



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
held on Monday 9 September 2013 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Bobby Thomas

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor Kana Naheerathan

COUNCILLORS:

Aden	Adeyeye
Al-Ebadi	Allie
Arnold	Ashraf
Mrs Bacchus	Beck
Brown	Butt
Cheese	Chohan
S Choudhary	A Choudry
Colwill	Cummins
Daly	Denselow
Gladbaum	Green
Harrison	Hashmi
Hector	Hopkins
Hossain	Hunter
Kabir	Kansagra
Kataria	Leaman
Long	Lorber
Mashari	Matthews
McLennan	Mitchell Murray
J Moher	R Moher
Moloney	Ogunro
Oladapo	BM Patel
HB Patel	HM Patel
RS Patel	Pavey
Ms Shaw	Singh
Sneddon	Van Kalwala

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Councillors Baker, Beswick, Clues, Crane, Hirani, John, CJ Patel, Powney, Ketan Sheth and Krupa Sheth

1. **Minutes of the previous meetings**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the special meeting held on 24 June 2013 and the ordinary meeting held on 24 June 2013 be approved as accurate records of the meetings.

2. **Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests**

Councillor Cheese declared a non-disclosable interest by virtue of being a member of the Kilburn Advisory Board.

Councillor Lorber declared a non-disclosable interest by virtue of being associated with the Friends of Barham Park.

Councillor Hopkins declared a non-disclosable interest by virtue of being associated with the Save Our Six libraries campaign.

3. **Mayor's announcements (including petitions received)**

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the first Full Council meeting in the Civic Centre.

The Mayor reminded everyone that the official opening of the Civic Centre would take place on Sunday 6 October from 12 noon until 7pm and encouraged everyone to support the event.

The Mayor announced that Councillors Ruth and Jim Moher had recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary and on behalf of the Council congratulated them both.

The Mayor pointed out that a list of current petitions showing progress on dealing with them had been circulated around the room.

4. **Appointments to committees and outside bodies and appointment of chairs/vice chairs**

RESOLVED:

that the following appointments be made:

Committee	Appointment
General Purposes Committee	Councillor McLennan, in place of Councillor Mashari
Health and Wellbeing Board	Dr Amanda Craig, Dr Sami Ansari and Dr Ajit Shah alternates to Dr Ethie Kong Dr Cherry Armstrong and Dr Nish Rajpal alternates to Sarah Basham Jo Ohlson and Sarah Mansuralli

	<p>alternates to Rob Larkman</p> <p>Sarah Mansuralli and Ian Winstanley alternates to Jo Ohlson</p> <p>Councillor J Moher as alternate to Councillor Crane</p> <p>Councillor Mashari as alternate to Councillor Hirani</p> <p>Councillor Butt as alternate to Councillor R Moher</p> <p>Councillor McLennan as alternate to Councillor Pavey</p> <p>Councillor Colwill as alternative to Councillor HB Patel</p>
Planning Committee	Councillor Brown as 1st alternate to Councillor CJ Patel in place of Councillor Hopkins

5. **Report from the Leader or members of the Executive**

Councillor Butt welcomed everyone to the first meeting of Full Council in the civic centre and thanked Andy Donald, Director of Regeneration and Major Projects and Aktar Choudhury, formerly lead officer on the Civic Centre project and his team for their work in completing the transition of staff and operations into the Civic Centre.

The Leader reported on the appointments made to senior officer posts as follows:

Eamonn McCarroll appointed Operational Finance Director
 Cara Devani appointed HR Director
 Aktar Choudhury appointed Director for Planning and Regeneration
 Jon Lloyd-Owen appointed Director for Housing and Employment
 Conrad Hall appointed Chief Finance Officer
 Ben Spinks appointed Assistant Chief Executive.

The Leader informed members that the process for the Council being accredited a London Living Wage employer was underway which would further the good work already undertaken on this. He stated that he would encourage all employers in the borough to adopt the London Living Wage which was the one thing that would benefit local people by putting more money in their pockets.

The Leader referred to the Big Energy Switch project being undertaken by a collaboration of councils and encouraged all councillors to make local residents aware of the potential for saving money on their fuel bills.

The Leader reported that the Council had made a submission to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel which sought to ensure that NHS services were fit for the needs of local people and he very much hoped the Council's concerns would be addressed.

The Leader reported that grant funding for the Tricycle Theatre had been extended for another two years which, amongst other things, would allow children to continue to benefit from the development work carried out by the theatre and present further employment opportunities.

The Leader referred to new public health contracts that had been put in place to ensure the commissioning of public health services were delivered for the benefit of the borough's residents.

Finally, the Leader reported that the Council was continuing with its school expansion programme to meet the demand for extra school places. The programme was currently dealing with primary school places and would then go on to expand secondary school places and make appropriate SEN (special educational needs) provision. A report to the Executive on 19 August 2013 provided more information on this matter.

6. Questions from the Opposition and other Non- Executive Members

Councillor Hopkins referred to the ban on lorries above 7.5 tonnes using certain roads in her ward and the need for effective enforcement, especially along Dollis Hill. She stated that this was made difficult because many of the signs were missing and so asked if these would be replaced and the ban enforced. Councillor J Moher replied that he had recently had discussions on this issue along with the effect heavy lorries were having on the Oxgate Farm building and flooding in the area. Work to rectify the situation was in hand and he expressed sympathy with the points made based on personal observation. Efforts would be made to effectively enforce the ban. Councillor Hopkins stated that it was not just Oxgate Farm that was affected but also the wider Dollis Hill area. From monitoring the movement of lorries, it appeared that many used local roads as a rat run. She appreciated the reply from Councillor Moher and looked forward to urgent action being taken.

Councillor HB Patel stated that the local water company had recently dug up the road on East Lane. Whilst understanding the need for these works to be carried out, he stated that they had caused significant traffic disruption along such a busy road and the diversions put in place were poor. Drivers had used Clarendon Gardens and Castleton Avenue as a cut through and heavy vehicles had caused damage to the footways. He asked why the Council had not anticipated the situation and put in effective diversions. Councillor J Moher acknowledged the damage caused along Clarendon Gardens and added that it appeared that larger vehicles were getting through the width restriction. He reminded members that an earlier decision had been taken to restrict all vehicles entering from East Lane but this had caused other problems and so the restriction had been lifted and a width restriction put in its place. He felt there was a need for better enforcement in the area and so had asked officers to look into this matter. Councillor Patel appreciated the reply from Councillor Moher but pointed out that the problem was largely caused by Council vehicles passing through the width restriction with the restriction

having been removed and then not being reinstated and action to stop this was needed immediately.

Councillor Arnold asked what the GCSE results in Brent schools were for the year in respect of 5 A-Cs and 5 A-Cs with English and Maths and how these compared with last year's results and the national average. Councillor Pavey replied that 64% had achieved A-C. He congratulated the young people on achieving such good results and thanked the schools for the work put in to reach this position. He also acknowledged the support of parents, governors and others that contributed to local schools performing so well. Councillor Arnold added her congratulations to everyone involved. She stated that the Government was turning back the clock with child poverty on the increase, teachers being undermined and she expressed concern that the appropriate measures were taken to ensure no-one was excluded.

Councillor Sneddon referred to the role of planning where a concentration of a particular type of business was allowed to occur. He recalled the Council passing a motion in 2011 on restricting the proliferation of betting shops and asked what steps had been taken to progress this. Councillor Butt replied that a study of recent cases where permissions for certain businesses had been challenged showed that most such challenges failed. Work was being carried out with London Councils and the Mayor of London to lobby for sufficient powers to be able deal with this problem. He referred particularly to the proliferation of betting shops and pay day lender outlets. Consideration was being given to what action could be taken in the Wembley area which if successful could be extended around the borough. Councillor Sneddon thanked Councillor Butt for his reply. He also referred to some councils calling for laws to limit particular businesses and that this was a matter of discussion nationally within the Liberal Democrat party. He hoped all parties could work together on this.

Councillor Oladapo asked what actions the Council took in partnership with the police following the tragic killing of Sabrina Moss in Kilburn and how the Mayor of London's decision to close Willesden Green police station as well as the front counter at Harlesden police station would impact on the police's ability to respond to extremely violent crimes such as this in the future. Councillor Choudry replied that one person had been charged in relation to this very serious incident. Following the murder the police had convened a group consisting of a wide range of community representatives who were asked to use their leadership role to reassure people about the situation, especially in light of the Notting Hill carnival taking place. Councillor Choudry was pleased to say that there were no related incidents at the carnival and an incident room remained at Willesden Green Police Station. The rationalisation of police services would see the closure of Willesden Green police station and the front counter at Harlesden police station as stated by Councillor Oladapo. There would be a 24 hour front counter service at Wembley. Contrary to the assertion that this would not have a detrimental impact on police services it was clear that people would be left feeling less safe with police services cut back in this way. Councillor Oladapo added that the murder had been one of the worst incidents to have taken place in the Kilburn area which remained a safe and vibrant place. He acknowledged the good work by the police in arresting a suspect. He reassured the Council that he and other community leaders would continue to work to prevent such an incident being repeated. He added that he understood that the Mayor of London even wanted to close Kilburn police station.

Councillor Hunter referred to the Council seeking London Living Wage accreditation and the criticism of zero hours contracts in the NHS. She asked how this could be reconciled with the Council employing staff on such contracts and if it could be guaranteed that the public realm contract would ensure staff were paid a minimum of at least the London Living Wage (LLW). Councillor Butt replied that he had always been committed to the LLW. Regarding zero hours contracts he referred to the time of the previous Council Administration when there were 700 people on such contracts. This number had now been reduced to below 200. Work was being undertaken to continue to review these contracts to ensure staff received appropriate terms and conditions and were not taken advantage of. Councillor Butt added that he would continue to encourage businesses to pay the LLW as the best way towards employing a happy workforce and contributing to the local economy. Councillor Hunter was pleased to hear that the number of staff on zero hours contracts had reduced but stated that, whilst there was a lot of discussion and agreement around the need to review these contracts, there was also comments made that they were sometimes necessary. She felt that in the public sector there should be zero tolerance of zero hours contracts.

Councillor Mitchell Murray asked what would be the impact in Brent of the Government's proposals to end the duty of local authorities to monitor and report on air quality. Councillor Mashari replied that the level of health inequality in the borough was already shocking. It was clear that air quality had an effect on the quality of life for local residents. Instead of working to improve the health of people the Government was instead proposing to dismantle the current structure that produced accurate data on air quality. This would mean that local authorities would be powerless to refuse planning permissions for developments that might have a detrimental effect on the health of local residents because the necessary evidence would not be available. She encouraged everyone to submit their objections to the proposal before the consultation period ended. Councillor Mitchell Murray thanked Councillor Mashari for her reply.

Councillor Lorber referred to a previous call-in of the Executive's decision to abolish parking scratch cards and the Executive's response that it amounted to a fuss about nothing. Members were told the situation would improve when additional staff were taken on. However, he stated that all this time later and residents were still unable to get through on the telephone and the IT systems were still not working properly. Councillors and officers continued to receive complaints and so Councillor Lorber asked if the Executive would apologise for forcing through this change. Councillor J Moher replied that all members could quote examples of complaints or praise. He acknowledged there were problems with the new system but additional telephone lines had been installed and additional staff recruited with the result that as of 5 September call waiting time was down to an average of one minute 39 seconds. Improvements to the service were happening and it had been made clear to the contractor that further improvements still had to be made. Councillor Lorber responded saying he felt the scheme was indefensible and referred to a specific case where a pensioner did not have access to a computer and her son had been unable to get through on the telephone. He again asked why scratch cards had been stopped and referred to consultation being carried out by Brent Housing Partnership over options for introducing parking scratch cards.

Councillor Van Kalwala asked if the Executive would agree with him that the people of Brent would have been better off if the MP for Brent Central had discovered her

conscience three years ago. Councillor Butt replied that he agreed with Councillor Van Kalwala. Sarah Teather, MP had voted for successive Government budgets which had reduced funding for Brent Council by £104M. As Schools Minister she oversaw the elimination of the previous Government's crucial Building Schools for the Future programme and she had colluded in the privatisation of the NHS. He stated that Brent residents needed an MP who would stand up for them through thick and thin and who would not be afraid to face the electorate on their record. Councillor Van Kalwala thanked Councillor Butt for his reply. He agreed that Sarah Teather had failed to stand up for the people of Brent. He stated that there was now the opportunity to wipe the slate clean and get in a Labour MP to stand up for Labour values and give people some hope for the future.

Councillor Brown thought that the Executive should be as appalled as local people were over the condition of the streets. He asked if the Council would expand its enforcement action against illegal dumping and invest to save on reducing the amount of rubbish on Brent's streets thereby saving in disposal costs. Councillor Mashari replied that the incidence of dumping in the borough was at a two year low and provided the following information: 2,500 street inspections carried out since April, 120 fly tipping cases dealt with and 81 litter investigations carried out. The amount of waste going to landfill was down and a robust enforcement programme was in place to tackle fly tipping. She suggested Councillor Brown might encourage more of his local residents to recycle because the Alperton ward had one of the lowest levels of recycling in the borough. Councillor Brown stated that local residents were voicing their disgust at the amount of fly tipping and felt his question regarding adopting an invest to save approach had not been answered.

7. Reports from the Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Councillor Mitchell Murray referred to the circulated report which set out the work undertaken by the various overview and scrutiny committees. She thanked members and officers for their hard work in producing the outcomes detailed in the report.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

8. Treasury Management outturn

Questions were asked around the recovery of monies the Council had lost during the Icelandic banking crisis. In particular what level of right back there would be as a result of the return of the monies and the timescale for final settlement. Councillor R Moher undertook to provide a written reply to Councillors Lorber and HB Patel on these questions.

RESOLVED:

that the 2012/13 Treasury Management outturn report be noted.

9. Motions

9.1 West Hendon development

Councillor Mashari moved a motion opposing the development of land adjacent to the Welsh Harp in West Hendon, recently agreed by Barnet Council and the Mayor of London. She stated that Welsh Harp was as an asset with SSSI (Site of Specific Scientific Interest), of metropolitan importance with rare birds, butterflies and dragon flies. The area was well loved and much valued as illustrated by the 700 signature petition and also on-line support. Councillor Mashari paid tribute to all who had supported the campaign against the imposition of the 29 storey tower block and who had taken part in protests to Barnet Council and the Mayor of London against what she considered to be vandalism. The specification was overdeveloped and she questioned if the area could cope with the additional numbers of people that would move in. She expressed dismay that the Secretary of State had decided not to call-in the proposed development and asked members to support the motion in the strongest possible terms.

Councillor Ashraf echoed the concerns expressed by Councillor Mashari and Councillor Kansagra pointed out that the development had received widespread opposition and was not in keeping with Barnet's Unitary Development Plan guidelines. He acknowledged the need for new homes but stated that this should not be at the expense of the environment. Councillor Kansagra recommended the use of brown field sites, which may be more costly but would be money well spent.

Members on all sides supported the motion.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the West Hendon Development plans which have recently been approved by Barnet Council and the Mayor of London be opposed;
- (ii) to note that the Welsh Harp Reservoir and Nature Reserve is the only site of special scientific interest (SSSI) in Brent or Barnet and has London wide and national ecological significance;
- (iii) to note that Barratt Homes has failed to address concerns raised by Brent officers, community groups and wildlife organisations who have opposed these plans, which will lead to 6000 new residents moving into tower blocks up to 29 storeys high and the construction of foot bridges leading directly from the site into the SSSI and that the scale and design of this development amounts to an act of environmental vandalism;
- (iv) to note that the scale and design of the proposed development contravenes official guidance in both the Barnet and London plans;
- (v) that the value of the Welsh Harp Nature Reserve and reservoir and the belief that this site must be preserved for future generations be reaffirmed;
- (vi) that this Council therefore condemns in the strongest possible terms the announcement on 9 September 2013 by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government that he has chosen to refuse to call in the decision by Barnet Council.

9.2 Restoring Brent's community libraries

Councillor Cheese moved the motion circulated in his and Councillors Lorber, Hunter, Cummins and Hopkins's names which sought to get the Executive to set up a cross party group to develop a community library strategy. He stated that it would soon be the second anniversary of the closure of six libraries in the borough and local people had not forgotten. As a result book borrowing had dropped; there was a lack of places for studying and for leisure time. He felt that whilst the previous Lead Member had been clear about the decisions taken the views of the present lead member was not clear and nothing had been done to return any of the libraries to use.

In response Councillor Mashari stated she was clear about the importance of reading and education. She was pleased to announce that there had been 54222 visits recorded to the new Wembley Library in the civic centre. She had met with all the groups involved with libraries and offered support in the form of providing furniture, spare books, training and access to resources. Further developments would take place and she suggested that positive engagement with the Council would be more beneficial than passing the proposed motion. Alternative views put were that the Council's library transformation plan had caused misery with the closure of six libraries and it was suggested that the new Wembley Library did not attract the same number of young or elderly people or families as the local libraries had. It was put that the closure of six libraries had resulted in the loss of premises that provided after school provision and facilities for the elderly.

The motion was put to the vote and declared LOST.

9.3 Cutting services

Councillor Shaw moved the motion circulated in Councillor Kansagra's name which sought to commit the Council to spend money on repairing roads, cleaning streets, collecting rubbish and pruning trees rather than maintaining current levels of reserves. She stated that she wanted to bring back pride in the borough. Councillor Shaw referred to trees not being pruned, resources for pest control being cut and complaints being received about potholes in roads. The Council claimed it had no money but she referred to the savings made by the Council and asked where it had all gone and why cuts to services had been made when there were large reserves to draw on. In response the point was made that the Council did not hold a high level of reserves relative to risk and that spending any reserves was a one off action. It was submitted that the financial situation for the Council would only get worse as the Government continued to require the Council to make savings on top of the £104M it had already lost. This represented a reduction of 30% and that was why the Council had had to make such significant savings. The point was made that some of the welfare benefit changes were having such an impact on the poorest people in the borough that the Council was having to take action to mitigate this. Action was being taken to regenerate areas of the borough in order to provide employment and lift people out of poverty. Another point of view was submitted that, although the Council had been required to make savings, the figure of £104M took no account of the grants the Council received. The savings had been achieved due to a programme introduced by the previous Administration and had made the Council more efficient. The claim was made that front line services had been protected and yet the response was that services could no longer be provided. A view was submitted that in the past the Council had a much

lower level of reserves and it had no detrimental effect on the operation of the Council.

The Mayor ruled that a further contribution to the debate was not relevant to the item and invited the Council to vote on the motion. In response a procedural motion was moved of no confidence in the Mayor's ability to chair the meeting. This was put to the vote and declared LOST.

The motion was put to the vote and declared LOST.

10. **Urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 8.42 pm

COUNCILLOR BOBBY THOMAS
Mayor