



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

**Minutes of the ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
held on Monday 25 February 2019 at 6.00 pm**

PRESENT:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Arshad Mahmood

The Deputy Mayor
Councillor Ernest Ezeajughi

COUNCILLORS:

Abdi	Aden
Afzal	Ahmed
Allie	M Butt
S Butt	Chan
Chappell	Chohan
S Choudhary	A Choudry
Colacicco	Colwill
Conneely	Crane
Daly	Dar
Denselow	Dixon
Donnelly-Jackson	Ethapemi
Farah	Gbajumo
Gill	Hector
Hirani	Johnson
Kabir	Kansagra
Kelcher	Kennelly
Knight	Lo
Long	Marquis
Mashari	Maurice
McLeish	McLennan
Miller	J Mitchell Murray
W Mitchell Murray	Naheerathan
Nerva	M Patel
RS Patel	Patterson
Perrin	Sangani
Shahzad	Ketan Sheth
Southwood	Stephens
Tatler	Thakkar

1. Apologies for Absence

The Mayor advised that direct apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Agha, Pavey and Krupa Sheth.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Abdirazak, Aden, Chan, Donnelly-Jackson and Mashari.

2. **Mayor's Statement - Order of Business**

Before consideration of the formal agenda, the Mayor informed members of a change to the order of business set out on the original summons. Given its relevance to the budget setting process, the Mayor advised that, in accordance with Standing Order 30, he intended to move the report on the Borough Plan 2019-2023 forward for consideration, following the Mayor's Announcements.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

- (1) The business to be considered at the meeting be re-arranged in the following order:
 - Agenda Item 6 – Borough Plan 2019 - 2023
- (2) The remaining items of business follow in the same order as listed on the agenda

3. **Procedural Motion - Conduct of Business**

The Mayor advised that as this was the Council's formal budget and Council Tax setting meeting he would be inviting Councillor Kabir (as Majority Group Chief Whip) to move a procedural motion, in accordance with Standing Orders, relating to the conduct of the debate on the budget report.

RESOLVED that the following procedural motion moved by Councillor Kabir, be agreed:

Debate on the Budget and Council Tax 2019-19

The debate on the budget be structured as follows:

1. The Leader of the Council be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes in presenting the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 Budget and Council Tax report to the meeting, after which the following arrangements would apply:
 - (a) The Leader of the Conservative Group be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes.
 - (b) The Deputy Leader of the Council be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes.
 - (c) The Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes.

- (d) A general debate follow during which the usual rules for debate would apply as set out in Standing Orders.
2. At the end of the general debate, the Leader of the Council be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes to submit his closing remarks prior to a recorded vote being taken on the budget proposals (to be moved en bloc)

4. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 26 November 2018 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

5. **Declarations of Interest**

The Mayor invited Members to declare any personal or disclosable pecuniary interests in relation to matters due to be considered at the meeting, in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.

- (a) Councillor Crane declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 6 (Budget and Council Tax 2019/2020 and 2020/2021) as a Council appointed Board Member on i4B and First Wave Housing.
- (b) Councillor Nerva declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 6 (Budget and Council Tax 2019/2020 and 2020/2021) as Vice Chair of the Local Government Information Unit and as a shared leaseholder Brent Housing.

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

The Mayor made the following announcements:

(i) Queens New Year's Honours List 2019

The Mayor announced he was delighted to see so many Brent residents having been rewarded in the New Year's Honours List. Members were asked to join him in congratulating the following individuals:

- Vera Schaufeld 88, who he advised lived in Barnhill and had been made an MBE for services to Holocaust Education, having dedicated her life to teaching adults and children with little or no knowledge of the English language.
- Mustafa Field, Director of Faith Forum for London who had been made an OBE for services to faith communities and social cohesion.
- Jashu Vekaria, Deputy Head Teacher of Uxendon Manor Primary who, having been voted best teacher in the Pearson Teaching Awards 2016, had now also received an MBE for services to primary education.
- Andria Zafirakou, who taught at Alperton Community School and had been awarded an MBE for services to education and young people, having also recently won the global competition to find the world's best teacher.

- Jamshaid Ahmad, a home office immigration officer who had been recognised with an MBE for services to law and order.
- Councillor Tariq Dar who had received an MBE for the work done over four decades with communities across Brent and whose award he felt was highly deserved.

(ii) Holocaust and Genocide Memorial Day

The Mayor informed Members that he was honoured to have attended the Holocaust and Genocide Memorial Day event, which had taken place at the Civic Centre to remember the victims of the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and subsequent genocides.

He felt the memorial had highlighted the importance in ensuring events like these were never able to happen again and reinforced the need to continue challenging hatred and prejudice at every level.

(iii) Lest We Forget Bench

The Mayor was pleased to remind Members of the unveiling, back in December 2019, of the *Lest we forget Bench* in order to commemorate the 100th anniversary of World War One. The bench, located in the Paul Daisley Garden, had been designed to create space for reflection in memory of all conflicts past and present and to honour service personnel in the sacrifices they and their families had made.

(iv) Pride of Brent

The Mayor was pleased to advise that he and the Chief Executive had been able to invite many long serving staff, unable to attend the Pride of Brent awards, to tea in the Mayor's Parlour. This had been an enjoyable afternoon providing a further opportunity to recognise staff for their valuable contribution.

(v) Rainbow Flag

The Mayor advised he had been delighted to join staff, councillors and residents to celebrate diversity, inclusion and tolerance at the recent rainbow flag raising ceremony on 19 February 2019 in honour of LGBT+ History Month.

Members were reminded that LGBT+ History Month took place in February each year and provided an opportunity to recognise the achievements of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, and to raise awareness of matters affecting the LGBT+ community. The theme of this year's month was Peace, Activism and Reconciliation.

(vi) Gala Fundraising Dinner and other announcements

The Mayor reminded Members that his last Gala Fundraising dinner would be taking place on Friday 5 April 2019 at Brent Civic Centre. The evening would consist of a three course meal and entertainment with tickets available via the Mayors Office.

The Mayor also took the opportunity:

- (a) To wish Councillor Denselow good luck in completing his tenth London Marathon, which he was running to raise funds for the children's library at the community-run Kensal Rise Library.
- (b) To advise Members that he been honoured to have had the opportunity to welcome several high level international delegations to Brent in order to promote the Borough. He highlighted how impressed they had all been by the Council's progressive, innovative approach to delivering quality public services for its residents.
- (c) To highlight a number of visits he had been privileged to undertake to various synagogues, temples, mosques, churches and other places of worship, given the key role they played across the Borough.
- (d) To wish Carolyn Downs, as Chief Executive, a happy birthday on behalf of all Members of the Council.

(vii) Petitions

Finally, the Mayor drew members' attention to the list of current petitions along with action being taken to deal with them, which had been tabled at the meeting, in accordance with Standing Order 66.

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

The Mayor advised that there were change in appointments to be considered at the meeting.

8. Borough Plan 2019-2023

Following the change in order of the agenda agreed at the start of the meeting, Councillor Butt (Leader of the Council) was invited to introduce the report of the Director of Performance, Policy & Partnerships which set out the Borough Plan, presenting the Council's vision, strategic themes and priorities over the next four years 2019-2023,

In introducing the report Councillor M.Butt highlighted that the Plan had been developed on the basis of Brent's Labour Party Manifesto with an emphasis on culture, empathy and ensuring that opportunities in Brent were shared amongst all communities. The Plan included a number of high-level desired outcomes for residents focussed around the following themes – every opportunity to succeed; a future built for everyone, an economy fit for all; a cleaner more considerate Brent; a borough where everyone can feel safe, secure, happy and healthy; and strong foundations. Councillor M.Butt advised that the Borough Plan, in conjunction with the budget, would provide the focus to deliver the aspirations and outcomes identified whilst also providing an opportunity for residents to be able to hold the Administration to account. He concluded by advising that he was proud of the commitments set out within the Plan, which the Administration had accepted the

significant challenge and responsibility for delivering, and thanked all involved for their efforts in its preparation.

As no other members indicated they wanted to speak on the report, the Mayor put the recommendations to the vote by a show of hands and they were unanimously declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to adopt the Borough Plan (as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report) and Delivery Plan (as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report) 2019-2023.

9. **Budget and Council Tax 2019/2020 and 2020/21**

The Council received a report from the Chief Finance Officer setting out the Council's budget proposals for 2019/20 and business plans for 2020/2021 along with the overall financial position facing the Council over the next four years.

In accordance with the procedural motion agreed at the start of the meeting, the Mayor invited Councillor M.Butt to present the report setting out the budget and Council Tax proposals for 2019/20 – 2020/21.

Councillor M.Butt began by highlighting the difficult financial position faced by the Council, as a result of Central Government's austerity programme with Brent's funding continuing to fall short of what was needed and he felt could reasonably be considered as adequate.

As a result of the ongoing funding limitations being placed on local authorities by the Government he pointed out that the coming years would require a further round of £ multi-million transformation, efficiencies and cuts in order to deliver the additional £40m identified as required to meet the shortfall in funding over the next 2 years and on top of the funding already lost to government austerity.

In terms of the budget presented for approval at the meeting, this had been designed to provide a detailed plan for the year ahead whilst also reinforcing the longer term strategy to address the ongoing pressure and cuts to public sector funding. Whilst the position moving forward was made even more difficult to predict due to the uncertainty over Brexit, one thing it was possible to be clear about was that spending on core services had once again fallen, this time in cash terms by 11%. Whilst this would be difficult enough it was not felt to represent the full picture as it failed, Councillor M.Butt pointed out, to take account of:

- the cumulative damage caused by the Government's ongoing programme of austerity and what the Council's current position might have been without almost a decade of funding cuts;
- population growth and the increasingly complex nature and volume of demand for local services along with the true costs of being able to meet these.

Councillor M.Butt went on to highlight the budget report had identified that for the Council to stand still in terms of its finances and in terms of being able to deliver the same quality and quantity of services as provided in 2018/19, would require a growth in core service spend of more than £17m as opposed to the reductions proposed. If funding had been maintained at the same level as set immediately prior to austerity the budget being set now would have been upwards of £370m,

without taking account of public health, as a result highlighting a shortfall of almost £100m.

Whilst the level of cuts had been criticised by some, Councillor M. Butt felt that things may get even worse, given what he considered to be the move away nationally from the principles of informed and inclusive government and a rise in less tolerant behaviour and views.

Notwithstanding the current position, the Council had however been keen once again to focus on providing the maximum level of support and opportunity for those within the borough whilst also ensuring the legal obligation to set a balanced and deliverable budget so that the borough could live within its means. The approach developed had been designed to treat everyone seeking help, support and advice with empathy and respect which were standards Councillor M. Butt felt everyone had the right to expect. Whilst the Conservative Government had removed the ability to provide a sufficient level of service in many areas this had not prevented the Council from looking to ensure that what remained was provided to the best of its ability.

Moving on to focus on the position regarding the Council's financial reserves, Councillor M. Butt highlighted the criticism often directed towards the Council by the Conservatives and their supporters for what he felt to be the prudent and responsible approach taken towards their management by the current Administration. Whilst the Council currently maintained a balance of approx. £12m in useable ear-marked reserves its Council Tax base for 2019/2020 was anticipated to be approx. £120m, all of which would be required to fund spend on core services which, with the exception of the Housing Revenue Account, was in the region of £238m. Removing the prospect of additional inflation, both in terms of cost and demand, would he pointed out mean that the current level of reserves would only provide a buffer of 1.6% against lower than anticipated collection rates and higher than expected demand. Whilst not complacent, the Council had therefore had to make tough decisions in order to provide a responsible, sustainable and solvent business model, which was an approach other authorities had not been able to deliver.

Turning then to the fees and charges proposed within the budget, Councillor M. Butt recognised that these would not all be popular making specific reference to the plans to increase the cost of owning and operating diesel powered vehicles in Brent. Whilst having some empathy with these motorists, the Leader took the opportunity to highlight the policy had been designed not as an income generating exercise but to encourage motorists out of more environmentally harmful vehicles and into something more greener or ideally on to public transport, recognising the harmful impact of climate change and need for more radical solutions.

In summing up, Councillor M. Butt advised that the Administration in presenting its budget proposals had recognised the difficult need to strike a balance between the delivery of longer term more strategic aims and more immediate priorities/demand. As examples he referred to the planning to be undertaken for the future development of the boroughs high streets and work being undertaken in relation to highway repairs; the work to address the current housing crisis and at the same time tackle the immediate pressures in relation to homelessness and to provide every child and young person in the borough with the opportunity to succeed with the brightest

possible future. Whilst not an easy budget to develop he advised he was proud of the Labour Administration's achievements, which had seen the Council look to stretch the use of every resource available in order to protect and sustain the social and civic infrastructure on which so many residents were dependent and not just wave through the unrestrained austerity of the Conservative Government. He finished by highlighting how strongly this approach had also been endorsed by residents at the last local elections and on this basis formally commended and moved the recommendations within the report.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Kansagra to respond to the budget proposals on behalf of the Conservative Group.

Councillor Kansagra began by highlighting what he felt to be the misleading nature of the context to the budget setting process outlined by Councillor M. Butt in relation to the need for austerity, given the economic collapse presided over by Labour when in power. He felt the position nationally was more positive than presented by the Leader, referring to the reduction in unemployment; increase in average weekly earnings and employment rates which had all been presided over by the Conservative Government over recent years. In terms of the position in Brent, he referred to the reduction of residents recorded as claiming benefits in both Brent North and Brent Central, using this as an example of the positive impact of the Conservative Government's approach creating and encouraging people towards sustainable employment opportunities rather than relying on a long term benefits culture.

Having noted the extent of the budget reductions proposed within the report, Councillor Kansagra advised that the Conservative Group whilst supportive of the efficiency savings identified, had concerns regarding a number of other issues relating to the budget proposals which were identified as follows:

- the lack of any review of Benefits staff being retained by the Council following the establishment of the Universal Credit regime and transfer of benefit claims management to the Department for Work & Pensions;
- the number of Executive Members appointed by the Leader, given what was felt to be an overlap of functions and cost to the Members Allowance Scheme;
- whilst welcoming attempts made to encourage and increase recycling rates, continued opposition was expressed in relation to the principle of the Green Bin Tax alongside the increase in fees;
- the current performance in relation to highway repairs relating to potholes, given the additional funding provided by the Government and cost of damage claims to the Council;
- the cessation of the Met Police Plus service given ongoing concerns relating to knife crime and its impact in terms of the Council's priority towards making Brent safer for its residents.

In concluding, Councillor Kansagra advised that the Conservative Group would not be submitting any alternative budget proposals but urged members to take account of the concerns outlined in response to the budget proposals.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Kansagra for his comments and then moved on to invite Councillor McLennan (Deputy Leader) to speak, as the next stage in the budget debate.

Councillor McLennan began by thanking the Council's Chief Executive and Management Team along with all the officers involved for their hard work, innovation, support and effort in preparing the budget report and proposals. She also took the opportunity to thank the Cabinet and all Members involved in the work of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group for their efforts in reviewing and monitoring development and delivery of the budget proposals and also all residents and stakeholders who had contributed to the budget consultation process.

Whilst there were no alternative budget proposals to respond on, Councillor McLennan felt it was clear that the Government's austerity programme was far from over. Despite the comments made by Councillor Kansagra, she highlighted the current pressures being caused as a direct result of the ongoing reduction in government funding for public services and resulting impact on local residents. In addition she highlighted significant concerns relating to the potential outcome of the Government's current Local Government Fair Funding review and its impact on authorities such as Brent.

In order to protect essential services for those most in need, given the extent of the reductions in funding and savings already delivered, she pointed out that the Council had had no choice but to recommend an increase in Council Tax as the process for identifying further savings and service transformation became increasingly difficult. Notwithstanding this she also felt it important to highlight the opportunities presented within the budget, which included the capital pipeline proposals designed to enhance infrastructure across the borough and also the options relating to the insourcing of Council services such as Council Tax and Housing Management.

In terms of the budget proposals, moved by the Leader, she pointed out these had been designed to comply with the legal requirement to set a balanced budget having included a requirement to achieve £40m of further savings over the current four year period. In summing up she felt the budget proposals moved by the Leader whilst challenging would enable residents to take confidence that the Labour Administration would continue to stand up for public services and the needs of local residents. She therefore endorsed and commended the budget to Members for approval.

The Mayor thanked Councillor McLennan and prior to opening the budget up to general debate, invited Councillor Kelcher, as Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee to speak in order to present the findings of the scrutiny budget review undertaken by a cross scrutiny Task Group lead by his Committee.

Councillor Kelcher began by outlining the approach taken towards the scrutiny review which, as this was the first in a two year cycle, had involved the review of all proposals included within the budget consultation process. A more strategic focus in relation to specific plans would be taken at the mid-point in the cycle, as in previous years. Whilst disappointed at the lack of any alternative budget options presented by the Opposition Group and querying the purpose of the Special Responsibility Allowance provided to the Leader of the Opposition as a result, he took the opportunity to thank all members, officers and other stakeholders for their engagement in the scrutiny process, which he pointed out had been designed to provide a "critical friend" approach. The Task Group, whilst aware of the

consequences in making any savings, had also recognised the need to set a legal and balanced budget and impact of Government funding reductions in driving many of the cuts proposed with the scrutiny focus therefore on areas where it was felt alternative options may be available or of most concern in relation to their impact.

In terms of specific comments, Councillor Kelcher advised that given concerns raised by the Scrutiny Budget Task Group, he had been pleased the following saving proposals had not been accepted:

- Full closure of Abbey Road Recycling Centre;
- Introduction of 15 minute social care visits;
- Reduction in Library opening hours.

In addition the Task Group and Scrutiny Committee had welcomed the reclassification of some proposals by identifying them either as pure budget savings or proposals linked to wider service or policy reform. It was felt this helped to make the consultation process more transparent and was an initiative the Task Group were keen to see developed in future years.

Councillor Kelcher then moved on to highlight a number of additional areas raised by the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee in relation to the budget on which responses had also been requested from Cabinet. These had been presented to Cabinet as an addendum to the main Budget Task Group report and included the following proposals for consideration:

- Lobbying for the introduction of a locally set tourist tax;
- The undertaking of full Impact Assessments on each budget proposal;
- Ensuring the necessary signposting was available to alternative funding mechanisms for the voluntary and community sector, following on from the scaling back of local authority funding support;
- Ensuring the engagement of scrutiny and other non-executive members in the decision making process relating to the delivery and allocation of funding for the London Borough of Culture;
- Identification of proposals designed to add value to the use of public library buildings;
- Improving the Cleaner Brent App in order to enable more types of issues to be reported; and
- Ring-fencing the use of funds generated through licensing activity to those areas impacted directly by the different activities being permitted.

Councillor Kelcher advised he looked forward to receiving responses on the above issues and to continue working constructively with the Executive in relation to future development and ongoing delivery of the budget.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Kelcher and advised that as the opening statements had now concluded he would open up the budget proposals for general debate by other Members.

Councillor Kabir opened the debate by highlighting what she felt to be the brutal and devastating nature of the ongoing round of funding cuts being imposed on local authorities, including Brent, under the Conservative Government's austerity

programme. Without the proposed increase in Council Tax, she pointed out that the Council's core budget for 2019/2020 would have reduced by 1.4% compared to the previous year with an overall reduction in the base budget totalling £185m since 2010. The efforts being made by the Council to engage local residents in the hard budget decisions now needing to be made in order to protect key front line services were recognised, although specific concern was expressed about the proposed 15% reduction in the budget for the Council Tax Support Scheme by 2020/2021. Notwithstanding the significant budget pressures identified, Councillor Kabir felt it was also important to highlight the positive measures which it had still been possible for the Council to deliver as a result of prudent financial forward planning in relation to local town centre improvements in areas such as Kingsbury. In commending the budget proposals for approval, Councillor Kabir ended by highlighting a need for the Government to acknowledge the full impact of austerity as part of their Fair Funding review for Local Government.

Other members who spoke in support of the budget proposals were as follows:

Councillor S.Choudhury who also recognised the scale of overall savings delivered by the Council and increasing difficulties faced in delivering a balanced budget, given the level of funding cuts required under the Conservative Government's ongoing programme of austerity. Of particular concern were the consultation proposals made in relation to Adult Social Care; Met Police Plus Patrol; Recycling, Refuge and Street Cleaning services which he felt if they were accepted, would have had a significant impact on local residents.

Councillor R.Patel highlighting the focus within the final budget proposals on the Labour Administrations core values, as set out within the Borough Plan. Given the difficult financial circumstances created by the government's ongoing reduction in funding he congratulated the Leader and Cabinet for their efforts in delivering what he felt was a fair, balanced and humane budget in such challenging circumstances.

Councillor Tatler, who also felt it was important to highlight the difficult choices having to be considered due to the financial pressures being placed on local services by central government, especially local authorities, as a result of austerity. Expressing concern at the potential impact of the removal of deprivation as a measure within the Local Government Fair Funding formula she felt the Government had continued to abdicate responsibility not only in terms of pursuing its policy on austerity but also in relation to the introduction of Universal Credit. Against this background, she pointed out the Administration had been required to take difficult decisions in order to continue supporting the most vulnerable and providing opportunities for local communities to prosper. Taking a more targeted and creative approach towards the use of its limited resources she pointed out it had, however, still been possible to deliver additional support for Small and Medium Enterprises whilst improving town centres across the borough leading to increased footfall; allocate over £3m of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to local community schemes; double the number of trees planted across the borough; deliver improvements to the cycling infrastructure and increase the installation of electric vehicle charging points. In addition, Councillor Tatler advised she was pleased to be able to announce the establishment of a £20m Capital Investment budget for footway improvements across the borough, but remained concerned that all of these measures were continuing to be delivered against the

background of the divisive austerity measures being pursued by the Conservative Government.

Councillor Dar who whilst supportive of the budget proposals, also took the opportunity to express concern at the impact which the Conservative Government's austerity measures and associated reductions in funding were having on the voluntary and community sector. Whilst local communities had stepped forward to assist he highlighted the continued strain on the sector in being able to support and assist those most in need as funding was cut across the public sector, which he felt required a reversal in Government policy.

Councillor Choudhry expressed disappointment at the lack of response from the Conservative Group towards the budget proposals given the difficult choices needing to be made in order to present a viable and balanced budget. In recognising the unique challenges and funding issues within Brent, he urged the Conservative Group to support the Administration in continuing to challenge the Government's ongoing funding policies and approach given their impact across Brent. He also highlighted the potential need, given the ongoing uncertainty in the Governments' approach, for the Council to have to consider increasing its level of reserves. Whilst recognising the serious nature of the Council's financial position, he commended the Leader and Deputy Leader for the difficult choices they had needed to take over the current and previous years in order to maintain a prudent budget approach and enable the Council to continue delivering services and meeting their commitments, which he pointed out other local authorities were struggling to achieve.

Councillor Knight, who also expressed concern, in the form of a poem, regarding the impact of the Conservative Government's ongoing programme of austerity on local communities within her ward and across the borough.

Councillor Johnson who thanked those members and officers involved for their efforts in preparing a budget in such challenging circumstances. Whilst recognising there was no option but to set a legal and balanced budget, he took the opportunity to highlight the overall level of funding lost by the Council as a result of the Government's austerity measures since 2010 and called for its reinstatement in order to reflect the level of need and demand on services now being experienced. Specific concerns were highlighted in relation to increasing levels of homelessness and the impact of the Government's welfare reforms.

Councillor Shahzad, who highlighted the widening funding gap in relation to public services and expressed specific concern at the impact of the Government's austerity programme and limited funding available to support the provision of Community Mental Health Services.

Councillor Chappell, highlighting the increasing impact of the Government's austerity programme with specific reference to levels of child poverty and foodbank use within his ward. In support of previous comments made he recognised that whilst not ideal, the budget proposals were attempting to address what he felt was an impossible situation created entirely by the Conservative Government.

Councillor Nerva who highlighted the difficult choices and extent of cuts having to be delivered not just within Brent but by local authorities across the country, as

identified within the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) State of Local Finance Survey 2019, as a result of the Government's continued austerity measures. Whilst the nature of cuts identified reflected political choice he was pleased, as an example, that Brent had taken the decision not to recommend a reduction in library opening hours; was continuing to support the develop of its community run libraries and also supported the establishment of the capital footway investment programme announced earlier in the meeting. He took the opportunity to thank officers for their support in preparing the budget and finished by highlighting a need for the Labour Party in order to prepare nationally for Government to tackle anti-Semitism and misogyny.

Councillor Donnelly-Jackson who also highlighted concerns in relation to the impact of austerity in Brent linked with an associated reduction in average household income, increase in debt, roll out of Universal Credit and increased private sector rental costs leading to increased demand on Council services. Whilst the Council aspired to maintain its high performing services, quality of care, education and library provision, support the police and increase the supply of affordable housing she reminded Members of the comments made by the Leader when opening the debate regarding the level of funding required for 2019/2020 (£17.9m) – 2020/2021 (£18.7m) in order for the Council to maintain current levels of service. This was against a background of huge Government funding reductions requiring the Council to make significant cuts and transformation to services with many families experiencing reduced levels of income after housing costs. Concern was also raised at the recent comments made by the UN raconteur for Extreme Poverty and Human Rights regarding the impact of increasing levels of child poverty. Recognising the attempts made to produce a balanced budget with empathy as well as with economic sense, addressing these concerns would, she felt, also require a change in Government nationally.

Councillor Southwood who expressed disappointment at what she felt to be the lack of any credible response from the Conservative Group in relation to the budget proposals. Highlighting the impact of the Government's programme of welfare reforms in terms of the number of households now worse off under Universal Credit and as demonstrated by the increased use of foodbanks in those areas where it had been rolled out for more than a year she called for its implementation to be halted with immediate effect. Staff and residents were praised for their efforts in seeking to address the difficulties created as a result of the roll-out of Universal Credit alongside the cumulative impact of the cuts resulting from the Government's ongoing reduction in public sector funding, the effects of which were continually reflected in councillors increasingly challenging casework. The Council were, however, responding she pointed out by looking to increase and co-ordinate local access to services via Community Hubs; secure funding to support the increasing number of rough sleepers; increase the supply of affordable housing (including the building of its own housing) and by ensuring local residents continued to be represented in a decent and caring way, recognising the real difficulties being experienced as a result of the Governments current policies.

Councillor Colaccico commending the balanced nature of the budget which she pointed out, had been based on a genuine consultation process and not only sought to provide investment in infrastructure such as footways but also protect the needs of the most vulnerable including those relying on Adult Social Care.

Councillor M.Patel who, focussing on children and young people, highlighted the impact of the Government's 62% funding reduction in youth services since 2010 which she felt had been aimed at reversing the previous Labour Governments programme of investment. Whilst recognising the challenging circumstances this presented she outlined how the Council's budget proposals had been focussed on prioritising the most vulnerable, building on the authorities highest ever OFSTED rating for Children's Services of good and outstanding for experience and progress of care leavers with staff thanked for their efforts. In terms of innovation she highlighted the proposals supported within the budget to establish family hubs focusing on the local delivery of services for those up to 18 in key neighbourhoods across the borough. As well as these measures she also highlighted the support within the budget to continue the delivery of youth service provision at Roundwood Youth Centre and which, she felt, demonstrated the aim within the budget to protect the most vulnerable and ongoing delivery of children's services within Brent.

Councillor Afzal who also took the opportunity to highlight the local impact on Brent created by the Government's ongoing programme of austerity demonstrated, as specific examples, through the increased use of foodbanks, cuts in youth services, cuts in police numbers and increase in poverty . On a more positive note he highlighted the way in which local communities were coming together in order to actively engage in addressing these challenges, as evidenced through the establishment of the community library within his ward.

Councillor Hirani, who took the opportunity to highlight the impact which cuts being imposed on local authorities and across the public sector in general, were having on local communities and in areas such as public health along with the associated effect on the NHS. As examples he highlighted cuts to funding for smoking cessation activity with the impact on cancer treatment and support and the consistent level of cuts to Adult Social Care with the knock on effect in relation to A&E. He felt the Government had failed to recognise the interaction of funding streams for local services across the public sector and the extent of the impact cuts in these areas were having. Despite the challenges created by austerity, however, he felt it important to note the focus within the Council's budget proposals in securing local investment for young people, arts and culture supported through the London Borough of Culture which he felt was in direct contrast to the Governments approach.

Councillor Ethapeni, who also highlight concerns in relation to the ongoing impact on local communities across Brent as a direct result of the Government's austerity measures. Specific concerns were raised regarding the ability to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour as a result of cuts to the police and closure of local police stations, ending of the Sure Start programme, cuts in funding for youth service provision and reductions in the street cleansing service which he felt all impacted on reducing the overall sense of local community and strengthening the view that austerity was far from over. He felt this was also reflected in the substantial savings which the Council was still being required to make as a result of the ongoing reductions in Government funding support and increase in Council Tax needing to be sought as a direct consequence in order to ameliorate the financial challenges faced.

Councillor Miller who thanked the Leader, Deputy Leader, Members and the public for their involvement in having to set what he felt had been the toughest budget he

had experienced as a local councillor in Brent. He highlighted the impact which the significant cuts imposed by the Government had had within community safety, including funding for the Met Police Patrol Plus service. Whilst few of the cuts identified in the current budget proposals would have been choices the Administration wanted to make the lack of options had required difficult choices to be made. He felt the Government's approach was seeking to shift blame on to local authorities rather than recognising the reality they had created and which he felt would be made worse as a result of the proposals being considered under their Fair Funding review and which would, in his view, require a radical re-route in approach nationally.

Councillor Hector who also highlighted concerns regarding the Conservative Government's Fair Funding formula review in terms of the proposals to disregard deprivation and poverty as indicators within the formula.

Councillor Kennelly highlighting what he felt to be the Conservative Government's lack of vision when compared to the ambition within the budget proposals moved by the Leader and more widely by the Mayor for London in terms of the levels of investment being made across London and within Brent. Whilst recognising the ongoing challenges created by the Government's continued programme of austerity and concerned by the taxation regimes which large multi-national companies were being allowed to operate under, he was particularly keen to support the ongoing development of the 24 hour economy given its associated benefits in terms of generating income and employment opportunities.

Councillor Dixon took the opportunity to thank the Leader, Deputy Leader and all other colleagues who had participated during the debate for their contributions in supporting the budget proposals. Following on from comments previously made she highlighted her specific support, as a member of the Fostering Panel, for the commitment and hard work of all those involved in the provision of children's services across the borough and welcomed the ongoing support for the provision of these and other vital local services.

Councillor Stephens, as the final contribution from the Labour Group during the debate, recognised that whilst not ideal the options available for consideration within the budget had in reality been limited by the cuts being imposed by the Conservative Government which he urged members of the Conservative Group to highlight the real impact of with their colleagues nationally. Whilst recognising the challenges still to be faced, he felt that the budget proposals enabled him to honour a commitment to be open and honest with residents about the choices and options available. Although the Government appeared not to believe in the provision of universal local civic services he felt the Council's budget had sought to maintain provision of these essential services for the most vulnerable whilst also providing investment in infrastructure, young people and libraries.

Responding during the debate to the comments made in relation to the Conservative Group, Councillor Colwill whilst recognising the challenges faced in balancing the budget, felt it was too easy for the Labour Group to blame the Conservative Government for the lack of funding available. As an example he highlighted the level of funds owed to the Council, which according to the accounts remained uncollected and felt this was an area which should also have been

subject to review and examined in more detail by scrutiny as part of the Budget consultation process.

These comments were supported by Councillor Maurice who highlighted the difficulty given the current size of the Conservative Group and resources available to them, in preparing a detailed alternative set of budget proposals. He reiterated the point highlighted by Councillor Colwill in relation to the level of uncollected Council Tax, which he felt could have been used to offset some of the issues and budget reductions on which concerns had been raised during the debate. In light of the concerns raised in relation to the impact of austerity he felt it would be hard to see how members could then justify acceptance of the 2% increase in Members Allowances being recommended later in the meeting and also supported the concerns highlighted in response to any surcharge being imposed on diesel vehicles, pointing out that a majority of the Council's own fleet would also be affected.

Having concluded the debate the Mayor thanked all Members for their contributions and then invited Councillor M.Butt to sum and respond to the points raised.

Councillor M.Butt thanked all Cabinet colleagues and Members for their contributions, highlighting that the choices having to be made were some of the most difficult he had had to present given their impact on local residents and the borough. He felt, however, that this was entirely as a consequence of the position taken by the Conservative Government and was proud that the Labour Administration were seeking to continue defending, protecting and where possible enhancing services for local residents and those most in need. As an example he made it clear that the Administration had taken the decision not to recommend, as part of the budget, the closure of Abbey Road Recycling Centre, introduction of 15 minute social care visits, a reduction in Library opening hours, removal of grants to the Voluntary and Community Sector or funding for the Connexions service. He felt this demonstrated the Administration's commitment to protecting services for those most in need alongside the values of social justice and empowering residents. He reminded Members that the budget proposals had been designed to address the steps needing to be taken by the Council in order to continue delivering for the borough and as such ended by once again commending the budget to Council.

The Mayor advised that this now concluded the budget debate and he would therefore be moving to the vote on the recommended budget moved by Councillor M.Butt. As the recommendations to be considered related to the budget setting process he reminded Members that these would require a recorded vote to be taken.

On a recorded vote being taken the budget proposals, as moved by Councillor M.Butt, were declared **CARRIED**.

Accordingly it was **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the decisions made by Cabinet on 11 February 19 in relation to the budget and Council Tax 2019/2020 and 2020/21.

- (2) To approve an overall 4.99% increase in the Council's element of council tax for 2019/20 with 2% as a precept for Adult Social Care and a 2.99% general increase.
- (3) To approve the General Fund revenue budget for 2019/20, as summarised in Appendix A of the report.
- (4) To approve the cost pressures and technical adjustments detailed in Appendix B of the report.
- (5) To note the report from the Budget Scrutiny Panel and addendum from the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee, as detailed in Appendix D of the report.
- (6) To note and agree for inclusion in the overall budget for 2019/20 the HRA Budget as set out in section eight of the report.
- (7) To approve the dedicated schools grant, as set out in section nine of the report.
- (8) To approve the capital programme as set out in Appendix E of the report.
- (9) To approve the Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy, Investment Strategy and MRP Policy as set out in Appendices F, G, H and I of the report.
- (10) To note the advice of the Director of Legal and HR as set out in Appendix J of the report.
- (11) To approve the schedule of fees and charges as set out in Appendix K of the report.
- (12) To note the results of consultation as set out in section 7 and detailed in Appendix L of the report.
- (13) To approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix M of the report.

Council Tax recommendations

Council noted that the recommendations agreed below only included a provisional Council Tax level for the GLA as its final budget had not been agreed at the time the Council's budget report was despatched. As a result it was noted that the statutory calculation of the total amount of Council Tax under Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 may be amended by the final Greater London Authority precept.

- (14) To resolve in relation to the council tax for 2019/20:

That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2019/20 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended:

- (a) £1,027,149,293 being the aggregate of the amount that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.
- (b) 905,158,017 being the aggregate of the amounts that the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
- (c) £121,991,275 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year.
- (d) £1,262.34 being the amount at (c) above, divided by the amount for the tax base of 96,639, agreed by the General Purposes Committee on the 21 January 2018, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

(e) Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
841.56	981.82	1,122.08	1,262.34	1,542.86	1,823.38	2,103.90	2,524.68

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (d) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

- (15) That it be noted that for the year 2019/20 the proposed Greater London Authority precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, in respect of the Greater London Authority, for each of the categories of dwellings are as shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
213.67	249.29	284.90	320.51	391.73	462.96	534.18	641.02

(16) That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at paragraph (14)(e) and (15), the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of council tax for the year 2019/20 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1,055.23	1,231.11	1,406.98	1,582.85	1,934.59	2,286.34	2,638.08	3,165.70

(17) That it be noted that the Chief Finance Officer has determined that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2019/20 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

- (a)** That the Chief Finance Officer be and is hereby authorised to give due notice of the said council tax in the manner provided by Section 38(2) of the 1992 Act.
- (b)** That the Chief Finance Officer be and is hereby authorised when necessary to apply for a summons against any council tax payer or non-domestic ratepayer on whom an account for the said tax or rate and any arrears has been duly served and who has failed to pay the amounts due to take all subsequent necessary action to recover them promptly.
- (c)** That the Chief Finance Officer be and is hereby authorised to collect revenues and distribute monies from the Collection Fund and is authorised to borrow or to lend money in accordance with the regulations to the maximum benefit of each fund.

(18) That in the event that the GLA sets a different council tax precept to that set out in this report (which was the published provisional amount at the date of the budget report dispatch) that authority be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer to vary the amounts at **(15)**, but only insofar as to reflect the GLA decision, and to make consequential, but no other, amendments to the amounts at **(16)**.

In accordance with Standing Order 43, as the above decisions related to the setting of the budget and Council Tax they were subject to a recorded vote with members voting as follows:

For (51): Councillors Aden, Afzal, Ahmed, Allie, M.Butt, S.Butt, Chappell, Chohan, S Choudhary, Choudry, Colacicco, Conneely, Crane, Daly, Dar, Denselow, Dixon, Donnelly-Jackson, Ethapemi, Farah, Gbajumo, Gill, Hector, Hirani, Johnson, Kabir, Kelcher, Kennelly, Knight, Lo, Long, Marquis, Mashari, McLeish, McLennan, Miller, Mitchell-Murray, Murray, Naheerathan, Nerva, M.Patel, R.Patel, Patterson, Perrin, Sangani, Shahzad, Ketan Sheth, Southwood, Stephens, Tatler and Thakkar.

Against (0)

Abstain (5): Councillors Mahmood (Mayor), Ezeajughi (Deputy Mayor), Colwill, Kansagra and Maurice.

10. **Changes to the Constitution**

Councillor M. Butt (Leader of the Council) introduced the report from the Director of Legal and HR Services which he advised proposed a number of changes to the Constitution relating to Full Council meetings; the scrutiny committee structure; senior management appointments and Planning Petitions.

As no other members indicated they wanted to speak on the report, the Mayor put the recommendations to the vote by a show of hands and they were declared **CARRIED**.

It was therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the following changes to the Constitution as detailed within the report and Appendices 1-3:
 - (a) Procedural Rules & Order of Business for Full Council meetings (as set out in Appendix 1 of the report);
 - (b) Procedural rules for the recruitment of Operational and more senior officer posts (as set out in Appendix 1 of the report)
 - (c) Scrutiny Committee structure and Terms of Reference (as set out in Appendix 2 of the report)
 - (d) Petition scheme relating to Planning (as set out in Appendix 3 of the report).
- (2) To authorise the Director of Legal and HR Services to amend the Constitution accordingly, including the making of any necessary incidental or consequential changes;
- (3) To note, to the extent that the changes relate to executive functions of the Council, they have been approved by the Leader.

11. **Members Allowance Scheme - Annual Review**

Councillor M. Butt introduced the report from the Director of Legal and HR Services seeking approval to the making of a Members' Allowance Scheme, in the proposed terms set out in the report, for the 2019/20 Financial Year.

In introducing the report Councillor M. Butt highlighted the annual review had continued to be informed by the principles and guidelines within the most recent review of Members Allowances undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in 2018 on behalf of London Councils. As part of the annual review process the Scheme included provision for an annual uplift in line with any inflationary pay award agreed under the Local Government Pay Settlement. Members noted the importance of the Scheme in recognising and supporting individuals in being able to undertake their role as local councillor.

As there were no other members who indicated they wanted to speak on the report the Mayor put the recommendations to the vote by a show of hands and they were declared **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

- (1) To approve and make a Members' Allowance Scheme in the terms set out in the report for the financial year 2019/20.
- (2) To authorise the Director of Legal and HR Services to comply with the statutory requirements to publicise the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme.

12. Urgent Business

The Mayor advised Members there were no urgent items of business for consideration.

As this was the final Council business meeting of his year in office, the Mayor ended by thanking all Members for their support and co-operation over the last year and advised that the next meeting would be the Annual Council and Mayor Making ceremony on Monday 1 May 2019.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

COUNCILLOR ARSHAD MAHMOOD
Mayor