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LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
held on Monday 8 September 2014 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Kana Naheerathan

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor Lesley Jones B.Ed MA

COUNCILLORS:

Aden	Agha
Ahmed	Allie
Bradley	Butt
Carr	Chohan
A Choudry	Collier
Colwill	Conneely
Daly	Davidson
Denselow	Dixon
Eniola	Ezeajughi
Farah	Filson
Harrison	Hector
Hirani	Hoda-Benn
Hossain	Kabir
Kansagra	Kelcher
Khan	Long
Mahmood	Marquis
Mashari	McLennan
Miller	J Mitchell Murray
W Mitchell Murray	Nerva
Oladapo	BM Patel
M Patel	RS Patel
Pavey	Perrin
Ms Shaw	Ketan Sheth
Krupa Sheth	Southwood
Stopp	Tatler
Thomas	Warren

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Councillors S Choudhary, Colacicco, Crane, Moher and Van Kalwala

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the Annual meeting held on 4 June 2014 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

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

None declared.

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

The Mayor welcomed everyone to his first meeting as Mayor of Brent.

The Mayor reported with regret that during the year the Council had lost two Brent stalwarts in Len and Joan Snow. He added that Brent and Harrow Co-operative Party, Wembley History Society and Willesden History Society were fundraising for a bench to commemorate Len and Joan. Details could be obtained from Councillor Long. As well as being a former councillor and former Mayor, Len had been an active member of the Co-operative Party and was a noted local historian, with many books to his name. A tree in memory of the couple would be planted later in the year.

The Mayor announced with regret that former councillor Karamat Hussain, who was the first Muslim Mayor of Brent (1981-82), had passed away recently.

The Mayor was pleased to announce that his chosen charities were Brent Mencap and Prostate Cancer UK.

The Mayor referred to the invitation sent to all councillors for his forthcoming Civic Welcome Reception on 20 September 2014 at 6.30pm taking place at Kingsbury High School. He hoped as many as possible would be able to attend this special occasion.

The Mayor announced that members of Brent's Cabinet were the first UK council Cabinet to take part in the ALS Ice Bucket challenge to raise awareness of Motor Neurone Disease.

The Mayor congratulated Brent's young people who were celebrating their exam results this autumn, especially the many students who had realised their dream and were off to university at the end of the month. The Council were proud that the majority of its schools had managed to improve their results, bucking the national trend.

The Mayor pointed out that, in accordance with Standing Orders, a list of current petitions showing progress on dealing with them had been circulated around the chamber.

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

RESOLVED:

that the following appointments be made:

Body	Nomination
Health and Wellbeing Board	Councillor Warren (Councillors Davidson and Shaw substitutes)
Corporate Parenting Committee	Councillor Warren (Councillors Davidson and Shaw substitutes)
Planning Committee	Councillor M Patel to replace Councillor Daly as a substitute member
Scrutiny Committee	Mother Christine Cargill (co-opted member CofE)
Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Councillor A Choudry to replace Councillor Daly as substitute member.

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

The Leader reported on the consultation process starting during the following week on the production of a Borough Plan. He stated that it would be a vision of how the Council would achieve what it wanted for the people of Brent. The Council would be listening and facilitating input from residents, community groups, employers and partners across all sections of the community in an open consultation exercise. A resident's attitude survey would be undertaken and focus groups established. He stated that the Connect forums would also be widely used and asked all councillors to encourage their residents to attend the meetings. The plan would be presented to the Council in March 2015.

The Leader referred to the decision taken in June 2013 regarding the appointment of a new Chief Executive. He stated that the external auditors were reporting back on how the Council was operating and whilst there was progress being made, stability within the Council would enable further progress to be made. The current arrangements would therefore remain in place until a recruitment process began in the new year which would tie in with the launch of the new Borough Plan.

Councillor Pavey (Deputy Leader) reported that the Council's 2015/16 budget was being drawn together and would be presented to the next Council meeting. He reminded members that the Government's strategy in 2010 had been to eliminate the deficit by 2015 which required the Council to reduce its spending by £100M. He stated that the strategy had not worked and the Government was still borrowing excessively. As a consequence the Council was being required to make a further £53M cuts over the next two years. However, Councillor Pavey stated that the Council's budget would still seek to protect the most vulnerable members of the community.

Councillor Mashari (Lead Member for Employment and Skills) reported on the new and improved Adult Education Service. Brent BACES had been overhauled and rebranded as Brent Start. Its modernisation would continue over the coming year

with courses being geared towards the needs of the local employment market. She also reported that the Brent foodbank had been linked to the local NHS clinical commissioning group and the schools forum in an effort to broaden the number of agencies that referred people in need. Councillor Mashari stated that during the previous year the Brent foodbank had received over 3,500 individual referrals and the Council would continue to do all it could to protect people not able to properly feed themselves or their families. Councillor Mashari ended by stating that she would be meeting with all the largest employers in the borough over the coming months to better understand local business needs and look for ways in which the Council could best support them and unlock training, employment and funding opportunities for local people and local projects.

Councillor Hirani (Lead Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing) reported on a new programme called Resilience which would deliver drug and alcohol prevention work in secondary schools in partnership with the Amy Winehouse Foundation, Addaction and involving members from B3 and B-Safe. He also referred to the opening of a new Public Health Resource Centre in partnership with Brent CSV which would provide people with accurate public health advice. Finally, he reported on a new partnership that linked dentists with local schools to deliver free fluoride and dental checks for children of nursery age up to year 2.

Councillor McLennan (Lead Member for Regeneration and Housing) reported on new licensing requirements for houses in multiple occupation and selective licensing introduced in Harlesden, Willesden and Wembley designed to tackle the poor conditions some local residents were forced to live in within the private rented sector. She referred to the housing supply crisis and reported on how the Council was tackling this by working with housing association partners to provide 675 properties in tandem with plans to build 5,000 affordable homes over the next five years and 10,000 new Council homes. A bid had been made to the GLA for a Housing Action Zone in Alperton and this would be followed by a bid for Wembley. Each zone would be worth £20M and would enable more affordable homes to be built. Councillor McLennan also reported on the continuing regeneration of South Kilburn which had now moved into phase 3 which would provide affordable homes, a health centre and remove existing housing not fit for the modern day.

6. Deputations

None.

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

Councillor Tatler asked how the change at Copland Community School would benefit local people. In the absence of Councillor Moher (Lead Member for Children and Young People), Councillor Butt (Leader) replied that on 1 September Copland Community School converted to the Ark Elvin Academy. The Council had worked with the Academy sponsor and the Department for Education following the OFSTED inspection judging the school inadequate. Any school judged inadequate was forced to become an Academy and so the Council had engaged with Ark, the sponsor, which had a track record in the borough for improving schools. Councillor Butt stated that he had that morning met with the leadership team and staff at the school and had been truly impressed.

Councillor Colwill expressed his concern at the number of roads and pavements that had only been improved along half their length with the remaining part being left undone. He suggested that Regal Way and Vista Way had not been completed; neither had Cranleigh Gardens which had been in the programme to be resurfaced nearly six years ago and asked when this would be done. Councillor Perrin (Lead Member for Environment) replied that he would be happy to meet with fellow councillors or residents to discuss the state of roads and pavements and agreed some were in a poor condition. Councillor Perrin went on to propose reasons why this was the case by referring to the damage to pavements caused by works carried out to properties, skips, delivery lorries, etc. He also referred to the paving of front gardens that forced up tree roots. The Council was utilising the resources it had as best it could but there was a lack of adequate resources to bring the standard up to a more desirable level.

Councillor Miller asked how selective licensing of landlords would benefit the residents of Brent. Councillor McLennan (Lead Member for Regeneration and Housing) replied that Cabinet had agreed in August to introduce licensing into Harlesden, Willesden Green and Wembley Central wards from 1 January 2015 because there was significant evidence of high levels of anti social behaviour related to private rented properties in these wards. Extensive consultation had been undertaken and the licence conditions would require basic minimum standards including gas and electricity certificates, eliminate overcrowding and deal with any related anti social behaviour. Councillor McLennan emphasised that bringing in these provisions was not an attack on landlords generally but was about tackling rogue landlords. She stated that it was important to work with landlords because the Council needed a supply of good private rented properties in the borough.

Councillor Davidson stated his opposition to what he referred to as the Tricycle Theatre's decision to boycott the Jewish Film Festival and was pleased that following opposition to this the decision had been reversed. He referred to the £198,000 per annum in Council funding the theatre received with the specific remit to put on a diverse range of activities. He believed the theatre had gone against this and asked the Council's representative on the theatre's board to make his position clear. Councillor Butt (Leader) replied that he had made his position and the Council's position absolutely clear. He stated that the theatre did a good job in presenting a programme of work to the community and the Council funded it for core activities which it delivered. The Council worked with all sections of the community and worked with the theatre to deliver activities to the whole community.

Councillor Dixon asked a question on behalf of Councillor Choudhary who was absent from the meeting. Councillor Dixon stated that everyone was aware that the Government's ongoing austerity programme was having a severe impact on Brent's most vulnerable residents and asked if an end was in sight or a way forward so that the most vulnerable residents could receive the help they needed to lead decent lives. Councillor Butt (Leader) replied that the opposition parties would know more about what was happening because they were responsible for the impact it was having on Brent's residents. He referred to the average household being approximately £877 per year worse off and every person being nearly £400 per year worse off. The borough of Brent had been hardest hit by the welfare reforms. He stated that the opportunity existed on 7 May 2015 to make a change in a similar way to earlier in the year when on 22 May Brent residents spoke up for who they trusted to run the Council.

Councillor Carr asked what mechanisms were in place to ensure that the situation in Rotherham had not been or would not be repeated in Brent. Councillor Butt (Leader) replied that all members had received a briefing note explaining the action taken by the Council and that he had also asked officers difficult questions over whether there was a possibility of such child sexual exploitation taking place in Brent. There was no current evidence of this that the Council or the police were aware. However there were concerns around youth gangs and the Council had in place a strategy to tackle gang violence by working with the police, youth offending service, the community safety team and making sure that girls identified as being at risk were referred to social services and supported through a multi agency approach. Councillor Butt added that the youth service worked in a preventative way by providing mentoring and outreach work to divert young people away from getting involved in gangs. He also stated that the Council was working on improved training for staff across the relevant agencies and raising awareness amongst children and young people. He stated that it was important to listen to the concerns of young people and take action on them.

Councillor Harrison asked what work was being undertaken by the Council to protect Brent's most vulnerable residents and in particular ensure everything was being done to eliminate violence against women and girls. Councillor Denselow (Lead Member for Stronger Communities) replied that he would circulate a full answer to the question to all Members and acknowledged it was a very important issue with Brent being the 10th worst out of the 32 London boroughs for levels of domestic violence offences. He explained that a wide range of groups were working with the most vulnerable in Brent and in particular that the contract to provide a domestic violence service to the most vulnerable victims in the borough was being re-tendered. A significant amount of the community safety budget went towards providing independent domestic violence advocates who provided support to victims and helped them through the criminal justice process. During the previous year 422 victims had been helped in this way. The adult safeguarding team were committed to working to protect vulnerable adults from violence and raise awareness regarding the issues of forced marriages, FGM and honour based violence. These issues were raised at the adult safeguarding board to ensure partner agencies were raising awareness within their own organisations.

Councillor Filson referred to the timed collection of waste as an effective measure to deal with waste on pavements and asked when this service would be extended to selected streets in Kensal Green ward in order to reduce the unsightly accumulation of trade and domestic waste bags on the pavements on the High Street in Harlesden, along Park Parade and on Harrow Road. Councillor Perrin (Lead Member for Environment) replied that as the timed collection service was rolled out, Park Parade was due to be done at the end of March, Harlesden High Street and Harrow Road on 27 April and that it would be extended to Station Road at a later date. The roll out in Harlesden was being held back because of the regeneration scheme being implemented.

Councillor Long asked what the Council was doing to promote fairtrade in its catering outlets and at meetings. She also referred to the MacMillan Cancer Support coffee morning taking place later in the month and asked that encouragement be given to using fairtrade products in that campaign. She added that if fairtrade products were not used the Council would lose its status as a

fairtrade borough. Councillor Pavey (Deputy Leader) replied that he was proud that Brent was a fairtrade borough and the Council continued to support initiatives to raise awareness in the community including holding events during fairtrade fortnight earlier in the year. He agreed that the most important role for the Council was to provide leadership on procurement of products and was able to confirm that the coffee sold in the Melting Pot, the Library cafe and provided at meetings was fairtrade, as was the sugar, bananas and a range of snacks. Following encouragement from the Council, Europa had committed to extend its fairtrade range and scrutinise their supply lines. It had also improved awareness of fairtrade amongst its staff. Councillor Pavey re-affirmed the commitment to fairtrade principles by emphasising that this was a radical initiative to intervene in global markets to guarantee poor farmers in developing countries a fair price for their products.

8. Report from the Chair Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Choudry (Chair of Scrutiny Committee) reported in accordance with standing orders on the work of the Scrutiny Committee. Committee members had attended a seminar run by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and all members had been invited to a scrutiny training session. A work programme session had taken place and all members had been invited to submit items for the work programme. The first formal meeting of the committee had taken place on 6 August and Councillor Choudry outlined the items it had considered. Councillor Choudry stated that two task groups had been established, one on promoting electoral engagement and the other on the budget, with a third on the pupil premium to be agreed. He re-iterated that he wished to encourage open meetings with input from the public.

RESOLVED:

that the report from the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee be received and noted.

9. Members Allowances

The report before Members addressed the requirement for the Council to review allowances to elected Members on a regular basis and to take into account the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for London (prepared by London Councils), which reported in June 2014.

Councillor Pavey introduced the report by stating that the role of a councillor had never been more demanding and that councillors could only properly serve the community if they reflected it. The job had developed into a professional role. The recommendations from the Remuneration Panel for London had suggested much higher rates than were being proposed. He stated that the proposals represented a fair compromise and were cost neutral; they would support new people from a range of backgrounds joining the Council. Councillor Pavey referred to the Conservatives splitting into two Groups and thereby both qualifying for special responsibility allowances which he considered a nonsense. The outcome of the local election had been a vote for a Labour administration with a Conservative opposition and he therefore moved that the Conservative Group be designated the principal opposition group. Councillor Warren opposed this by saying that sadly the Conservative vote in Brent had declined over the last 20 years and accused the Conservative Group of doing nothing to arrest the decline. He read from a letter

from the President of the local Conservative party which recognised the Brondesbury Park Conservatives. He stated that his group would continue to provide strong opposition and hold the Labour Group to account. Councillor Colwill responded by recalling how in the past the Conservatives had lost seats in the old Brent East constituency under Councillor Warren when he was previously on the Council while he and his colleagues managed to increase their seats in the north of the borough. Councillor Colwill explained that the reason why the group had split was that the Brondesbury Park members had tried to demand that they should lead the Conservative Group but had been resisted. Councillor Carr recognised the enormous amount of work faced by a councillor and the need to attract new talent. However, all those standing in the recent election had known about this and the present allowances payable and she did not feel able to accept the increases being proposed.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the proposed Members Allowance Scheme attached as appendix 1 to the report submitted be agreed;
- (ii) that any additional payments for Members' allowances and Special Responsibility Allowances arising from the new scheme take effect from 1 June 2014;
- (iii) that the Conservative Group be recognised as the principal opposition group for the purposes of the new Members Allowance Scheme.

10. **2013/14 Treasury Management Outturn Report**

The circulated report updated Members on Treasury Management activity and confirmed that the Council had complied with its Prudential Indicators for 2013/14.

RESOLVED:

that the 2013/14 Treasury Management outturn report be noted.

11. **Motions**

11.1 **Northwick Park Hospital**

Councillor Daly read out the proposed motion. She referred to the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) visit to Northwick Park Hospital in May 2014 which found that 24,568 patients were re-admitted within one week of being discharged by A&E, which was much higher than the national average, no Medical Director was in post, there was no consultant in the department at night time, an overly dependent reliance on poorly inducted locum doctors, patients sitting in ambulances because A&E was full and patients not being properly provided with food and drink. Councillor Daly added that surgery, critical care, maternity and family planning, services for children and young people and outpatient services had all been found to be either inadequate or required improvement. She asked the Council to demand from NHS England, the CQC and the North West London Hospitals Trust an apology to the people of Brent. She felt the least that could be done was to keep the A&E at Central Middlesex hospital open until the failings were addressed.

Councillor Daly also asked the Council to pass on its thanks to the staff at Northwick Park hospital for the professionalism and passion they displayed despite the circumstances within which they worked.

Councillor Warren spoke in support of the opening paragraph of the motion because there were clearly concerns arising from the inspection. However he pointed out that the CQC report concluded that improvements were needed and not that the services were unsafe. He did not think the majority of residents were affected by the situation at Northwick Park hospital. Councillor Warren questioned how the motion could call for performance at Northwick Park hospital to vastly improve, which he said would take time, but also say that if it was agreed that all the improvements would be carried out then delay to the closure of the A&E at Central Middlesex hospital would not be sought. He therefore moved an amendment to the circulated motion to delete all after paragraph 1. He felt the Council had a responsibility to be a critical friend of Northwick Park hospital and pointed out the outstanding stroke unit and short term assessment team there.

Councillor Kansagra supported the motion and referred to discussion at Scrutiny Committee on 6 August 2014 when Members were assured by health managers that everything was in place for the closure of the A&E at Central Middlesex Hospital. However the CQC report had clearly shown this not to be the case and a clear message needed to be sent out from the Council that this was not acceptable.

Councillor Hirani welcomed the support for the motion and agreed that a clear message was needed to express the concerns of the people of Brent given that the A&E at Northwick Park hospital would be the only A&E facility serving people within the boundaries of Brent.

The amendment moved by Councillor Warren was put to the vote and declared LOST.

The motion as circulated was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

- (i) this Council places on record its deep concern about the findings from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of Northwick Park Hospital – which is set to become the main A&E hub when the Central Middlesex unit closes;
- (ii) this Council places on record its concern at the quality of health provision for the majority of Brent residents that depend on Northwick Park;
- (iii) that North West London Hospital Trust be called upon to delay the closure of its A&E facility at Central Middlesex until the performance of Northwick Park Hospital is vastly improved;
- (iv) that urgent assurances be demanded from The North West London Hospital Trust that they will implement the recommendations as set out in the CQC report to improve Northwick Park Hospital as a matter of urgency or else delay the closure of the A&E unit.

11.2 **Waste collection service**

Councillor Kansagra moved the motion circulated in his and Councillors Colwill and BM Patel's names by claiming the decision to introduce a chargeable waste collection service was not one of efficiency but the introduction of a tax. He felt the charge introduced would be subject to increases in the future and that there should be a period during which residents were able to make up their minds whether they wanted to keep their green bins. He felt the issues raised at the Scrutiny Committee had not been adequately addressed.

Councillor Warren questioned why the same arguments set out in the motion were not put before the Scrutiny Committee when it considered the matter. He wanted the charge scrapped but did not feel the motion sufficiently addressed the issue.

Councillor Perrin stated that an undertaking had already been given to monitor the new arrangements and review them in line with the decisions of Scrutiny Committee.

The motion was put to the vote and declared LOST.

11.3 **Listening Council**

Councillor Warren moved the motion circulated in his and Councillors Davidson and Shaw's names which sought to reverse the charge imposed for collecting green waste by deleting the budget for trade union officials and making savings on senior officer salaries. The motion also called for the re-introduction of the parking scratch card. Councillor Warren stated that the Council claimed to be a listening Council but it had to respond to what it heard. Councillor Davidson added that he felt the Council had a dismissive attitude towards the views of the community which had made it clear that it wanted to retain the use of scratch cards.

Councillor Butt referred to Government policies that he claimed were adversely affecting residents in Brent. He referred to the consultations carried out by the Council and the work it was doing with the local community. He pointed out that the Council faced severe financial challenges and reminded members that Government ministers advocated the introduction of some charges.

The motion was put to the vote and declared LOST.

12. **Urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm

COUNCILLOR KANA NAHEERATHAN
Mayor