



## **LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT**

**Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL  
held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 15 September 2025 at  
6.00 pm**

### **PRESENT:**

**The Worshipful the Mayor**  
Councillor Ryan Hack

**The Deputy Mayor**  
Councillor Narinder Singh Bajwa

### **COUNCILLORS:**

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

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Matin & Rajan-Seelan.

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

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the of the Council meeting held on Monday 7 July 2025 be approved as a correct record.

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

Councillor Lorber declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 9.2 (Liberal Democrats Motion – Standing United against Racism & Xenophobia in Brent) and Agenda Item 14 (Non Cabinet Member Debate – Deterrence, Integration & Accommodation Impacts of Illegal Immigration on Brent) as someone who had initially entered the UK as a refugee.

There were no other declarations of interest made during the meeting.

### 5. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor made the following announcements:

#### (i) **Passing of The Duchess of Kent**

The Mayor began his announcements by taking the opportunity, on behalf of the Council, to extend his sincere condolences to all members of the Royal Family on the passing of The Duchess of Kent.

In recognising Her Royal Highness for the lifelong dedication to public service, support for charitable causes and enduring commitment to the arts and education, the Mayor felt it important to acknowledge the wide respect in which she had been held alongside her compassion and grace and with her legacy remembered with great admiration.

In honouring her memory, the Mayor offered his deepest sympathy to the Royal Family on behalf of the Council.

#### (ii) **Brent Student Exam results**

On behalf of the Council, the Mayor then moved on to congratulate young people across the borough for the recent success achieved in their exam results.

In taking the opportunity to commend the results achieved, the Mayor felt it important to acknowledge that this reflected not only the hard work and determination displayed by young people but also the incredible support from their teachers, school staff, parents and carers with Brent's schools continuing to inspire excellence and the students recognised as a credit to their communities.

The results achieved were also felt to highlight not only the commitment of students across the borough but also the strength of Brent's education system, with pride expressed in all young people and Mayor looking forward to seeing all that they would accomplish in future.

(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**

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

Having considered the changes outlined it was **RESOLVED**:

(1) To approve the following changes in committee membership:

- (a) Councillor Long to be replaced by a vacancy as Vice-Chair of the Brent Connects – Willesden Forum.

(2) To note the following changes in the membership on outside bodies:

- (a) The appointment (by the Leader of the Council) of Councillor Mili Patel as the Council's full member representative on London Councils Grant Committee with Councillor Rubin appointed as one of the Council's two Deputy Members.

**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 two questions had been received from members of the public, for consideration at the meeting, which were as follows:

Question 1 from L.Varsani regarding enforcement against cycling on pavements

Question 2 from R.Furness enforcement against untaxed and abandoned vehicles on the public highway.

The Mayor advised that those members of the public who had submitted questions had been given the opportunity to attend the meeting to ask a supplementary question. As both individuals had unfortunately advised they were unable to attend the meeting, the written responses provided in relation to their questions by the Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement were therefore noted without further comment.

With no further questions to be considered, the Mayor advised that concluded the public question session.

## 9. **Petitions**

The Mayor advised that he had accepted requests for the presentation of two separate petitions at the meeting, which had met the threshold for consideration at Full Council based on them containing more than 200 signatures.

The petitions to be presented, were highlighted as follows, with the Mayor advising that unless otherwise indicated by members, he intended to allow up to five minutes for the presentation of each petition by the lead petitioner before then providing the relevant Cabinet Members up to two minutes to respond on each matter and then providing any other members who indicated they would like to speak with an opportunity to contribute (within the overall time limit available).

- 1st petition – Retain the heritage Victorian Villa (Altamira) as part of the redevelopment at 1 Morland Gardens
- 2nd petition – Save Welsh Harp Education Centre

### **(1) Retain the heritage Victorian Villa (Altamira) as part of the redevelopment at 1 Morland Gardens**

As no objections were raised on the approach outlined, the Mayor then moved on to welcome Philip Grant to the meeting to present the first petition (representing the Willesden Local History Society). Prior to the petition being presented, Philip Grant welcomed the approach outlined by the Mayor in enabling other members to contribute and speak as part of the approach in considering the petition and also referred members to the photograph of the Villa circulated as part of the agenda text.

In thanking the Mayor for the opportunity to present the petition, Philip Grant began by taking the opportunity to remind members of the history of the Altamira building which he described as a beautiful, Italianate-style Victorian villa built 150 years ago, at the entrance to an estate called Stonebridge Park which had subsequently given its name to the area. Members were advised that the Council had bought the building in the 1990s and restored it as home to an Adult Education college and inspiring place of learning in one of the borough's most deprived areas.

In highlighting the buildings status as a high value locally listed heritage asset, he pointed out those who had signed the petition felt this had not been recognised by the Council when in January 2020, the Cabinet had been persuaded to approve a project which included its demolition. Referring to the hundreds of objections submitted by local residents in response to the subsequent planning application determined in 2020, as well objections from the Victorian Society, he reminded members that these had also been supported by a Professor of Architecture whom he quoted as having written:

“1 Morland Gardens is not just any nineteenth-century villa, but a characteristic work by an architect of genuine and lasting significance. Its destruction would be a

terrible loss, not only to the local environment, but also to the architectural heritage of Victorian Britain.”

It was also pointed out that Councillor Aden (representing the local Stonebridge ward councillors) had also spoken against the demolition at the 2020 Planning Committee meeting, and asked the Council to think again, so it was with regret that the Committee had subsequently approved the Plans. Referring to what the petitioners had felt to be the many faults in the scheme, Philip Grant advised it was no surprise that the planning consent had expired in October 2023, without construction having begun. This had led to an urgent review of plans for the future of the site with officers being provided with evidence, as part of this process, in support of retaining the heritage building. This had been supported, as part of a December 2024 consultation, with details on how it was felt the Villa could be retained for community use, while still providing nearly 30 Council homes on the site.

Confirmation was provided that this supporting evidence had also been provided for Councillor Benea (as Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Property) and, as a result, those in support of the petition hoped the Council would now be able to confirm it would seek to retain Altamira, as part of the future plans for Morland Gardens, also supported by the following statement within Brent’s adopted Local Plan which Philip Grant ended by highlighting:

“Once a heritage asset is demolished, it cannot be replaced. Its historic value is lost forever to the community and future generations.” it concluded “The effective preservation of historic buildings ... and their stewardship is ... fundamental to the Council’s role.”

The Mayor thanked Philip Grant for presenting the petition and then invited Councillor Benea, as Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Property to respond.

In response, Councillor Benea began by thanking Philip Grant and the other signatories of the petition for taking the time to make their views known with the Council acknowledging the sentiments expressed in support of retaining the locally listed Altamira building at 1 Morland Gardens.

Referring to the more recent report considered at Cabinet on 16 June 2025, the petitioners were advised that the Council was proposing a site use option of affordable homes and youth facilities for the 1 Morland Gardens site with an assurance that any redevelopment proposals would be subject to a full planning application that would consider the relevant planning and heritage considerations.

In summing up, the petitions were advised that no decision had been made on either the demolition or retention of the Altamira building and that any decision on the building would therefore be subject to a future Cabinet report following the necessary design, site investigation works, and viability assessments having been undertaken on the Cabinet approved mixed-development site use option of affordable homes and youth facilities.

Having thanked Councillor Benea for her response, the Mayor then invited comments from other members on the petition, with the following contributions noted:

Councillor Lorber, in opening the contributions felt it important to recognise that this was not being raised as a new issue given the redevelopment of Morland Gardens had been subject to a previous call-in. In highlighting concerns relating to the outcome of funding already allocated to the redevelopment proposals without any new homes yet being delivered on site, he outlined what he felt to be a need for leadership in taking the scheme forward in order to deliver much needed homes whilst also seeking to preserve Altamira Villa as an important historical and heritage asset.

Councillor Maurice also spoke in support of the petition, recognising the importance in preserving the borough's heritage assets and taking the opportunity to highlight his opposition to the original redevelopment proposals when serving as a member of the Planning Committee and in support of retaining the frontage of the building.

Following on, Councillor Mistry highlighted what she also regarded as the importance in recognising the historical context of the Altamira Villa and need to do all possible to avoid its loss as a valuable heritage asset as part of any future redevelopment plans for the site.

As a final contribution, Councillor Ethapemi also spoke to welcome the comments made by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Property in response to the petition regarding the additional feasibility review outlined. Whilst also supporting the need to retain and preserve the Victorian heritage Villa, it was hoped this could be achieved in a way that would not prevent much needed housing also being delivered as part of the redevelopment of the site.

Having thanked members for their contributions the Mayor advised that concluded consideration of the first petition and then moved on to deal with the second and final petition submitted.

## **(2) Save Welsh Harp Education Centre**

The Mayor then welcomed Martin Francis to present the second petition, seeking support for the continued use of Welsh Harp Education Centre to deliver an Environmental Education programme. In thanking the Mayor for the opportunity to present the petition, Martin Francis began by advising that the petition was supported by Brent Parks Forum as well as Brent Friends of the Earth and contained 487 signatures.

In highlighting how the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre had been closed following the withdrawal of funding by Thames21 at the end of the summer term, reference was made to the difference the lack of primary aged school children visiting the centre was having in terms of the excitement created and motivation provided (as had been famously highlighted by David Attenborough) in children seeking to tackle the climate and ecological emergency and preserve the natural habitat without them being able to experience it on a practical level and first hand basis. The petitioners were therefore keen to highlight the important and valued role the centre had played in enabling school children to gain that type of

experience working with up to 300 pupils a week and recognising that the vast majority of the borough's primary schools did not have the grounds to match the experience offered by the woodlands and ponds available to access via the Centre.

As further support, reference was also made to the Brent Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-2030, which it was pointed out has also specifically recognised the importance of the Centre by stating:

"The council has secured funding to improve the Educational Centre on the site, to bring residents, schools and communities closer to nature and to help improve biodiversity."

Whilst Brent Cabinet in May 2023 had therefore agreed to delivery of post -16 SEND provision in a new building on the site, it was pointed out this had been on the basis that:

"The proposal would enable the Environmental Education programme to schools to continue to be delivered as part of the wider building use alongside the post-16 horticultural use."

It was, therefore, with concern that comments made at a recent Welsh Harp Joint Consultative Committee, had been noted with those present advised at the meeting that the building would be fully utilised during curriculum time by the Post 16 provision and only available for other groups outside of that time and it reported that the design of the new building would include no space for a primary classroom and no time of primary school visits. The petitioners were also concerned that despite a long list of organisations identified as being consulted on the new building, these did not appear to include Primary Schools. Referring to the loss making aspect of the Centre being cited as a reason for Thames21 withdrawal, it was pointed out that a proportion of these losses was attributable to the high heating and maintenance costs of the previous cabin style classrooms which had been addressed as part of the design of the shared new building.

The opportunity was also taken to outline the work undertaken by those in support of the petition in bringing together a consortium to use the building outside of school hours in an effort to provide a reliable income stream to help subsidise the Centre moving forward, with the main cost identified now relating to staff salaries.

As a result of these efforts and the concerns highlighted, Martin Francise ended by advising that those in support of the petition were therefore calling on the Council to undertake a full scoping exercise, in order to find a new organisation to run the Centre including the potential inclusion of local industry such as Careys to enhance their green credentials or a voluntary organisation such as the Canal and Rivers Trust, with the following three assurances sought in response to the petition:

- (1) That the Environmental Education Centre would have space in the new building.
- (2) That the council would make an all-out effort, driven by a passionate commitment to environmental education and the urgent need to address the climate and ecological emergency, to find a new partner to run the WHEEC.

- (3) That the curriculum and activities offered by the Centre would continue to enrich the science curriculum on life processes and living things with first-hand experience, in an attempt to recognise the passion identified and address indifference to the lack of any ongoing provision.

The Mayor thanked Martin Francis for presenting the petition and then invited Councillor Benea (as Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Property) in the absence of Councillor Grahl (as Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools) to respond.

In response, Councillor Benea began by thanking the petitioners for highlighting their support for the Welsh Harp Education Centre, recognising the depth of feeling outlined whilst also welcoming the opportunity to clarify a number of issues relating to the current position on the Centre.

As a starting point, Councillor Benea opened by placing on record the Council's thanks to Thames21 (with a particular focus on their volunteers) for the time and energy devoted to inspiring the next generation on the importance of the natural environment. This was in recognition of the role Thames21 had played, since December 2016, in the delivery of a wide ranging and valued programme of activity with schools whilst occupying the Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre and which it was acknowledged had helped countless local children to learn, first-hand, about the value of the environment and need to protect it, for which the Council and all those who had benefitted were grateful.

Councillor Benea felt it was also important to recognise the way in which the Council had sought to support Thames21 in their work, including the provision of a rent-free period and financial contribution towards their running costs in the hope that this would have given them the platform to achieve longer-term financial sustainability. Despite this, however, Thames21 had unfortunately taken the difficult and voluntary decision to end their work at the centre and, as a result, had vacated the site on 31st July 2025.

Referring to the poor condition of the building, Councillor Benea highlighted this had been assessed as being at the end of its life and requiring significant capital investment to ensure it was maintained. Given the Council's responsibility to think about how the site could continue to best serve the borough over future years, Cabinet in May 2023 had therefore approved a major capital investment to develop a new Post-16 Skills Centre on the site designed to provide a high-quality horticultural facility for young people with SEND, with opportunities for work experience, volunteering, and also wider community use.

In response to the petition, an assurance was provided that the new centre would not be closed off to the wider community with it noted that from the outset the design brief had included flexible space for community groups including, as an example, Scouts, Guides, Woodcraft Folk and groups with a focus on environmental education and countryside management. The new facilities would also include a multi-use room, storage space, a small kitchen, fully accessible facilities and, crucially, outdoor access all co-designed with a range stakeholders, including Thames21, local schools, parents, and carers, to ensure the centre was able to reflect the needs of the borough's diverse communities. Subject to planning and construction milestones being met, Councillor Benea advised the new Post-16



Skills Centre was due to open in the 2027-28 academic year and in summing up, once again took the opportunity to recognise the invaluable contribution made by Thames21 and their volunteers.

In closing her response, Councillor Benea felt it important to reflect on the work undertaken to lay the foundations for what would come next and in seeking to build on that legacy, to ensure that the Welsh Harp site would continue to be a place where education, inclusion, and environmental stewardship was able to thrive for generations to come.

Having thanked Councillor Benea for her response, the Mayor then invited comments from other members on the petition, with the following contributions noted:

In opening the comments, Councillor Mitchell took the opportunity to thank the petitioners along with Councillor Benea for raising and seeking to address the concerns raised, recognising the challenges currently faced in seeking to provide opportunities for children from across the borough to access and engage with the natural environment in response to the biodiversity crisis and also urban nature of Brent. In supporting the need to continue provision of access to these opportunities, it was recognised that this would also need to be undertaken in a fiscally prudent manner with Councillor Mitchell advising of the commitment from the Welsh Harp local ward councillors to continue working with the relevant lead members to ensure that the delivery of the new facilities was designed to ensure the provision of as wide a range of opportunities as possible for the local community (including schools) to access Welsh Harp as a valuable local asset and in order to continue learning about the natural environment.

As a further contribution, Councillor Lorber also speaking in support of the petition, felt it important to highlight the need to ensure the provision of any new facility at the centre included continued access for local schools with the scheme identified as one that would potentially have benefitted from Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) funding. In outlining the previous use of NCIL funding to support community bids and previous advice around permitted use of that funding, concern was expressed that this approach appeared to have changed following the recent decision of Cabinet to approve the use of £8m worth of NCIL funding on schemes supporting public realm improvements, which he felt had been decided without the necessary choice by local residents and allocated on initiatives that should normally have been funded through the Council's revenue budget. As such he felt the approach adopted needed to be highlighted, falling as it did during a local election year.

With no further comments made, the Mayor once again thanked all those who had participated for their contributions and advised that as this had been the final petition for presentation he would now move on to deal with the remainder of the agenda.

## 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) – Addressing Safety and Fly-Tipping Risks in Bee Corridor Management in Brent**

The Mayor invited Councillor Jayanti Patel to move the first motion, which had been submitted on behalf of the Conservative Group. Councillor J. Patel began by, highlighting the way in which the motion had been presented to reflect resident concerns about safety, hygiene, and accessibility of bee corridors and wildflower initiatives, with specific issues identified including fly-tipping, unmanaged vegetation, dumping of waste and litter often in areas adjacent to where children played. It was also pointed out that overgrown grass near footpaths and crossings, particularly around Kingsbury Roundabout, had created hazards for pedestrians and drivers with enhanced risks in relation to fire safety also identified as a cause for concern.

As an alternative approach, Councillor Jayanti Patel highlighted the way similar challenges had been addressed elsewhere, including the use of hanging baskets within Harrow with bee-friendly plants which had been installed across lamp posts and railings supporting the approach towards biodiversity and corridor links between green spaces. In summing up, he highlighted the call within the motion to ensure Brent's bee and wildflower corridors were managed in a safe, welcoming, and responsible way, which he hoped members would support given the concerns being raised by local residents.

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

In moving the amendment, Councillor Kabir began by highlighting the importance of the Council's commitment to environmental initiatives such as the bee and wildflower corridors across the borough as well as climate change action. Whilst acknowledging the importance in listening to concerns raised around the impact of green projects it was felt the original motion had failed to recognise the successful work being undertaken across Brent that was making a real difference in bringing cleaner air, flourishing wildlife, and a collective ambition to do better back to the borough. As an example, reference was made to over 7 miles of wildflowers having been sown across the borough since 2019 creating 22 wildflower meadows which have added bursts of colour to parks, as well as helping to reverse declining insect populations delivering real change which it was felt would have a material impact on the borough for many years to come.

In highlighting that the original motion had included reference to work being undertaken by a number of other Labour administrations across London in relation to the climate emergency, the need to ensure this activity was undertaken hand-in-hand with local residents was also acknowledged. In moving the amendment it was, however, felt that residents were already feeling the benefit of this action in Brent through access to more parks and open spaces, repair cafes and the introduction of school streets enabling children to breathe cleaner air and with the Council also just having awarded an additional £8m to local community projects

designed to further improve the future public realm across Brent. In accepting the need to ensure that action to tackle the climate change was balanced against the safety and overall look of the borough, it was felt that the amendment moved alongside the commitments already made would ensure this was the approach adopted moving forward. On this basis the amendment moved by Councillor Kabir was as follows:

To add the wording underlined and delete the wording indicated:

### **“Addressing Safety and Fly-Tipping Risks in Bee Corridor Management in Brent**

#### **This Council notes**

- That ~~the Conservative Group~~ all political groups have supported and encouraged the environmental value of Brent’s bee corridors and wildflower initiatives in promoting biodiversity and supporting pollinator populations.
- The Council’s commitment to doing everything in its power to offset the impacts of climate change; and to protect biodiversity across the borough.

#### **This Council further notes, however**

That the recent ~~unmanaged~~ long grass and overgrown vegetation along designated bee corridors in our parks and open spaces along with uncut grass verges have in some cases led to increased instances of:

- Fly-tipping of cans, bottles, and concealed waste such as dog fouling, which poses hygiene risks where children play and track contamination into homes.
- Residents reporting reduced visibility near footpaths, crossings, and residential boundaries — notably along Fryent Way, creating hazards for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Fire risks during dry periods, as evidenced by the fire in Roe Green Park on 25th August.
- Concerns raised by residents regarding safety and accessibility, particularly in overgrown areas such as Eton Grove Park, Queensbury Station Parade, Kingsbury and other roundabouts in Brent.

#### **This Council recognises**

That similar challenges have been addressed successfully elsewhere:

- Newham Council’s fly-tipping campaign used pavement stencils, “crime scene” tape, and community-led clean-up events to reduce dumping by over 60%.
- Camden Council’s visibility motion mandated regular trimming near junctions and crossings, supported by resident-led audits to identify problem areas.

- Brent's own corridor strategy has previously trialled rotational sowing and visible placement of wildflower zones to balance biodiversity and public engagement.

And that Brent Council has introduced a number of successful initiatives in recent years to tackle these issues, such as the popular Community Skip scheme, and Green Corridors and Neighbourhoods in Church End, Roundwood, and Kingsbury.

**This Council, therefore, resolves to request that the Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement produces a report to explore:**

- (1) Implementing a zoned maintenance strategy, ensuring continued regular trimming near pedestrian routes, junctions, and residential grass verges while preserving biodiversity in core areas — such as the open spaces on Fryent Way away from built-up zones.
- (2) Introduce Increasing the amount of clear signage and QR-coded educational materials, which are already in place by all of Brent's bee corridors, to inform residents about the purpose of bee corridors and discourage illegal dumping which residents across Brent are witnessing.
- (3) Republishing a transparent annual maintenance schedule and designate points of contact for reporting fly-tipping and safety concerns arising from these bee corridors, which was made available to residents when the bee corridors were launched and sets out the cycle of maintenance and how to raise concerns with fly-tipping or safety.
- (4) Engage The ways in which the Council already engages with local communities, "Friends of" groups, and residents to co-develop monitoring and feedback mechanisms, ensuring resident voices shape future bee corridor management.
- (5) Exploring creative deterrents such as pavement stencils, visual markers, and community-led stewardship initiatives to discourage fly-tipping and promote shared responsibility through our Don't Mess with Brent campaign."

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

In opening the debate, Councillor Mistry, highlighting her personal background and commitment to environmental causes, felt it was important to seek a collaborative approach in support of addressing the environmental challenges identified. Whilst supporting the work being undertaken by the Council around biodiversity, the need to recognise the concerns outlined within the original motion were highlighted as important in terms of adjusting the approach and focussing the creation and maintenance of the corridors and meadows across core areas. In expressing support for the original motion, it was hoped the use of alternative methods such as encouraging borough-wide front garden competitions would also be considered to engage children and other local residents in the process of environmental improvement.

As a further contribution Councillor Krupa Sheth welcomed the debate, which she felt further highlighted the success achieved through the introduction of Bee and wildflower corridors in Brent in boosting biodiversity and contributing towards the Council's Net Zero 2030 target. At the same time it was pointed out, however, in response to the original motion that much of the action being sought was already being delivered including systems in place to sow low-growing plants to keep sight lines clear, the early cutting of verges being undertaken when needed and fire breaks being mowed during heatwaves to protect public safety. Members were also advised that each Bee corridor already included signage explaining their purpose with a well-established system in place to respond to concerns around fly-tipping or safety via the Fix My Street app.

In addition, the Parks Service was also involved in regular engagement and collaboration with Friends of the Parks Groups and the local community, including support on community litter picks and, it was pointed out, remained open to continued partnership work going forward. This activity was also being undertaken alongside the Council's Don't Mess with Brent campaign which had been designed to combat the issues and nuisance created by fly-tipping and (members were reminded) had been recently praised both within Parliament and by the Secretary of State for Environment and Rural Affairs during a recent visit to the borough. Whilst pleased to note the motion had therefore recognised the value of this work, alongside efforts being made by other Labour Councils across London, it was felt Brent had already demonstrated a lead in seeking to reverse the impact of austerity and improve Public Realm ensuring this continued to be well communicated and residents remained engaged. On this basis, Councillor Krupa advised she would be supporting the amendment moved in seeking to continue the work outlined.

As a final contribution. Councillor Lorber sought to challenge the approach outlined by Councillor Krupa Sheth in responding to the motion, especially across areas such as Alperton which he felt had not been subject to the activity required in relation to management of the corridors. Concern was expressed that, once established, the areas were left to become overgrown with weeds and full of rubbish, which was also a trend he felt being witnessed across parks and grass verges throughout the borough, with residents having to endure the resulting mess and nuisance.

At this stage, the Mayor advised that the time limit allocated for debate on the motion had been reached. In drawing the debate to a close, he therefore invited Councillor Jayanti Patel (as mover of the original motion) followed by Councillor Kabir (as mover of the amendment) to exercise their right of reply.

In summing up, Councillor Jayanti Patel queried the current approach towards the provision of bee corridors particularly in the Kingsbury area and whilst recognising the way in which they symbolised the Council's commitment to biodiversity felt this also needed to be balanced against the concerns raised by local residents regarding their maintenance. In Queensberry Ward, as an example he once again reiterated the way in which unmanaged growth had led to fly-tipping, fire risks, and poor visibility near crossings and homes and in commending the motion, as originally moved, felt that the concerns raised by local residents required urgent action.

As Councillor Kabir advised she did not wish to exercise a right of reply in relation to the amendment the Mayor, having thanked councillors for their contributions,

then moved to the vote on the motion starting with the amendment moved by the Labour Group.

The amendment, as set out above, was then put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

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

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

**“Addressing Safety and Fly-Tipping Risks in Bee Corridor Management in Brent**

**This Council notes**

- That all political groups have supported and encouraged the environmental value of Brent’s bee corridors and wildflower initiatives in promoting biodiversity and supporting pollinator populations.
- The Council’s commitment to doing everything in its power to offset the impacts of climate change; and to protect biodiversity across the borough.

**This Council further notes, however**

That the recent long grass and overgrown vegetation along designated bee corridors in our parks and open spaces along with uncut grass verges have in some cases led to increased instances of:

- Fly-tipping of cans, bottles, and concealed waste such as dog fouling, which poses hygiene risks where children play and track contamination into homes.
- Residents reporting reduced visibility near footpaths, crossings, and residential boundaries — notably along Fryent Way, creating hazards for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Fire risks during dry periods, as evidenced by the fire in Roe Green Park on 25th August.
- Concerns raised by residents regarding safety and accessibility, particularly in overgrown areas such as Eton Grove Park, Queensbury Station Parade, Kingsbury and other roundabouts in Brent.

**This Council recognises**

That similar challenges have been addressed successfully elsewhere:

- Newham Council’s fly-tipping campaign used pavement stencils, “crime scene” tape, and community-led clean-up events to reduce dumping by over 60%.

- Camden Council's visibility motion mandated regular trimming near junctions and crossings, supported by resident-led audits to identify problem areas.
- Brent's own corridor strategy has previously trialled rotational sowing and visible placement of wildflower zones to balance biodiversity and public engagement.

And that Brent Council has introduced a number of successful initiatives in recent years to tackle these issues, such as the popular Community Skip scheme, and Green Corridors and Neighbourhoods in Church End, Roundwood, and Kingsbury.

**This Council, therefore, resolves to request that the Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement produces a report to explore:**

- (1) Implementing a zoned maintenance strategy, ensuring continued regular trimming near pedestrian routes, junctions, and residential grass verges while preserving biodiversity in core areas — such as the open spaces on Fryent Way away from built-up zones.
- (2) Increasing the amount of clear signage and QR-coded educational materials, which are already in place by all of Brent's bee corridors, to inform residents about the purpose of bee corridors and discourage illegal dumping which residents across Brent are witnessing.
- (3) Republishing a transparent annual maintenance schedule and designate points of contact for reporting fly-tipping and safety concerns arising from these bee corridors, which was made available to residents when the bee corridors were launched and sets out the cycle of maintenance and how to raise concerns with fly-tipping or safety.
- (4) The ways in which the Council already engages with local communities, "Friends of" groups, and residents to co-develop monitoring and feedback mechanisms, ensuring resident voices shape future bee corridor management.
- (5) Exploring creative deterrents such as pavement stencils, visual markers, and community-led stewardship initiatives to discourage fly-tipping and promote shared responsibility through our Don't Mess with Brent campaign."

## **10.2 2nd Motion (Liberal Democrats Group) – Standing United against Racism and Xenophobia in Brent**

The Mayor then invited Councillor Lorber to move the second motion, which had been submitted on behalf of the Liberal Democrats Group. As context to the motion, Councillor Lorber began by highlighting his personal background and commitment in seeking to stand against racism and expressed concern at what he described as the recent horrific scenes with police being attacked by self-described proud nationalists and also at the foreign intervention of powerful individuals from America in seeking to challenge the legitimacy of the democratically elected UK government. Referring to his background as a refugee, concern was also expressed at the attacks being witnessed across the UK on individual's homes and in hotels where asylum seekers had been placed. In recognising the increase in

what he regarded as racist and xenophobic rhetoric and use of inflammatory language designed to scapegoat migrants and minority communities alongside Brent's status as one of the most diverse and welcoming boroughs in the UK, Councillor Lorber advised that the motion had been presented to emphasise the need as a community to stand up and show leadership in making clear that the type of behaviour being witnessed was unacceptable and would not be tolerated in the borough, with confirmation provided that the amendment submitted by the Labour Group was also supported.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Lorber for moving the motion and then drew members attention to an amendment submitted by Councillor Benea on behalf of the Labour Group, previously referred to and circulated in advance of the meeting.

In moving the amendment, Councillor Benea began by thanking the Liberal Democrat group for bringing forward the original motion as an important antidote to the divisive headlines witnessed over recent weeks in relation to migration and refugees. In terms of the proposed amendment, it was pointed out this had not been designed as a political point-scoring exercise but to highlight the work already being undertaken by the Council and in seeking to ensure that the position of councillors position as democratically elected local representatives was used to counter hatred and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to the refugee and migrant communities in Brent in order to send a clear message that the Council stood with them.

As a first-generation migrant from Romania, Councillor Benea shared her personal experience of leaving home to start a new life in the UK, making it her purpose to ensure this remained a safe and credible option for others searching for a new beginning. In highlighting the privilege felt in being part of an organisation that was committed to demonstrating its support for migrants, the opportunity was also taken to remind members of the motion she had previously moved which had committed Brent to becoming a Borough of Sanctuary, as a place proud of its vibrant and diverse history and one which would always strive to do more for those fleeing persecution. In recognising how this sentiment had been reflected in support being provided for refugees around housing and welfare, employment and immigration advice and through the efforts to close health inequality gaps exposed by the Brent Poverty Commission, Councillor Benea ended by commending the amendment to all members and hoping that all would join her in standing on the side of the borough's migrant communities. On this basis the amendment moved by Councillor Benea was as follows:

To add the wording underlined and delete the wording indicated:

**“Standing United against Racism and Xenophobia in Brent”**

In recent years, particularly after the Brexit referendum, there has been a disturbing rise in racist and xenophobic rhetoric in public discourse, much of it amplified by political parties and figures on the far right and reactionary elements who seek to divide our communities. These groups have used inflammatory language, scapegoating migrants and minority communities, in a calculated attempt to stoke fear and resentment for political gain.



Brent is one of the most diverse boroughs in the UK. Over many decades, people from across the globe – from South Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and beyond – have made their home here, contributing immensely to our local economy, public services, cultural life, and social fabric. Whether as NHS workers, teachers, carers, builders, artists, entrepreneurs, or community leaders, migrants have played a vital role in shaping modern Brent into the vibrant, resilient, and forward-looking borough it is today.

**This Council believes:**

- Racism, xenophobia, and all forms of bigotry must be challenged wherever and whenever they arise, including when they come from mainstream or elected political figures.
- The demonisation of immigrants and refugees not only undermines social cohesion but also endangers the safety and well-being of residents across Brent.
- Brent's diversity is not a challenge to be managed, but a strength to be celebrated.

Brent has always been stronger because of its diversity – not in spite of it. At a time when fear and hatred are being weaponised in national discourse, we in Brent choose a different path: one of solidarity, mutual respect.

**As a result, this Council resolves to:**

- (1) **Proudly reaffirm Brent's commitment to being an inclusive, anti-racist borough through our affirmed status as a Borough of Sanctuary and a proud signatory of the Unison Anti-Racism Charter**, where all residents – regardless of background, nationality, or immigration status – are welcomed, valued, and protected.
- (2) **Publicly condemn the racist and xenophobic rhetoric** being spread by Reform UK and other groups on the far/right and make clear that such divisive narratives have no place in our borough or our politics.
- (3) **Celebrate the contributions of immigrants to Brent**, through public awareness campaigns, community events, and educational initiatives that promote understanding, solidarity, and historical awareness as part of the Council's refreshed approach to EDI, and as historically celebrated during Brent's Borough of Culture status in 2020.
- (4) **Encourage all councillors and community leaders** to speak out against hate speech and misinformation targeting migrants and to work proactively to build unity across all of Brent's communities.
- (5) **Continue to support migrant and refugee communities** through council services, advocacy, and partnerships with local organisations working on inclusion, integration, and support; as well as working to close the health inequality gaps exposed in the 2020 Brent Poverty Commission through initiatives such as Brent Health Matters."

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

In opening the debate, Councillor Mistry felt it important to acknowledge that the original motion appeared to reflect the national mood rather than the specific situation in Brent welcoming the borough's vibrant, multi-ethnic character and decades of peaceful coexistence between various diverse communities. At the same time, however, concerns were outlined in relation to the impact the influx of recent economic migrants arriving via unsafe channel crossings were having in terms of the asylum system and pressures being experienced across Brent in relation to the supply of temporary housing accommodation. In clarifying that the position adopted was not aimed at demonising migrants or refugees but in seeking transparency and accountability in relation to what the Conservative Group felt was a failing asylum system, she highlighted a need for compassion to be matched by capacity, warning that not addressing the strain on housing risked further undermining social cohesion.

As a further contribution, Councillor Mili Patel, in providing historical context to the debate referred to an article in the Daily Mail from the 1930's reacting to the Kindertransport which had saved thousands of Jewish children from Nazi persecution which had argued government policy at the time should not be "ruled by misguided sentimentalism". Reference was also made to the proposals in the 1970s offering refugees funds to settle elsewhere or provide alternative options for resettlement following the displacement of many East African Asians who were left homeless by regimes led by the likes of Idi Amin. As a contrast Councillor Mili Patel felt it important to recognise that Brent had hugely benefitted from the migration and assimilation of many of these migrant communities, with it pointed out that many of those currently serving as councillors would not be here if steps had not been taken to accept refugees fleeing persecution. It was therefore with disappointment that she felt the subject presented for the Non Cabinet Member debate later on the agenda had been framed in a way which looked at migration as an insurmountable challenge rather than a celebration of how it had contributed to the development and history of Brent. In thanking the Liberal Democrats Group for the original motion and support of the amendments moved, it was felt this would assist in placing humanity back at the centre of a national conversation spiralling out of control, recognising the impact on those affected and fact that Brent had been stronger because of its diversity, not in spite of it. In ending, Councillor Mili Patel advised she was therefore proud of the work being undertaken by the Council to support refugees who had chosen to make Brent their home with Brent continuing to be a place of sanctuary and seeking to treat all residents with the respect and dignity deserved rather than supporting what was felt to be the current dangerous and divisive rhetoric when it came to migration.

As a final contribution, Councillor Clinton then spoke in support of the motion and amendments moved by Councillor Benea also highlighting a need for political leadership against racism, hate, and division, which he was pleased to note many different members of the local community had recognised as unacceptable behaviour.

At this stage, the Mayor advised that the time limit allocated for debate on the motion had been reached. In drawing the debate to a close, he therefore invited

Councillor Lorber (as mover of the original motion) followed by Councillor Benea (as mover of the amendment) to exercise their right of reply.

On the basis of the debate and amendment moved having been accepted, both Councillor Lorber and Benea advised they did not wish to exercise a right of reply.

Having thanked members for their contributions the Mayor then advised that as the amendment moved by the Labour Group had been accepted, he would move straight to the vote on the substantive motion (as amended)

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

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

### **“Standing United against Racism and Xenophobia in Brent**

In recent years, particularly after the Brexit referendum, there has been a disturbing rise in racist and xenophobic rhetoric in public discourse, much of it amplified by political parties and figures on the far right and reactionary elements who seek to divide our communities. These groups have used inflammatory language, scapegoating migrants and minority communities, in a calculated attempt to stoke fear and resentment for political gain.

Brent is one of the most diverse boroughs in the UK. Over many decades, people from across the globe – from South Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and beyond – have made their home here, contributing immensely to our local economy, public services, cultural life, and social fabric. Whether as NHS workers, teachers, carers, builders, artists, entrepreneurs, or community leaders, migrants have played a vital role in shaping modern Brent into the vibrant, resilient, and forward-looking borough it is today.

This Council believes:

- Racism, xenophobia, and all forms of bigotry must be challenged wherever and whenever they arise, including when they come from mainstream or elected political figures.
- The demonisation of immigrants and refugees not only undermines social cohesion but also endangers the safety and well-being of residents across Brent.
- Brent’s diversity is not a challenge to be managed, but a strength to be celebrated.

Brent has always been stronger because of its diversity – not in spite of it. At a time when fear and hatred are being weaponised in national discourse, we in Brent choose a different path: one of solidarity, mutual respect.

**As a result, this Council resolves to:**

- (1) **Proudly reaffirm Brent's commitment to being an inclusive, anti-racist borough through our affirmed status as a Borough of Sanctuary and a proud signatory of the Unison Anti-Racism Charter**, where all residents – regardless of background, nationality, or immigration status – are welcomed, valued, and protected.
- (2) **Publicly condemn the racist and xenophobic rhetoric** being spread by Reform UK and other groups on the far/right and make clear that such divisive narratives have no place in our borough or our politics.
- (3) **Celebrate the contributions of immigrants to Brent**, through public awareness campaigns, community events, and educational initiatives that promote understanding, solidarity, and historical awareness as part of the Council's refreshed approach to EDI, and as historically celebrated during Brent's Borough of Culture status in 2020.
- (4) **Encourage all councillors and community leaders** to speak out against hate speech and misinformation targeting migrants and to work proactively to build unity across all of Brent's communities.
- (5) **Continue to support migrant and refugee communities** through council services, advocacy, and partnerships with local organisations working on inclusion, integration, and support; as well as working to close the health inequality gaps exposed in the 2020 Brent Poverty Commission through initiatives such as Brent Health Matters."

### **10.3 3rd Motion (Labour Group) – Backing healthy, sustainable high streets in Brent**

The Mayor then invited Councillor Agha to move the first motion submitted by the Labour Group. In moving the motion, Councillor Agha began by highlighting what he regarded to be the key duty of a local authority in seeking to protect and deliver for its residents by building long standing, sustainable communities. As such, he advised the motion had been designed to recognise the importance of high streets at the heart of local communities, providing essential services, creating local employment, and serving as places where residents were able to meet and connect as well as providing a reflection of the communities served in terms of their character and way in which they represented the diverse and vibrant mix of businesses across the borough. Concern was, however, expressed at the impact being felt across many high streets as a result of the previous Government's programme of austerity, with many businesses struggling as a result of rising costs and the proliferation of certain types of businesses such as fast food outlets and adult gaming centres taking their place. As a result, he pointed out the motion was proposing action designed to redress the balance and place power and pride back at the heart of local communities recognising the need to prioritise the safety and health of residents and ensure businesses were able to feed back into the local economy. In recognising the responsibility on the Council to act, the current constraints on them being able to do so were also highlighted, which the motion had sought to address. In summing up, Councillor Agha therefore expressed his pride in working with colleagues to not only call for a change in the law on gambling premises but to ensure that local residents voices were also heard in seeking to tackle the unsustainable clusters of businesses currently appearing across specific

high streets in the borough, enhancing the Local Plan and establishing a dedicated multi-agency task force to crack down on unlawful activity in support the borough's independent businesses and as part of the process in building a fairer, more resilient future for Brent.

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

In opening the debate, Councillor Hirani supported the need to recognise the importance of thriving healthy high streets but expressed concern to avoid initiatives such as the dedicated new multi-agency taskforces and other interventions leading to the imposition of additional unnecessary costs, creating inefficiencies, and diverting resources from existing frontline services. Whilst highlighting the Conservative Groups support for the motion, the opportunity was taken to advocate for a more balanced approach which, whilst designed to support local enterprise, would also ensure public funds were being used effectively. As examples, reference was made to the potential adoption of a one-hour free parking scheme in town centres (as had successfully been adopted across Harrow), reduction of business rates and enforcement against illegal trading as measures that would provide an immediate impact in supporting local businesses and high streets, with implementation being funded through the collection of appropriate fines through enforcement action. In highlighting the work being undertaken in collaboration with the Kenton Traders Association in terms of the type of support that could be provided, it was hoped (in supporting the vision identified within the motion) that consideration would also be given to the measures outlined during implementation.

Councillor Ethapemi, also spoke in support of the motion, endorsing the comments made by Councillor Agha and supporting the concerns raised about the impact being created by the proliferation of gambling premises on the borough's high streets and surrounding areas and communities.

As a further contribution, Councillor Johnson (also speaking in support of the motion) also highlighted the importance in ensuring the views of local residents and the communities represented were fully reflected within the approach adopted towards supporting the boroughs high streets and tackling the harm being created by gambling. Expressing pride at the proactive lead being taken by Brent nationally in seeking to highlight and tackle the harm being created by the proliferation of gambling premises across the borough, he was keen to support the call being made as a result for the Government to provide local authorities with the necessary power to control the provision of these types of premises on high streets, ensuring residents had a real say over their local environment. In addition, support was expressed for the proposed focus on review of the Local Plan to strengthen policies that would limit over-concentration of uses like adult gaming centres and fast-food outlets while also protecting green spaces. Reference was also made to the proposals outlined within the motion to explore new and innovative ways to support and promote legitimate local businesses in terms of the targeting of business grants, skills training and marketing campaigns with the overall approach also supported by the proposed development of a Brent Hight Streets Charter in offering a shared vision for safe, clean and vibrant high streets. In highlighting the support also expressed for the approach outlined by Dawn Bulter as a local MP in Parliament he ended by expressing hope that the campaign and lobbying being led by Brent working with the Social Market Foundation in relation to the harm created

by gambling premises on local communities would have the necessary impact in terms of the urgent reform being sought.

As a final contribution, Councillor Mistry also spoke highlighting concern at the impact of the current parking restrictions on local businesses in town centres across the borough when compared with the approach adopted by other Council's, such as Harrow, in introducing a free parking period given the benefits experienced by local businesses. Whilst supporting the motion, she therefore hoped members would also recognise the need to consider and address the issue as part of the overall approach outlined in seeking to support the borough's high streets and local businesses.

At this stage, as the time limit for debate had been reached, the Mayor then invited Councillor Agha to exercise his right of reply. In thanking members for their support and comments, Councillor Agha ended by once again highlighting his support for the proposals within the motion including establishment of a dedicated multi-agency taskforce to actively identify and take action against businesses operating illegally and calls for a change in the law on gambling premises to ensure that local residents voices were also heard in seeking to tackle the unsustainable clusters of those type of businesses appearing across the borough and in order foster a supportive environment in which business could flourish supported by their local communities.

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

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

**"Backing healthy, sustainable high streets in Brent**

**This council notes:**

- That our high streets and local town centres are the heart of our communities, providing essential services, employment, and social spaces for Brent residents.
- That a diverse and vibrant mix of businesses, from independent shops to established retailers, is crucial for the economic and social well-being of the borough.
- That the proliferation of fast-food outlets and the rise of cash-intensive businesses, alongside high concentrations of Adult Gaming Centres, can impact the character of our high streets, create unfair competition for legitimate traders, and pose risks to public health, safety, and consumer welfare.
- That Brent Council has a responsibility to protect its residents and support the growth of a sustainable and prosperous local economy.
- That Brent Council is already taking a leading role in this fight, having partnered with over 40 local and combined authorities to lobby central government for urgent gambling reform, and working with the Social Market

Foundation to research the true impact of these businesses on our communities.

**This council believes:**

- That a proactive approach is needed to foster a supportive environment for legitimate businesses to flourish.
- That clamping down on illegal and illicit trading activities is essential to creating a level playing field for all businesses and to safeguard our communities.
- That strong collaboration between the Council, local businesses, residents, and the police is key to tackling these issues effectively.

**This council resolves:**

- (1) To develop and implement a Brent High Streets Charter in consultation with local business groups and residents, outlining a shared vision for safe, clean, and vibrant high streets and our ambition to declutter inaccessible spaces.
- (2) To establish a dedicated multi-agency task force, including officers from Trading Standards, Licensing, the police and other law enforcement agencies, to actively identify and take action against businesses that operate illegally, sell counterfeit goods, or engage in other illicit activities.
- (3) To review and, if necessary, amend Brent's Local Plan to ensure a more balanced and diverse mix of businesses on our high streets, with a particular focus on addressing the over-concentration of certain types of businesses, such as takeaways and adult gaming centres.
- (4) To explore local measures to deal with high-risk cash businesses, to address any risk of financial crime and/or community harm.
- (5) To explore new and innovative ways to support and promote our borough's legitimate businesses, including targeted business grants, skills training, and marketing campaigns.
- (6) To launch a public awareness campaign to inform residents about the dangers of using illicit services and purchasing illegal products such as disposable vapes and snus, and to encourage them to report suspicious business activities.
- (7) To contribute to the Mayor of London's Plan for London consultation, feeding Brent's voice into the future of the capital's high streets."

**10.4 4th Motion (Labour Group) – Breathing new life into Brent's transport infrastructure projects**

The Mayor then invited Councillor Lesley Smith to move the second and final motion submitted by the Labour Group. In moving the motion, Councillor Lesley Smith advised that she had originally settled in Brent as a result of the Bakerloo

line, which she had used ever since and with the local businesses which had flourished around Queen's Park station also demonstrating its strength as a commuter starting point and attracting people to the borough. In highlighting the impact which the Bakerloo line had had in transforming Queen's Park as a destination, the opportunity was taken to recognise the number of young people now arriving to use the various cafes, bars and other facilities in the area delivering jobs and prosperity. Brent was also noted to have more Bakerloo stations (ten) than any other borough located within its area, running from Kilburn Park to Kenton but in recognising this fact it was also felt more could be done in terms of the service provided. Referring to the stock used on the line being some of the oldest on the Underground and operated in the UK, issues were identified in terms of the lack of air conditioning and its general maintenance with the motion therefore highlighting support for the announcement of the latest TfL settlement provided by the Chancellor in seeking to make new rolling stock a reality and to extend the line in order to spread its benefits beyond their current reach.

In moving the motion the opportunity was also taken to express support for the funding required to deliver West London Orbital, given the difference it would bring not only to Brent but also across the wider West London region in terms of providing access for up to half a million people to the new station at Old Oak Common as well as supporting the creation of up to 39,000 jobs and 22,000 homes across Brent Cross, Wembley, and Cricklewood. This would be in addition to the benefits created in terms of reducing car use and emissions and in support of providing new step-free access to Neasden and Harlesden stations and elsewhere in the borough, something it highlighted as also needed in Queen's Park. In summing up, confirmation was also provided that the amendment submitted by the Liberal Democrats Group in support of the urgent upgrade identified as required to the Uxbridge branch of the Picadilly line (in order to ensure this met the same standard as the Heathrow branch) was also supported as part of a coordinated approach in seeking to meet the needs of residents across Brent.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Lesley Smith for moving the motion and then drew members attention to the amendment submitted by Councillor Clinton on behalf of the Liberal Democrats Group, as previously referred to and circulated in advance of the meeting.

In moving the amendment, Councillor Clinton began by thanking the Councillor Lesley Smith for bringing forward the original motion and confirming the acceptance of his amendment which, whilst also supportive of the upgrade being sought to the Bakerloo line and commitment to West London Orbital, had been designed to highlight the case in support of upgrading the Uxbridge branch of the Picadilly as another critical transport link within the borough. In highlighting his personal experience of the poor reliability of the service on that branch of the Piccadilly line along with increasing demand on the existing service, given the level of development in the surrounding area, Councillor Clinton ended by outlining what he felt was the need to ensure provision of an expanded, resilient and interconnected transport network for residents across the borough regardless of which line they used and once again thanked the Labour Group for their support of the changes outlined within his amendment.

On this basis the amendment moved by Councillor Clinton was as follows:



To add the wording underlined and delete the wording indicated:

### **“Breathing new life into Brent’s transport infrastructure projects**

This Council notes:

- That a robust ~~and integrated~~ transport network is fundamental to the economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, and social well-being of Brent's residents.
- The significant challenges posed by climate change and the urgent need to transition to more sustainable modes of transport, reducing reliance on private cars.
- The Government's £2.2bn multi-year ~~capital~~-funding settlement to ~~Transport for London~~ TfL earlier this year, which made note of support for high priority new rolling stock and signalling procurements on the Bakerloo Line.
- That both the ~~proposed~~ Bakerloo Line Extension and the ~~West London Orbital (WLO)~~ projects have been identified as key ~~strategie~~ transport schemes that would deliver transformative benefits for Brent ~~and the wider region~~.
- The compelling economic case for both projects, delivering ~~on~~ tens of thousands of new homes and jobs, and unlocking growth ~~in key areas~~ across the borough. ~~and beyond, including creative and cultural hubs in Park Royal and Soho.~~
- That reports estimate upgrading the Bakerloo line will ~~create capacity for an additional~~ increase capacity by 150,000 daily journeys, connecting some of London’s least served areas to the TfL network.
- That the Council has ~~already~~ demonstrated its commitment to the ~~West London Orbital, WLO~~ having approved with a contribution of £465,516 plus a £150,000 contingency from its Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy to fund the next stage of its development, in collaboration with the West London Alliance.
- That the ~~upcoming~~ Autumn Budget presents ~~an~~ crucial opportunity for the Government to demonstrate its commitment to investing in strategic transport infrastructure.
- The poor reliability of tube services and the lack of night tubes on the Uxbridge branch of the Picadilly line.
- The thousands of (much needed) flats being built on that branch, increasing demand on existing services.

**This Council believes:**

- The Bakerloo & Picadilly lines are Line is critical transport links an iconic part of London's underground, its history, and culture, connecting landmarks from Wembley to the West End and beyond.
- The ~~West London Orbital~~ WLO is a crucial, ~~shovel-ready~~ rail link that would connect strategic growth areas in West and North West NW London, providing a sustainable transport corridor, reducing congestion on local roads, and offering our residents new, direct journey opportunities.
- The combined delivery of both projects, and improvements to tube services would create a resilient and interconnected transport network that serves the needs of our current residents and supports the sustainable growth of our borough ~~for decades to come.~~
- The delivery of these projects aligns with the Labour Government's policy of creating a unified, simplified, and publicly accountable rail network, as outlined in its commitment to establish Great British Railways.

**This Council resolves:**

- (1) To ~~formally and~~ unequivocally support the delivery of both the Bakerloo Line Upgrade and Extension and the ~~West London Orbital~~ WLO projects.
- (2) To ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Mayor of London, the Secretary of State for Transport and the Chancellor to express Brent's strong support, and to urge the Government to use the ~~upcoming~~ Autumn Budget to deliver on its rail commitments, and prioritising inge funding for these critical projects.
- (3) To ~~commit to working collaboratively with Transport for London~~ TfL and other partners to ensure that Brent's interests are at the forefront of the planning and implementation of these schemes, including ~~additional~~ lobbying ~~on~~ providing for step-free access at transport stations across the borough.
- (4) To also ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Mayor requesting:
  - Services on the Uxbridge branch line be on par with the Heathrow Branch
  - The extension of the night tubes to the Uxbridge branch."

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

Speaking in support of the motion, Councillor Kennelly, in opening the debate outlined what he felt was the importance of the Bakerloo line extension as a key strategic transport scheme that would be able to deliver transformative benefits not only to the economy in Brent but also the wider region. Whilst welcoming the Government's TfL funding settlement and priority for new rolling stock and signalling along the existing line, he also supported what he regarded as the compelling economic case presented for extension of the line and in ending also expressed support for the amendment moved highlighting the need for improved

services on the Uxbridge branch of the Picadilly line, given the impact this would also have on Brent residents, including himself, served by that line.

As a further contribution, Councillor Maurice also spoke advising that whilst supportive of the improvement and upgrade of public transport, he felt this needed to be undertaken on the basis of need and funding having also been identified. Querying the direct benefits of the proposed Bakerloo Line extension, specifically within Brent, he felt the main advantage to be provided would be in terms of the provision of new rolling stock (recognising the ageing nature of the current stock) and signalling improvements. Whilst welcoming the benefits associated with West London Orbital, Councillor Maurice identified what he felt to be a significant issue in terms of the new station at Brent Cross West having been designed and built without provision for WLO. Recognising that TfL was also in a process of financial recovery, he ended by highlighting the significant lobbying that he felt would still be required to attract the necessary support and funding for the expansion of the Bakerloo line and improvements also being sought, through the amendment, to the Picadilly line which he pointed out had always been prioritised on the basis of access to Heathrow.

As a final contribution Councillor Nevra, also speaking in support of the motion, felt it was important to respond to the issues raised by Councillor Maurice in terms of the importance of the improvements being sought to both the Bakerloo and Picadilly line by residents relying on those services and living in the surrounding areas, recognising not only the compelling economic case but also wider impacts in relation to environmental sustainability, social well-being and wider transport connectivity. In welcoming the near unanimous cross party support expressed during the debate, he hoped all members would support the motion (as amended) in seeking to secure the necessary commitment to both the upgrade and expansion of the Bakerloo line and enhancements to the Picadilly line in terms of the prioritisation by the government for funding to deliver these critical projects.

At this stage, the Mayor advised that the time limit allocated for debate on the motion had been reached. In drawing the debate to a close, he therefore invited Councillor Lesley Smith (as mover of the original motion) followed by Councillor Clinton (as mover of the amendment) to exercise their right of reply.

In thanking members for their support, Councillor Lesley Smith (in exercising her right of reply) felt it important to challenge the comments made by Councillor Maurice on behalf of the Conservative Group during the debate, highlighting the significant benefits it was felt the expansion and upgrade of the Bakerloo line and improvements being sought in the service along the Uxbridge branch of the Picadilly line would deliver within Brent in terms of new homes, jobs, being able to unlock additional growth and prosperity and attract additional interest and investment from outside the borough given the range of areas served by the stations along both lines across the borough. Whilst recognising the extensive lobbying required to secure the necessary investment and ensure Brent's interests were at the forefront in terms of the delivery of these schemes as key strategic transport infrastructure projects, she felt confident the approach outlined in the motion and amendment would support this process backed by the commitment, investment and support already provided by the Council and cross party support also highlighted, and as such hoped all members would support both the motion and amendment as moved.

On the basis of the debate and amendment having been accepted, Councillor Clinton advised that he did not wish to exercise any right of reply.

Having thanked members for their contributions the Mayor once again advised that as the Labour Group had indicated there were in acceptance of the amendment moved by the Liberal Democrats Group he would move straight to the vote on the substantive motion (as amended). The Mayor then moved on to put the substantive motion, as amended, to a vote which was declared **CARRIED**.

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

**“Breathing new life into Brent’s transport infrastructure projects**

This Council notes:

- That a robust transport network is fundamental to the economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, and social well-being of Brent's residents.
- The significant challenges posed by climate change and the urgent need to transition to more sustainable modes of transport, reducing reliance on private cars.
- The Government’s £2.2bn multi-year funding settlement to TfL earlier this year, which made note of support for high priority new rolling stock and signalling procurements on the Bakerloo Line.
- That both the Bakerloo Line Extension and the WLO projects have been identified as key transport schemes that would deliver transformative benefits for Brent.
- The compelling economic case for both projects, delivering tens of thousands of new homes and jobs, and unlocking growth across the borough.
- That reports estimate upgrading the Bakerloo line will increase capacity by 150,000 daily journeys, connecting some of London’s least served areas to the TfL network.
- That the Council has demonstrated its commitment to the WLO with a contribution of £465,516 plus a £150,000 contingency from its Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy to fund the next stage of its development, in collaboration with the West London Alliance.
- That the Autumn Budget presents an opportunity for the Government to demonstrate its commitment to investing in strategic transport infrastructure.
- The poor reliability of tube services and the lack of night tubes on the Uxbridge branch of the Picadilly line.
- The thousands of (much needed) flats being built on that branch, increasing demand on existing services.

**This Council believes:**

- The Bakerloo & Picadilly lines are critical transport links.
- The WLO is a crucial rail link that would connect growth areas in West and NW London, providing sustainable transport, reducing congestion on local roads, and offering our residents new, direct journey opportunities.
- The combined delivery of both projects, and improvements to tube services would create a resilient and interconnected transport network that serves the needs of our current residents and supports the sustainable growth of our borough.
- The delivery of these projects aligns with the Labour Government's policy of creating a unified, simplified, and publicly accountable rail network, as outlined in its commitment to establish Great British Railways.

**This Council resolves:**

- (1) To unequivocally support the delivery of both the Bakerloo Line Upgrade and Extension and the WLO projects.
- (2) To ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Mayor of London, the Secretary of State for Transport and the Chancellor to express Brent's strong support, and to urge the Government to use the Autumn Budget to deliver on its rail commitments, and prioritise funding for these projects.
- (3) To work with TfL and other partners to ensure Brent's interests are at the forefront of the planning and implementation of these schemes, including lobbying for step-free access at stations across the borough.
- (4) To also ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Mayor requesting:
  - o Services on the Uxbridge branch line be on par with the Heathrow Branch
  - o The extension of the night tubes to the Uxbridge branch."

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

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

Following on from the debate on the final motion, Councillor Muhammed Butt began by assuring members of the Council's ongoing commitment to continue lobbying for the improvements being sought along both the Bakerloo and Picadilly lines as well highlighting the Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL) investment already provided to support the ongoing development of West London Orbital (in collaboration with the West London Alliance) given the wider benefits identified in

relation to strategic growth, economic prosperity and the provision of more sustainable transport links.

Moving on, the opportunity was also taken to thank all members of the Cabinet for the work being undertaken across their portfolios to continue supporting and safeguarding local residents in line with the Council's core strategic priorities, recognising the ongoing nature of the financial pressures faced by the Council. In commending the work being undertaken to manage demand and address the pressures identified whilst also delivering on their commitments, members were assured that the need for continued financial discipline and careful stewardship had also been recognised to sustain and ensure the Council's ongoing financial sustainability. As part of this approach, reference was made to the recent decision made by Cabinet to allocate what he felt was a transformational £14.5m of investment to revitalise Brent's roads, parks, and public safety infrastructure funded through SCIL which, he pointed out, had been designed to deliver real improvements for residents across the borough on an everyday basis and build on the £15m of funding already invested since 2022 focussed on creating a cleaner, safer, greener borough where residents felt connected and proud to live.

As part of the update, members were also asked to note (as tabled at the meeting) the Executive decisions which had been taken under the Council's urgency procedures, since the previous update provided for the Council meeting in July 2025.

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

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

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

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

12.1 No supplementary question was raised by Councillor Kennelly with the written response provided by Councillor Grahl (as Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools) on the protection of vulnerable children noted, as circulated with the agenda.

12.2 No supplementary question was raised by Councillor Choudry with the written response provided jointly by Councillor Krupa Sheth (as Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement) and Councillor Farah (as Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Jobs & Skills) on the provision of additional CCTV enhancements via SCIL investment noted, as circulated with the agenda.

- 12.3 Councillor Kabir thanked Councillor Donnelly-Jackson (as Cabinet Member for Housing) for the written response to her question seeking an update on the impact of the Housing Benefit subsidy gap and in welcoming what she felt to be Brent's innovative approach towards tackling homelessness and addressing the pressures on temporary accommodation asked if a detailed breakdown on the numbers of families and single people who had presented as homeless to the Council could be provided from 2021 onwards to highlight the ongoing challenges being faced.

In response, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson advised that she would be able to provide a detailed breakdown on the figures following the meeting and in response to the ongoing pressures and challenges highlighted, took the opportunity to outline a number of initiatives currently being pursued. These included consultation being undertaken on a new Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Strategy which had been developed in partnership with Crisis, who it was pointed out also chaired the Homelessness Forum and had recently been shortlisted for a London Homelessness Award for their work with refugees facing homelessness. Reference was also made to development of the Build for Zero approach, which used real-time data to respond to the needs of homeless people alongside the Council's Radical Place Leadership pilot focussed on how the Council could develop and work more effectively with partners in the delivery of more joined up services. The provision of access to the GLA's Council Homes Acquisition Grants Programme (CHAPS) was also welcomed in supporting the delivery of new temporary accommodation units, as a further way in assisting to reduce subsidy loss. Finally, all those involved in delivery of homelessness services being provided through the New Horizons Centre and Turning Point were commended for the real difference being made and opportunity provided to ensure that those facing homelessness were treated with dignity and received the support needed.

- 12.4 In noting the written response provided to his question regarding the strategy to close the funding gap and prioritise footway repairs, Councillor Jayanti Patel as a supplementary question, asked Councillor Krupa Sheth (as Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement) for a detailed breakdown of the planned £11m footway maintenance spend referred to within her response, which he understood was being funded from the £15m additional investment in maintenance provided as part of the three-year programme running from 2023 to 2026. In order to support transparency and ensure residents were kept informed of progress, details were also sought on a breakdown of total spend for 2023, 2024 and to date during 2025 along with the remaining balance allocated for 2026 with Councillor Jayanti Patel expressing disappointment that it appeared in total only seven miles were scheduled for reconstruction during 2025 and 2026, which he pointed out comprised less than 1.5% of Brent's total network. With 88% of pedestrian injury claims linked to footway defects, he also ended by seeking confirmation as to whether the Council would publish an annual Accessibility Impact Statement identifying high risk areas for disabled residents and parents with young children.

In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth advised that due to the detailed nature of the information being sought she would need to liaise with officers to arrange a response on the available information following the meeting.

- 12.5 In noting the response provided by Councillor Krupa Sheth (as Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Enforcement) to his written response regarding the use of SCIL to fund local infrastructure and Public Realm projects, Councillor Lorber felt it important to recognise that this had been an approach recommended by the Liberal Democrats Group over previous years as part of their alternative budget proposals but which had been rejected on a consistent basis as not allowed and financially irresponsible. The initial question raised had therefore sought clarification about the basis on which this decision had been made, given the previous advice received. Whilst the decision to invest SCIL funding in the areas identified was welcomed, it was pointed out this had also come as no surprise during an election year. In observing a pattern where significant investment programmes continued to be announced in advance of local elections Councillor Lorber, as a supplementary question, asked whether the Cabinet Member would be willing to lobby for annual local elections as a means of providing a more consistent programme of investment for the benefit of local residents.

In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth acknowledged the support expressed for the programme of investment identified, which it was pointed out would also directly benefit residents in Sudbury as well as across the remainder of the borough in terms of addressing key priorities and public realm need.

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) As a member of the Brent Pension Fund Sub Committee Councillor Ahmadi Moghaddam, referring to further advice received in relation to the Council's Pension Fund obligations regarding divestment from companies linked to the ongoing conflict and alleged human right violations in Gaza and queries from residents seeking urgent action on this issue, sought an update on the progress being made by the Council towards meeting its commitment to divest and in taking steps towards pursuing more ethical investments. In support of the strength of feeling on this issue, members were also reminded of the petition which had been presented to Council during the previous year seeking a commitment towards divestment and follow up deputations presented to the Council's Pension Fund Sub Committee highlighting the need for urgent action to be taken.

In response, Councillor Mili Patel (as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources) thanked Councillor Ahmadi Moghaddam for his question and advised that the Council was mindful of the additional legal notice recently circulated to all LGPS administering authorities, and of the strength of feeling locally. In continuing to support the stance taken by the government that the remaining hostages needed to be released and in seeking a clear pathway towards an enduring peace in relation to the conflict



in Gaza, Councillor Mili Patel advised that the Council had also recognised the growing documentation of human rights violations in Palestine and echoed the international consensus that the status-quo could not continue to hold. In terms of the position adopted by Brent in relation to divestment, the opportunity was taken to remind members of the balance needing to be achieved in terms of the fiduciary duty to the 22,000 members of the Pension Fund and wider social and ethical responsibilities. As a result, officers were carefully reviewing the position paper supplied by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and working with the LGPS Scheme Advisory Board (SAB), who were seeking further guidance from the Government, with the Council continuing to draw on the SAB's advice, legal counsel and best practice from other local authorities.

In addition, members attention was also drawn to the implications arising from the government's "Fit for the Future" reforms, requiring all Pension Fund assets to be managed through the London CIV by March 2026. As Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, Councillor Mili Patel advised she would also, therefore, be writing to the LCIV to call for a more robust framework that would enable future the exclusion of investments linked to conflict, military occupation or genocide. In providing further assurance, confirmation was also provided of the Council's commitment to responsible investment, with all Pension Fund investment managers signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) considerations also integral to the overall investment strategy and approach. Over the coming months work would also continue with fund managers to disclose pension fund investments in companies listed by the United Nations OHCHR.

In ending her response, members were advised that the Leader & Deputy Leader had also formally requested the preparation of a plan to explore practical and legally sound options to advance divestment, so that, following the May 2026 local elections, the next Administration would be in the strongest possible position to take a clear, robust, and legally watertight decision that would not only safeguard the financial interests of the Fund's members but would also provide a firm commitment towards ethical divestment. Whilst this work continued, it was also pointed out that Brent Labour were also exploring the inclusion of a codified election pledge in their forthcoming manifesto to pursue options to divest from companies implicated in breaches of either international law or worldwide human rights with the pledge also made to ensure members were kept updated on progress as the work outlined continued.

- (ii) Councillor Mitchell seeking further details on how the allocation of SCIL and NCIL funding was being used to assist in tackling the climate emergency and addressing climate change in Brent.

In response, Councillor Rubin (as Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Community Power) provided a brief explanation of the way in which NCIL was generated through receipts from developers linked to developments across the borough which could then be reinvested to support a range of community and infrastructure projects. In addition to a range of cost of living support, he pointed out that Cabinet had also recently approved an ambitious and

extensive programme of NCIL investment designed to respond to priorities identified by residents in relation to the public realm, including a range of measures focussed around addressing the climate emergency. These included the introduction of four new school streets designed to reduce pollution and encourage more active modes of travel around schools, the planting of 1,500 new trees, the provision of funding to deliver green corridors in Church End and Kingsbury making those areas some of the greenest and climate friendly areas in Brent. In addition, funding had been provided to support a habitat bank to rewild the borough, new rain gardens, park upgrades and community planting schemes along with the provision of four new repair cafes and investment in walking and cycling routes again to encourage more sustainable modes of transport. Taken together, it was felt this investment would significantly contribute to the Council's net zero climate goals while saving residents money and also improving their quality of life.

- (iii) Councillor Long seeking further details on the design of Cycleway 23 between Wembley and Willesden junction, as a result of safety concerns regarding the layout (adjacent to the North Circular Road section) requiring those needing to access buses to cross the cycle land before doing so. As a result, clarification was sought as to whether the design plans would be presented to the Disability Forum, Pensioners Forum and the Willesden, Harlesden and Wembley Brent Connects Forums with details also sought as to when the next Lime Bike Forum was due to be held.

In response Councillor Krupa Sheth (as Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement) advised that the date for the Lime Bike Forum had now been arranged, on which members would be advised and details publicised shortly. In relation to the cycleway, members were advised that discussions were currently ongoing with TfL to finalise the design and once available these would be shared with the relevant Brent Connect and other Forums.

- (iv) Councillor Kennelly, who in expressing concern at the recent decision of the London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust to close the hydrotherapy pool at Northwick Park Hospital, sought further detail on any engagement with the Council by the Trust regarding the rationale in support of the decision, consultation with stakeholders and alternative provision noting the concern and disappointed which had been expressed by local residents. Whilst appreciating that the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Leisure (who also chaired the Health & Wellbeing Board) had written to the Hospital Trust to highlight the concerns being expressed locally, details were also sought on what further action it was felt could be taken in seeking to get the Trust to review their decision and ensure proper consultation was undertaken with residents around future decision on service provision.

In response, Councillor Nerva (as Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Leisure and Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board) confirmed that he had written to the Chief Executive of London Northwest University Healthcare NHS Trust seeking clarification on the rationale behind the decision to close the service, decision-making process and consultation undertaken along with plans for any alternative provision. Whilst advising that the response provided had been disappointing and reminding members that the Council held no direct Executive responsibility for the provision of NHS

services he reminded members of the powers available to the Council's scrutiny function and suggested this may also be an issue they identified for review.

- (v) Councillor Mistry, highlighting concerns regarding the regular upkeep and maintenance of Eton Grove Open Space in Queensbury. Highlighting the work being undertaken by a volunteer to maintain the green space, including the clearing of grass verges and litter, pruning of bushes and branches and clearance of weeds it was felt the green space was being neglected by the Council despite these issues having been previously highlighted. Details were therefore sought on when the Council planned to address the concerns identified and undertake the necessary clearance and maintenance of the open space.

In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth (as Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement) advised that if details of the issues highlighted could be sent direct to her following the meeting she would arrange for officers to follow up and investigate any action required.

- (vi) Councillor Kansagra seeking further details on the Council's approach to the provision of support for local business as part of the wider regeneration of the borough's high streets. Drawing on his personal experience as a small business owner the opportunity was taken to highlight concerns being raised by local shop owners in relation to safety, shoplifting and also local parking restrictions. Highlighting the impact of these issues on the sustainability of local high street businesses and wider economic prosperity of the borough he therefore asked what the Council's plans were to address them as investment priorities.

In response, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as the Leader of the Council) felt it important to remind members of the recent £14.5m programme of SCIL investment which had been agreed by Cabinet to revitalise Brent's roads, parks and public safety infrastructure alongside the £8m programme of NCIL investment made with a focus on local neighbourhoods in direct response to residents priorities. In addition, he highlighted how the Council continued to work in collaboration with the GLA and Camden to ensure businesses in the south of the borough, including Kilburn, received support. As an overall package of measures, he felt this demonstrated how Brent was investing and working to support existing and encourage new businesses into the borough to ensure the borough remained open for business both now and in the future.

- (vii) As a final question Councillor Lorber who, in highlighting concerns regarding the impact and disturbance being created for local residents by roadworks taking place across the borough, sought details on whether detailed information could be published about when and for how long major roadworks were scheduled across the borough for the next 18 months. As specific examples of the difficulties being caused for local residents, reference was made to the congestion caused by recent roadworks undertaken by Affinity Water to repair a burst water pipe on East Lane when combined with roadworks in the vicinity of Northwick Park Hospital, Alperton and Wembley Central due to construction linked to redevelopment schemes in those areas.

In response, Councillor Krupa Sheth (as Cabinet Member for Public Realm & Enforcement) reminded members that they should already be receiving details as part of the Members Bulletin on all current works on the public highway scheduled across the borough, with details of all approved permitted planned utilities works on the public highway already available via the One. Network website. [Causeway one.network](#). It was, however, pointed out that notice of emergency works would be more difficult to provide in advance due to their nature.

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

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

The Mayor then moved on to deal with the updates from each Scrutiny Committee Chair, reminding members that 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, he advised the remaining time available would then be opened up for any other non-Cabinet members to question (without the need for advance notice) the Scrutiny Committee Chairs on matters relating to the work of their Committee.

Councillor Conneely was then invited to introduce the update report on the work being undertaken by the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee, with the following issues highlighted:

- The wide-ranging nature of scrutiny activity undertaken by the Committee since the last update, as set out within the update report circulated with the agenda which had included a focus on housing, recycling and the provision of affordable housing.
- In response to concerns identified in relation to underperformance around complaints relating to housing repairs the Committee had sought to challenge officers and the contractor on performance, recognising the impact on tenants. As a result of their review the Committee had welcomed the changes outlined in terms of enhanced contract accountability, introduction of transparent resident led performance monitoring (including establishment of the Housing Board) along with the strengthening of financial protection when services broke down as part of the approach in developing a clear plan for improvement for tenants on which the Committee would continue to closely monitor progress.
- As part of their focus on recycling, the Committee continued to monitor performance in relation to the improvements being sought in recycling rates, again welcoming the shift towards the development of improved infrastructure for food waste and communal recycling along with the enhanced tracking of households missing out and efforts being made to address corporate waste, including lobbying for limits on single use plastic bags by independent retailers on the high street. The Committee had also identified the need to ensure a cohesive plan was developed for any investment being made available through the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme.

- The Committee had also considered arrangements for the provision of affordable social housing as part of the upcoming Local Plan review. Whilst recognising the need to provide alternative options for delivery, the Committee had questioned the inclusion of Shared Ownership and Student Accommodation as genuine affordable housing products and also identified, as part of the review of the Local Plan, a need for land value mapping, the provision of more sustainable options for affordable housing along with enhanced incentives for social housing partners supported by the need to secure essential supporting infrastructure as part of future developments and the need for greater challenge in terms of viability assessments. The establishment of the Local Plan Member Working Group had also been welcomed in this respect.
- The ongoing monitoring of Brent's overall financial position based on detailed updates regarding the financial outturn position for 2025-26, 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. These would again be issues focussed on by the Budget Scrutiny Task Group, with members keen to ensure the focus on any savings identified avoided impacting on social care and youth services and with support expressed for the continuation of lobbying efforts seeking urgent reform of local government finance in order to provide local authorities with greater options for how they raised and spent resources, including the use of the community infrastructure levy (CIL) and use of Council assets to meet social need.
- 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 and thanks expressed to members and other key stakeholders for their engagement in the work of the Committee to date.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Conneely for her update and then invited Councillor Ketan Sheth as chair of the Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to introduce the update report on the work being undertaken by that Committee, with the following issues highlighted:

- Since the previous update, the Committee had finalised its work programme for 2025-26 with its first meeting being held in July which had considered two key safeguarding reports. The first of these had been the Brent Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) Annual Report 2024–25, which had been presented by their Independent Chair Nicola Brownjohn who had outlined the progress being made in terms of development of the new SAB Strategic Plan 2024–26. The Committee had noted and welcomed the significant reduction in the backlog of safeguarding reviews from the period related to the pandemic along with the update on strengthened governance, improved performance, audit standards, and enhanced collaboration between statutory partners as well as the success of a Community Engagement Project, supported by Healthwatch, which had improved resident engagement and community

connections. Progress on transitional safeguarding was also highlighted and welcomed by the Committee.

The second update had been on the Brent Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2024–25, presented by Independent Scrutineer Keith Makin who had outlined the Partnership's role and achievements in ensuring strategic alignment between Health, Police, and the Council. Plans to strengthen youth engagement were welcomed, particularly the introduction of young scrutineers and collaboration with Brent Youth Parliament, with members also informed of continued joint working with the Safer Brent Partnership and the SAB on transitional safeguarding. Updates were also provided in relation to the introduction of Lead Safeguarding Partners and preparations for the Children's Wellbeing and Education Bill with the Committee having welcomed the priorities identified for the coming year including online safety, enhanced data analysis, and a focus on neurodiversity.

- The significant work scheduled on the Committee work programme for the remainder of 2025-26, with the next meeting in September due to focus on Children's Oral Health, Period Dignity and the Impact of Youth Service Delivery in Brent.
- In recognising the flexible and broad ranging nature of the Committee work programme, the opportunity was taken to specifically acknowledge and welcome the continued contribution and engagement of Brent Youth Parliament to ensure the views of young people across the borough were included as well as engagement with a range of other key stakeholders including local health providers, housing, social care and the local community.
- The ongoing and active engagement of the Committee in the work of the North West London Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee Brent, which Councillor Ketan Sheth continued to Chair. This had included a review of proposals relating to maternity provision across North West London including outcomes and equity across the region, Adult Mental Health and the impact arising from reconfiguration of the ICB. The next meeting was scheduled for November with the Committee due to review Special School Nursing, the future of Place Based Partnerships, Dentist Commissioning and Children's Dental Health.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Ketan Sheth for the updated provided and it was **RESOLVED** that the contents of both reports be noted.

Following the updates provided, the Mayor advised that the remainder of time available would be open for questions from non-cabinet members to the Scrutiny Chairs. 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. Questions relating to the following issues were raised and responses provided, as set out below:

- (i) Following on from the question he had raised earlier in the meeting, Councillor Kennelly asked Councillor Ketan Sheth if he could confirm that the Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee would be seeking to review the decision

taken by the Northwest University Healthcare NHS Trust to close the hydrotherapy pool at Northwick Park Hospital and when that was likely to be scheduled.

In response, Councillor Ketan Sheth (as Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee) thanked Councillor Kennelly for the suggestion and advised it was a matter about which he and the Committee were aware and would be looking to review at the earliest possible opportunity. Once this had been scheduled, he advised members would be informed of the relevant details.

- (ii) As an initial comment in relation to the response on the previous question, Councillor Lorber felt there would be a need for the Committee to carefully consider the arrangements when undertaking the review, given the need to ensure independence following an article by the Chair as part of his regular column in the local press on the closure, which he felt appeared to repeat the response provided by the NHS Trust.

Moving on, in welcoming the focus provided by the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on what he felt should be regarded as the failure to provide an adequate housing service for tenants, Councillor Lorber, referring to similar issues and the response of the leadership within another London Borough, questioned whether it would be reasonable to seek a similar level of executive accountability from the leadership at Brent.

In response, Councillor Conneely (as Chair of the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee) advised that the consensus of the Committee when reviewing housing performance had been that they were satisfied, at this stage, with the improvement plan in place particularly in view of the additional protection and engagement with tenants and independence and role of the Housing Board in the process. It was pointed out, however, that the Committee intended to keep progress under review including the response provided in relation to the Council's self-referral to the Social Housing Regulator.

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

#### **14. 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 once again 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 but also Council's financial resilience given the ongoing financial pressures faced and challenging nature of decisions required to address the position and ensure the Council was able to continue delivering a balanced and financial sustainable budget. In outlining the range of work being undertaken members were advised that the Committee had also sought assurance on the activity being taken in response to the Council's self-referral to the Social Housing Regulator as well as an update on progress with the review of the Council's commissioning and procurement arrangements in an effort to drive further value for money and also focus on the approach towards delivering social value and community wealth building. This was alongside an ongoing focus on delivery of the more flexible and agile risk based Internal Audit Plan, Council's emergency planning arrangements and development of the Strategic Risk Register. In concluding his update, Councillor Chan took the opportunity to assure 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.

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

In accordance with Standing Order 34, the Mayor advised that the next item on the agenda was the non-cabinet member debate, with the subject chosen for consideration being "Deterrence, Integration and Accommodation Impacts of Illegal Immigration on Brent".

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. Prior to the debate commencing the Mayor felt it important to remind everyone of his focus in seeking to celebrate the diverse nature of the borough and recognise the peaceful relationships that existed between the many different communities residing in Brent, reflecting the strong level of community cohesion across the borough. As such he hoped all members participating in the debate would take these principles into account when speaking to ensure any contributions made were done so in an appropriate manner, also recognising the requirements placed on all members under the Code of Conduct, for which he thanked everyone in advance for their support.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Kansagra to introduce the motion which had been submitted as the basis for the Non-Cabinet Member debate. In moving the motion, Councillor Kansagra began by welcoming the comments from the Mayor in terms of highlighting the need for a serious and at the same time honest debate on the growing pressures being experienced across the UK and within the borough as a result of illegal immigration. Whilst emphasising the need for sensitivity, compassion and the creation of safe and legal routes for the most vulnerable it was also felt more robust deterrence and control was required in relation to the asylum system. In raising the matter for debate, Councillor Kansagra advised that he was aware the current challenges in relation to immigration had not materialised in



isolation and reflected a wider approach in relation to international foreign policy and intervention by governments in regions across the globe, including Libya, Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan with lessons needing to be learnt as a result focussed around the provision of support and aid to affected nations rather than direct military or political interference.

In terms of the impact across the UK and within Brent, the pressures being created on the supply of housing, education and the police along with health services were all cited as significant challenges and felt to be contributing factors to the recent civil unrest experienced across the UK. As such, Councillor Kansagra highlighted what he felt to be the urgent need for practical action to restore public confidence in the integrity of the asylum system underpinned by an honest and open debate on the challenges faced.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Kansagra for introducing the motion and then opened up the debate for contributions from other members.

Opening the debate Councillor Lorber spoke first, highlighting what he felt to be the misinformed nature of the motion presented and request made to the Conservative Group in advance of the meeting for them to consider withdrawing it. Outlining the basis of the request, he felt it important to clarify the reference to illegal immigration and implication that those migrants and refugees currently being housed in hotels having gained entry through irregular routes were of that status. Referring to the 1951 International Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees he felt it important to note that under this Convention, a person situated outside their country of nationality who possessed a well-founded fear of persecution on grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion should in fact be classified as a refugee rather than illegal immigrant. He pointed out the Convention further acknowledged that the pursuit of asylum might necessitate contravention of a particular nation's immigration laws and stipulated that those entering in such circumstances should not be penalised for irregular entry. As a result, he advised those arriving in the UK and being placed in Brent should not be characterised as illegal immigrants but rather as asylum seekers, pending their application being assessed and right to remain established. In ending his comments, Councillor Lorber highlighted what he regarded as the root cause of the current challenges in relation to the asylum system, which he felt had been the persistent failure of the previous Conservative Government to properly administer and resource the asylum system leading to a backlog of claims whilst focussing on more costly and unworkable options, including the Rwanda scheme. As such he advised neither he or the Liberal Democrats Group would be supporting the motion moved as the basis for the debate.

As a further contribution Councillor Clinton, also speaking in opposition to the motion, expressed concern at what appeared to be the alarming increase in hate crime throughout the UK over recent weeks, recounting numerous accounts of offences committed against individuals from a range of diverse backgrounds. He felt this had been fuelled by an increase in the level of uninformed, anti-immigration rhetoric. As such, he felt the motion moved as the basis for the debate would only serve to contribute to this wider rhetoric and had the potential to further increase hostility being directed towards those individuals seeking asylum. In highlighting the range of current significant challenges faced across the country and within Brent, including the ongoing pressures arising from the pandemic, Russian invasion

of Ukraine, cost of living crisis, previous Conservative Government's economic policies, other geopolitical challenges (including US trade tariffs) as well as the lack of provision of affordable social housing, UKs ageing population and impact of climate change, he felt it clear that none of these issues had been created by migrants or refugees. In contrast, he took the opportunity to highlight the positive contributions being made by immigrants to society through employment and taxation and the key roles they often played in supporting the construction industry and NHS. As such, he advised he would also be opposing the motion and hoped all members would take the same stance.

Also speaking against the motion, Councillor Afzal expressed concern and reservations about the way it had been framed and presented, perceiving it to be opportunistic in nature. In support of the previous comments made, he felt it was deplorable to target asylum seekers and refugees who were seeking safety and sanctuary. Drawing parallels between the current increase in rhetoric being witnessed nationally and those previously employed by the far right, Councillor Afzal observed that whilst currently concealed beneath humanitarian sympathy and arguments concerning burdens upon taxpayers and cultural tensions, the implicit element of this ideology remained evident and characterised the calls within the motion for immigration restrictions predicated upon housing shortages as hypocritical, noting the previous Conservative Government's failure in relation to the delivery of affordable social housing provision. Rather than focussing on immigration, Councillor Afzal attributed the current housing crisis to the previous Conservative Government's programme of austerity, housing deregulation, inadequate funding, privatisation, and economic policies favouring the rich and landlords. In highlighting that refugees existed as a consequence of war, poverty, famine, disease, colonial legacy, and the ongoing exploitation of poorer nations globally by the West, he concluded by affirming that Brent had consistently been an inclusive borough and expressed pride in the commitment to maintaining this character both presently and in the future.

Speaking next, Councillor Maurice responded to the concerns raised, acknowledging the propagation of hatred by far-right elements in recent weeks whilst equally condemning hatred disseminated by the left. This latter phenomenon was, in Councillor Maurice's view, particularly evident amongst those participating in demonstrations in support of Palestine. He then turned to the matter of hotel accommodation for asylum seekers feeling that this did not provide an appropriate solution for either those seeking asylum or families currently waiting to be housed across the borough living within unsuitable temporary accommodation who he felt were also being overlooked, notwithstanding that they met the necessary criteria. As such, Councillor Maurice advised the motion was seeking to advocate for the equitable treatment of those individuals, contending that the placement of people in inadequately managed Houses in Multiple Occupation as well as those in hotels was unacceptable. Concern was also expressed at the current Government's attempts to deter illegal and unsafe channel crossings, which were also felt to be inadequate with the need identified to establish a more robust and equitable system, incorporating genuine and tangible deterrents. To support the process he felt reform of the asylum system was required to enable faster decision making, ensuring that those seeking asylum were not waiting for clarity on their immigration status for long periods of time and that a process was established enabling firm humane returns for those with no right to remain supported by the establishment of safe and legal routes for the most vulnerable with clear caps linked to local

capacity. Councillor Maurice referred to the examples of other nations implementing such measures set out within the motion as ways in which appropriate deterrent and processing measures could be established without the need to veer into more extreme policy measures and concluded by advising that on this basis he would be supporting the motion in seeking the adoption of a fair and more transparent approach to immigration.

Councillor Nerva then spoke, advising that he felt compelled to contribute having also listened to the tone of the debate and urging those in support of the motion to recognise the composition of the chamber and how Brent celebrated diversity. Highlighting the range of backgrounds from which a majority of councillors had been drawn and the experience of many of their parents or grandparents in seeking to enter the UK, he outlined his objective as a councillor in supporting the promotion and development of community cohesion, which he knew most members would also support. Referencing the unanimous support for the earlier motion, which called for support in combating racism Councillor Nerva hoped all Members would once again honour that spirit in seeking to oppose the motion moved as the basis for the current debate. He also felt it important to recognise what he felt had been the role of Brexit in precipitating the current crisis, noting that the UK's withdrawal from the European Union had complicated and delayed the mechanisms available for managing the refugee situation more effectively. In concluding, Councillor Nerva expressed his unequivocal support for refugees across the UK and those currently being placed in hotel accommodation and hoped that all members would join him in voting against the motion.

Moving on, Councillor Mistry also spoke in support of the motion taking the opportunity to highlight the value placed on community cohesion and contribution made by those seeking to settle in the borough. At the same time, however, it was felt that the concerns being expressed by many residents regarding the increasing number of migrants being placed in the borough also needed to be reflected in terms of the growing pressure on housing, primary care and policing given what were often regarded as a lack of shared values and increasing concern around incidents of assaults against women and girls allegedly being perpetrated by certain individuals being located within hotels whilst awaiting assessment of their asylum claims. In contrast it was felt the Ugandan refugee resettlement scheme had demonstrated how such a scheme could be successfully established and operated in order to achieve successful integration and assimilation into British society rather than those individuals being regarded as a burden, which was seen as a failure of the current asylum system. In highlighting the current number of asylum claims being received within the UK, the need was identified for urgent reform of the system and the introduction of appropriate deterrent (such as the Rwanda scheme) to ensure that those in genuine danger and at risk of persecution were protected and those with no right to remain were dealt with humanely and swiftly.

Speaking next, Councillor Chan addressed the motion, acknowledging the existence within society of individuals indifferent to the welfare of their fellow human beings. Notwithstanding this observation, he was pleased to acknowledge that such persons constituted a negligible minority. In acknowledging the importance of friendship, family, safety, history, belonging and culture, Councillor Chan further observed that the British populace were not lacking in discernment and had taken note of the disposal of the nation's historic assets, the implementation of austerity measures, the outsourcing of public services, privatisation, and the imposition of

enforced competition by previous Government's which he felt had left many with a feeling of them being of no consequence and seeking a sense of belonging. In echoing comments made by Dawn Butler MP that 'strangers are often those waiting to be friends' he also supported the need identified for the Government to renew, restore, and rebuild the UK's institutions to address this state of affairs. Whilst acknowledging that such an undertaking would necessitate substantial investment and resources, Councillor Chan expressed confidence that, as a nation possessing considerable skill and potential, this objective could be realised provided these resources were distributed equitably and therefore concluded, in opposing the motion, by advocating for a fair and just redistribution of wealth, skill, and potential.

As a final contribution, Councillor Moeen also spoke to express her opposition to the motion highlighting the need to recognise the humanitarian nature of the situation faced by those seeking refuge and fleeing persecution. She contended that the application of enhanced deterrence measures and unfulfilled commitments would prove ineffective in preventing migration and would only serve to render vulnerable individuals more susceptible to exploitation by criminal elements. In reminding members of Brent's history in relation to Irish migrants, she identified the diverse nature of communities who had subsequently chosen to settle in the borough and their associated integration as a positive attribute and a source of strength for the borough. Supporting the view that the current pressures being experienced in relation to the supply of housing were a consequence of previous government failures and inadequate funding rather than being attributable to those seeking refuge, safety and opportunity she felt the attempts to blame migrants should therefore be regarded as a deflection from the substantive issues, namely the requirement for equitable housing policies and appropriate government support. In drawing the debate to a close Councillor Moeen ended by highlighting the way in which she felt inclusion and compassion were the means necessary to foster trust, diminish exploitation, and strengthen community cohesion as opposed to deterrence and scapegoating.

In view of the remaining time available the Mayor then invited Councillor Donnelly-Jackson (as Cabinet Member for Housing) to summarise and close the debate.

In closing the debate, Councillor Donnelly Jackson (Cabinet Member for Housing) began by reasserting the view that the motion on which the debate was based had been predicated upon a false premise, claiming that the use of hotels for people seeking asylum was somehow the cause of Brent's housing crisis, which was strongly refuted. Highlighting that the housing crisis had been developing over decades and as a direct consequence of the previous Conservative Government's failure to invest adequately in affordable housing and to protect social housing stock driven by policies such as Right to Buy. As a result, she hoped members would avoid falling for dehumanising rhetoric that oversimplified complex issues and demonised entire groups of people, highlighting the way in which the previous Government had allowed the asylum system to collapse leaving the people affected in limbo, unable to work or integrate and stranded in hotels with substantial financial resources having been committed on unworkable schemes like Rwanda resulting in chaos rather than focussing on seeking to build competence and fairness into the asylum system.

The importance in recognising and focussing on the human aspect of the issue was also highlighted, with members reminded that those seeking asylum had fled

conflict, persecution and danger in seeking safety and of the Uks proud record in offering sanctuary as well as the moral and legal duty created as signatories of the Refugee Convention to act with humanity and fairness. As a result, Councillor Donnelly-Jackson felt that rather than seeking to scapegoat people seeking refugee the asylum system required comprehensive reform and proper resources, including the provision of new safe and legal routes, noting that the Labour government was committed to restoring order and humanity to the system with faster and fairer decisions, an end to the reliance on hotels, and a proper plan that communities including those within Brent could trust.

In concluding, Councillor Donnelly Jackson also took the opportunity to thank the charitable organisations, faith groups, and volunteers supporting asylum seekers across the borough for their invaluable contribution, advice, education, friendship and reassurance reflecting the best of Brent as a borough. In rejecting the politics of fear, members were urged to stand up for a system that was competent, fair and humane and, in rejecting the motion, to reaffirm Brent's pride in its status as a Borough of Sanctuary.

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:

### **“Deterrence, Integration and Accommodation Impacts of Illegal Immigration on Brent**

#### **Background:**

Brent has seen growing pressures on its housing stock, primary care and policing, in part due to hotels used for those arriving by irregular channel crossings by boats.

Hotels are used by the Home Office to place asylum seekers and those who arrive through illegal routes. This burdens the wider public purse and taxpayers and may create resentment towards those who follow these illegal routes.

There is currently no clear policy to integrate people arriving illegally, leading to cultural tensions, fears and safety concerns. Although not in Brent, the high-profile case of sexual assault by a recent arrival has amplified public anxiety.

#### **This Council Notes:**

- Illegal immigrants increase the demand for emergency hotel accommodation, diverting resources from Brent residents in need.
- Brent households face extended waits for temporary housing while hotels remain filled with asylum claimants which could include those arriving by small boats.

- The answer is deterrence to stop the boats, faster decisions that ensure people are not waiting for clarity on their immigration status for long periods of time and firm humane returns for those with no right to remain.
- Safe and legal routes should exist for the most vulnerable, with clear caps linked to local capacity.
- Other European countries have adopted deterrent and processing measures without veering into extreme policy e.g.
  - Italy agreed with Albania to process arrivals in centres under Italian jurisdiction, moving decisions away from beach landings.
  - Denmark legislated for third country processing, explored partnership with Rwanda while seeking a path that fits with European rules.
  - The European Union has struck migration partnerships with Tunisia and Egypt to curb dangerous journeys upstream.

**This Council Believes:**

- Genuine refugees fleeing persecution deserve protection and swift humane processing.
- The integrity of our asylum system must be upheld by deterring dangerous journeys and prevent abuse of legal channels.
- Faster decision-making is required to process asylum claims and that people arriving illegally should be deported. Quick humane returns for those with no right to remain will restore public confidence.
- Those in genuine danger should be protected and shown the integrity of the system.
- That residents should not be made to subsidise national policy failures which result in inflated rental costs and overstretched public services.
- The Government has removed the Rwanda option without putting a credible solution to remove illegal immigrants in its place. This does not serve the national interest.
- If a workable model can cut the pull of illegal routes, a serious government should test it and be honest about results.

**This Council therefore resolves:**

- (1) To publish data on the number of hotels used for asylum accommodation in Brent and, once they are granted leave to remain, the impact on the housing waiting list.
- (2) To secure monthly data from the Home Office and an exit plan for hotel use in Brent with dates and milestones."

**16. Treasury Management Outturn Report 2024-25**

As the final item of business on the agenda, 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 2024 - 25.

In introducing the report, the Deputy Leader felt it important to recognise Brent's ongoing commitment to financial transparency and scrutiny and 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. In noting that the Council was only able to borrow for capital investment and not to fund operational day-to-day expenditure or offset the increasing pressures being experienced across Council budgets members were also advised of the careful financial stewardship and 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.

The opportunity was also taken to highlight the Council's continued commitment, as part of the approach outlined, to borrowing in as prudent and sustainable a way as possible to deliver on infrastructure projects for residents, without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio with officers thanked for their support in providing clear direction around the Treasury Management activity.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Mili Patel for introducing the report and as no other members indicated they wished to speak and no need was indicated to exercise a right of reply, then moved to put the recommendations in the report to the vote which were declared **CARRIED**.

Council therefore unanimously **RESOLVED** to note and approve, following its consideration by Audit & Standards Advisory Committee on 23 July 2025 and Cabinet on 8 September 2025, the 2025 - 25 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.

#### 17. **Exclusion of the Press & Public**

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

#### 18. **Urgent Business**

There were no urgent items of business raised at the meeting so the Mayor, in closing the meeting, thanked all members for their co-operation and support and advised that he looked forward to seeing everyone again in person at the next Full Council which would taking place at 6pm on Monday 10 November 2025.

The meeting closed at 8.18 pm

COUNCILLOR RYAN HACK  
Mayor