillor J Patel felt this highlighted a level of hypocrisy given Labours criticism of the previous Conservative Government in relation to austerity with many thousands of vulnerable pensioners across Brent just above the cut off for Pension Credit or not claiming benefits now set to lose the allowance and having to make the choice between eating or heating. As such the approach adopted was felt to represent a betrayal of pensioners and elderly residents given an allowance previously paid to all pensioners was now being restricted to those on income related and means tested benefits or tax credits in order to ease fiscal pressures. In pointing out that all pensioners deserved to live in warm safe homes and the impact in removing support from a social justice perspective and in terms of potential health risks among the elderly population, Councillor J.Patel advised that in addition to opposing the Government's approach the motion was also seeking to ensure the Council continued to offer support to those vulnerable pensioners most at risk utilising the Resident Support Fund or similar provision. Concern was also expressed at the level of savings due to be achieved when compared to the funding being provided for foreign environmental aid or to fund public sector pay awards with the Labour Governments priorities questioned. As a result, Councillor J.Patel hoped all members would support the motion submitted as the basis for the debate and join the call for the Labour Government to review and reverse their decision to means test Winter Fuel Payments in order to ensure that vulnerable pensioners were protected from fuel poverty with the fear this may lead to further potential action against pensioners in future budget statements.

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

In opening the debate, Councillor Kelcher began by highlighting what he felt to be the opportunistic nature of the motion which rather than focussing on the difficulties created as a result of the previous Conservative Government's fiscal policy failed to recognise the difficult nature of decisions required by the new Labour Government in attempting to address the challenging financial position they had inherited. If wanting to truly act as champions for the most vulnerable in society, Councillor Kelcher queried why the Conservative Group had not previously sought to bring forward motions opposing the two-child benefit cap, bedroom tax or changes in universal credit regime, schools funding or opposing the freeze in public sector pay with the current proposal means tested to ensure the most vulnerable remained

protected. In contrast to the approach of the new Government he reminded members of the previous Conservative Governments mismanagement of the economy involving repeated fiscal interventions, austerity and tax cuts which had led to the black hole in public finances now having to be tackled. As such he advised he would not be supporting the motion submitted.

Councillor Kennelly also felt it important to recognise how the approach adopted by the new Government in moving from universal to means-tested Winter Fuel Payment had been designed to ensure that support was maintained for the most vulnerable residents and those in greatest need rather than for all with the approach (as also identified by Councillor Kelcher during his contribution) reflecting the £22 billion black hole in public finances inherited as a result of the economic mismanagement of the previous Conservative Government. In highlighting the need for action, Councillor Kennelly pointed out that whilst looking to address the challenging financial position inherited, the Labour Government remained committed to protecting pensioners including maintaining the triple lock and development of a long-term energy strategy with support also being provided to raise awareness and ensure all relevant benefits were being claimed by those eligible. Taken together, he felt this would ensure a more comprehensive approach was taken to protect and support the most vulnerable recognising the tough nature of decisions needing to be made.

As there were no further contributions, the Mayor then invited Councillor Donnelly-Jackson, as Cabinet Member for Resident Support & Culture, to summarise and close the debate.

In responding to the debate and motion, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson in recognising the concerns raised felt it important to remind members of the context within which the decision had needed to be taken given the size of the gap inherited from the previous Conservative Government in relation to public finances. In seeking to adopt a fiscally responsible approach the new Labour Government was now seeking to put the economy back on track but it was recognised this would require a number of difficult decisions, of which the change in Winter Fuel Payments was one. In support to the comments highlighted by Councillor Kennelly during the debate, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson also felt it important to note that the decision not only reflected budget constraints but was also designed to promote fairness and a more effective targeting of resources with the shift from a universal benefit to a means-tested one ensuring that financial assistance remained focussed on the most vulnerable pensioners, rather than giving it to everyone even where not required. The change in approach would also ensure funding could be prioritised to support public finances, allowing the government to protect the triple lock and raise the state pension with further support available through the extension of the Household Support Fund and longer-term energy strategy including the establishment of Great British Energy.

In terms of support the Council was able to provide reference was made to the impact of ongoing work involving Pension Credit take up campaigns (with 220 pensioners assisted to claim over £851,814 in unclaimed Pension Credit), the Resident Support Fund (RSF) having approved 876 applications from pensioners, with an average payment of £889 to assist with essential expenses and grants provided to 54 pensioners during the current year totalling £22,976. Further support was being provided in the form of targeted communication and Outreach work and Community

Support Initiatives involving Brent Hubs and the Council's 50+ partners offering pensioners access to warm spaces, social activities, energy advice, and food support through programmes such as the Brent Well and Warm scheme. Taken together it was felt this represented a comprehensive approach involving a combination of national benefits like Pension Credit with local initiatives such as the RSF and Brent Hubs to ensure pensioners in Brent received tailored financial support in order to reduce the risk of fuel poverty and financial hardship. Whilst therefore recognising the difficult nature of the decision made in relation to Winter Fuel Payments Councillor Donnelly-Jackson felt this needed to be seen in the context of the financial mess needing to be fixed from the previous government alongside the efforts being taken by the Council to ensure pensioners remained fully supported through the offer of targeted resources, direct outreach, and comprehensive local programmes designed to ensure that no one was left behind. On this basis she advised the Labour Group would not be supporting the motion moved as the basis for 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 **LOST**.

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

“Cutting of Winter Fuel Payments

This Labour government is planning to scrap the Winter Fuel Payment (WFP) which will impact 10 million pensioners including over 30,000 in Brent, despite promising to protect the benefit during the general election. One in five winter deaths are directly attributable to cold homes, and one in ten to fuel poverty. While some pensioners currently in receipt of WFP may not require it, many thousands across Brent just sit above the cut off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.

Just weeks after the election, the Labour Chancellor Rachel Reeves has announced a cut to the WFP which will reduce it by up to £300, money that would have helped pensioners with heating bills during winter.

Between 2010 and 2023, the Conservative Government lifted over 200,000 pensioners out of absolute poverty. The Conservative governments unprecedented cost of living support following Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine also prevented 400,000 pensioners from falling into absolute poverty in 2022 to 2023.

The WFP was introduced in 1997 by Gordon Brown. Ironically it is now a Labour government that is withdrawing the same WFP.—Previously paid to all pensioners it is now being restricted to those on income related benefits or tax credits to ease fiscal pressures. This is a shameful betrayal of British pensioners.

For two and a half years, Labour have accused the Conservatives of making people choose between 'eating and heating'. As a pensioner you are now being penalised for not claiming benefits. Labours policy will mean more pensioners will unnecessarily die in Brent from the cold this winter.

This Council therefore notes:

- The Labour government decision to restrict the WFP to only pensioners in receipt of means tested benefit, which disproportionately affects Brent's most vulnerable residents.
- That all pensioners deserve to live in warm safe homes, and that removing support will increase the risk of cold related illnesses and excess winter deaths among the elderly population.
- The criticism from Age UK, Countryside Alliance and other charities highlights the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.

This Council therefore resolves:

- (1) To request the Leader of the Council writes to the Chancellor, urging a review of the decision to means test the WFP and to ask the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit are protected from fuel poverty.
- (2) To condemn the removal of WFP from pensioners who do not claim means tested benefits recognising the disproportionate impact this will have on our most vulnerable residents.
- (3) To write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to seek funding for local advertising and outreach campaigns to raise awareness about Pension Credit and other benefits, targeting pensioners who may be eligible but are not currently claiming.
- (4) To recommend that provision is made in Brent Council's finances to support struggling residents with 'top-ups' to the loss of the WFA either through the Resident Support Fund or similar provision."

17. Brent Youth Justice Plan 2024-25

The Mayor invited Councillor Grahl, as Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools, to introduce a report from the Corporate Director of Children & Young People presenting the Brent Youth Justice Plan 2024-25. In introducing the report members were advised that the Youth Justice Plan included an overview of local youth justice progress and priorities along with the arrangements for monitoring performance, with the Plan (in accordance with statutory requirements) having been submitted to the Youth Justice Board for review and approval prior to its formal consideration by Cabinet in advance of its recommended adoption by Full Council.

In recognising the commitment and achievements of the Youth Justice Service and the wider partnership work being undertaken to support children and young people who were at risk of or had entered the youth justice system, attention was also drawn to the overall performance achieved by the service particularly in respect of the reduction in number of young people entering the criminal justice system for the first time and low numbers of young people in custody. The strong performance identified was attributed to the Council's focus on prevention and engagement with children and young people, with the positive feedback provided through young

people and their parents and carers and partnership work on early intervention and preventative support highlighted and thanks expressed to all those working within the Youth Justice Service for their efforts, diligence and innovation in supporting young people.

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

In supporting the proposals outlined as a professional who had worked in the criminal justice system, Councillor Dixon took the opportunity to commend the positive outcomes being achieved within such a challenging context in seeking to provide early intervention and divert young people from entering the criminal justice system and need for continued investment in the engagement and intervention process. As such she hoped all members would join her in supporting the recommendations within the report.

As no other members indicated they wished to speak the Mayor thanked members for their contribution and invited Councillor Grahl to exercise her right of reply. In closing the debate, Councillor Grahl took the opportunity to thank members for their support and the Mayor then moved on to put the recommendations in the report to the vote which were declared **CARRIED**.

Council therefore unanimously **RESOLVED** following its referral by Cabinet on 9 September 2024 to approve formal sign off and adoption of the Brent Youth Justice Plan 2024-25 as detailed within Appendix A of the report.

18. **Treasury Management Outturn Report 2023-24**

The Mayor then invited Councillor Mili Patel, as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, to introduce a report from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources updating members on the Council's Treasury Management Activity during 2023 - 24. In introducing the report, the Deputy Leader felt it important to recognise the economic background in relation to the current outturn position which included the continuing economic volatility and challenges arising as a result of ongoing global geo-political tensions and the impact of current inflation and interest rates. In highlighting the importance of the Treasury Management function in managing and planning for the level of funding required to support the Council's activities, services and affordability of the capital programme members were also advised of the activity being undertaken to optimise the effect of borrowing costs and investment income whilst managing the associated risks in line with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators that had been approved by Full Council in February 2023 and in accordance with relevant professional codes and legislation.

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

In highlighting the role of banks in terms of the level of investment and borrowing activity undertaken in support of the Council's Treasury Management activity Councillor Lorber took the opportunity to express concern at the ongoing closure of high street bank branches and lack of progress being made in the roll out of banking hubs across the sector given the impact on local residents. As such he

highlighted what he felt was a need for ongoing lobbying and pressure to be applied across the sector, supported by local authorities to address the issue.

Speaking in response, Councillor Kelcher took the opportunity to highlight and welcome the recent announcement by the Government on the work being undertaken with the banking sector to ensure that at least 350 banking hubs were delivered across the UK.

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 summing up, Councillor Mili Patel advised that she had also recognised the importance in seeking to maintain face to face banking provision for local communities and on high streets and therefore welcomed the focus of the new Government in working with Cash Access UK, as the organisation responsible for overseeing the hub rollout, to continue championing access for all as a priority.

Having thanked members for their contributions the Mayor then put the recommendations in the report to the vote and they were declared **CARRIED**.

Council therefore unanimously **RESOLVED** to note and approve, following its consideration by Audit & Standards Advisory Committee on 24 July 2024 and Cabinet on 9 September 2024, the 2023 - 24 Treasury Management outturn report in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice.

19. **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 Monday 18 November 2024.

The meeting closed at 8.34 pm

COUNCILLOR TARIQ DAR MBE
Mayor