

Minutes

COUNCIL

6 July 2017

Meeting held at Council Chamber - Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



Councillor Carol Melvin BSc (Hons) (Mayor)
Councillor John Morgan (Deputy Mayor)

	MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors: Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana Lynne Allen Teji Barnes Jonathan Bianco Mohinder Birah Wayne Bridges Tony Burles Keith Burrows Roy Chamdal Alan Chapman George Cooper Judith Cooper Philip Corthorne Brian Crowe Peter Curling Catherine Dann Peter Davis Nick Denys Kanwal Dheer Jazz Dhillon Jas Dhot Jem Duducu Janet Duncan Beulah East Tony Eginton Duncan Flynn Neil Fyfe Narinder Garg Dominic Gilham Raymond Graham Becky Haggart John Hensley Patricia Jackson Allan Kauffman Judy Kelly Manjit Khatra Mo Khursheed Kuldeep Lakhmana Eddie Lavery Richard Lewis Michael Markham Douglas Mills Richard Mills John Morse June Nelson Susan O'Brien John Oswell Ray Puddifoot MBE John Riley David Simmonds CBE Jagjit Singh Brian Stead Michael White David Yarrow
	OFFICERS PRESENT: Fran Beasley, Jean Palmer, Paul Whaymand, Raj Alagh, Lloyd White, Mark Braddock, Morgan Einon, Beth Rainey and Neil Fraser
11.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>) Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Edwards, Gardner, Higgins, Jarjussey, Money, Palmer, Sansapuri, Seaman-Digby and Sweeting.
12.	MINUTES (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>) RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 23 February and 11 May 2017 be agreed as a correct record.
13.	MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>) The Mayor confirmed that she was now two months into her Mayoral year, and that those months had been tinged with sadness following the recent terror attacks, as well as the fire at Grenfell Tower. The Mayor extended her thoughts and prayers to all those affected by the tragedies.

The Mayor went on to confirm that to date, she had attended over seventy engagements, including three on her first day. All had been very diverse and interesting, including the opening of a new care home at Ryefield Court, which was very impressive and included its own bar, cinema, and seven star accommodation.

The recent launch of the Mayor's charity has been held on the previous Tuesday, and all three chosen charities had attended, including the Halo Foundation, who spoke movingly about the importance of their charitable work.

Members were requested to record the 19 July in their diaries, as the first supper quiz was to be held on that evening.

14. **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Councillor Puddifoot moved the recommendation as set out in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Simmonds and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Urgency decisions detailed in the report be noted.

15. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS** (*Agenda Item 6*)

6.1 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR BRIDGES TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR PUDDIFOOT:

"Following the tragic incident at Grenfell Tower in Kensington and Chelsea and the actions of Camden Council to evacuate tower blocks now considered to be a danger to the lives of tenants and leaseholders, would the Leader of the Council please inform Council of the current situation relating to tower blocks in Hillingdon?"

Councillor Puddifoot advised that, using the definition of a tower block as a building of more than 6 floors, Hillingdon had eleven tower blocks, with the tallest being fourteen floors high. All blocks had been inspected, and the Department for Communities and Local Government had been sent a return advising that Hillingdon had no high rise buildings with the aluminium composite cladding (ACM), as installed at Grenfell Tower.

However, the inspections did show that the Council's four bison blocks, built in the early 1960's, had been re-clad in the early 1980's with brick cladding containing a polystyrene layer between the brick and the original concrete building. In view of this, the Council had engaged fire safety specialists and fire protection specialists to look at any potential fire hazard that could arise from this particular cladding.

Their views had been received very recently, and while generally positive, it had been recommended that the Council review the fire stopping material around windows and vents. In addition the Council would be installing vertical fire breaks around the buildings (alongside the existing horizontal fire breaks.)

It had previously been agreed that the windows at the Rabbs Mill House block be replaced, and in addition, a 'fire sock' would be installed around each window at the same time as these works were carried out. At the remaining blocks, windows were to be removed, and new window surrounds inserted.

It was hoped that these works would begin in August, with all blocks completed by early December 2017. Letters would be hand delivered to both tenants and leaseholders of these blocks, informing them of the specialist findings and

recommended works. As well as high rise blocks, Hillingdon had twenty-two smaller sheltered housing blocks, and the cladding and insulation in those blocks was currently being tested, with the results expected before the end of the month.

The Council had a rolling programme of fire safety inspections, and prior to the Grenfell tragedy, had commenced a programme to upgrade all fire doors from the currently fitted universal fire doors to a newer available higher standard fire door. It had been decided to commence with the sheltered housing blocks, as these had the more vulnerable tenants, and work on this was taking place currently and would continue over the summer months. The plan to replace the fire doors in the high rise blocks had been due to take place after the work at the sheltered housing blocks had been completed, but had now been brought forward, and would take place over the coming months.

To avoid lengthy statutory consultations with leaseholders in the high rise blocks, and to put the safety of residents first, it was confirmed that the Council would not charge leaseholders for the installation of their fire doors.

The Council had also recently replaced the fire alarm systems at six sheltered housing blocks, and had commenced with replacing lighting at five of the high rise tower blocks. All sheltered housing and high rise blocks in the Borough had premises information blocks fitted, which contained information of layouts, the location of any asbestos in the building, and details of higher dependency residents, to aid the Fire Brigade in prioritising actions in the event of a fire.

On Monday 26 June 2017, Council officers had met with London Fire Brigade technical officers and a station officer to review the work plans already underway, as well as the Council's proposed work plans. Council officers confirmed that once test results on the cladding used within the tower blocks were available, these would be shared with the Fire Brigade. Council officers would also undertake joint visits to the blocks, to deal with any issues or concerns that the Brigade might have. The Fire Brigade welcomed Hillingdon's approach, and the actions already being undertaken to safeguard Hillingdon residents.

Regarding the installation of sprinkler systems, the Fire Brigade advised that they were awaiting Government advice on retrofitting. However, rather than wait for this, the fitting of sprinkler systems in communal areas of all high rise blocks had been authorised, as well as the consultation of tenants and leaseholders on the matter of fitting sprinklers inside their homes.

Members were reminded that they had received a copy of the letter sent to residents of Hillingdon's tower blocks, as well as the updated advice issued by the London Fire Brigade in the previous week. The letter to residents included details of a dedicated helpline, whilst the advice from the fire brigade referred to their 'stay put' policy, which advised that in the event of a fire, all residents not directly affected should remain in their homes, unless directed to leave by the Fire and Rescue Service.

Advice on fire safety in purpose-built blocks, issued by the Local Government Group in 2011, and followed by Hillingdon, stated that where the 'stay put' policy was in effect, it was unnecessary and undesirable for a fire alarm to be provided, as such an alarm would inevitably lead to a proliferation of false alarms. This would place a burden on emergency services and would lead to residents ignoring warnings of genuine fires. However, the Council would adhere to any new guidance on fire alarms, should any be forthcoming.

Members were advised that the Council had been, and would continue, to do all that it could to keep its residents safe from the risk of major fire. Councillor Puddifoot went on to thank Council officers for their hard work, not only over the previous three weeks, but also for what was done on a regular and routine basis. Prior to the tragedy at Grenfell Tower, Hillingdon had not received any concerns from residents or Members about fire safety in high rise blocks, and whilst the Council was confident that any risk was being managed, it was important that there was no complacency in such matters.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Bridges asked whether the Leader of the Council agreed with the recent statement by John McDonnell, MP, that the victims of the Grenfell Tower tragedy had been 'murdered' by political decisions that had been taken over recent decades?

Councillor Puddifoot advised that whilst forty-five Councils of all political colours, though mainly Labour Councils, had tower blocks with the same cladding as present at Grenfell Tower, there was currently no information as to why the decision had been made to use that particular cladding. A report into the matter would be published in due course, which would highlight further detail including the apparent failure of Camden Council to install fire doors, to fit plastic gas pipes, and their decision to use ACM cladding. It would be sensible to await this further information before apportioning any blame.

However, Councillor Puddifoot expressed his opinion that no one present at Camden Council in 2004, when planning permission for the tower block had been granted, would have knowingly put residents' lives at risk, and this was true for the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, as well as the other 43 councils who had installed ACM cladding.

The dictionary definition of murder was to kill unlawfully and with premeditation, and regardless of political views, it was impossible to believe that local Councillors and Members of Parliament across the county had made premeditated decisions to kill or harm their residents. Whilst Mr McDonnell's comments could be seen as rabble rousing, it was incumbent on those who held public office to act responsibly and sensibly, and in this instance, the Leader of the Council did not consider that Mr McDonnell had done so.

16. **MOTIONS** (*Agenda Item 7*)

7.1 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR EGINTON

Councillor Eginton moved, and Councillor Curling seconded, the following motion:

"That this Council supports the independence of the committee system from the executive and, in order to further establish that independence, resolves that the Overview and Scrutiny committees need to be rigorous to ensure that the executive can both be supported and held to account. Council confirms that the decision as to which matters are to be considered by all such committees should not be subject to informal consultation or veto by members of the Cabinet."

Following debate on the motion (Councillors Corthorne, Riley, and Simmonds) it was put to the vote and the motion was lost.

7.2 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR BURROWS

Councillor Burrows moved, and Councillor D. Mills seconded, the motion as set out in the order of business.

Following debate on the motion (Councillors Curling, Crowe, and Duncan) it was put to the vote and unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED: That Hillingdon Council acknowledges that car ownership is vital to our residents as a means of going about their daily business, especially if having to travel across the Borough north/south.

The Council therefore reaffirms its current planning policy relating to car parking spaces for new developments and will resist attempts to reduce this standard at the cost of higher density of future developments.

Council therefore instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Mayor of London reminding him of the importance of the car to Hillingdon residents and our intention to maintain the existing parking standards policy.

7.3 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR NELSON

Councillor Nelson moved, and Allen seconded, the following motion:

"That, since the Council took away the dedicated caretakers from our tower blocks etc, and replaced them with a team of off-site cleaners, residents have noted that they are not receiving the same good service that they did previously. General maintenance, which ensured buildings were once clean and free from dumped rubbish, is not being carried out.

This is giving rise to fire hazards and vermin damaging to residents' health and wellbeing. For this reason Council asks the Social Services, Housing and Public Health Scrutiny Committee to investigate reinstating dedicated caretakers to assist in implementing the planned maintenance programme for Council buildings."

Following debate on the motion (Councillors Corthorne, and Hensley), it was put to the vote and the motion was lost.

7.4 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR MORSE

Councillor Morse moved, and Councillor Curling seconded, the following motion:

"That this Council welcomes the Leader's use of emergency powers in respect of fire safety and prevention in Council owned blocks of flats, including the replacement of fire doors.

Council requests that the Leader and Cabinet consider that approval be given to the installation of sprinkler systems in the Council's high rise housing and community (LEA) schools so that our residents are put first when it comes to being safe in their homes and their children are safe at school. Insurance cost savings can be calculated and offset against the reduction in risk to the loss of the Council's assets."

Councillor Puddifoot moved, and Councillor Simmonds seconded, an amendment to the effect that the motion read as follows:

"That this Council notes the programme of fire safety inspections at Council blocks of flats and the decision made earlier this year to replace all fire doors, currently universal standard doors, with what is regarded as the best currently available on the market.

In view of the likely demand for fire doors across the country that this Council welcomes the use of emergency powers in respect of fire safety and prevention in Council owned blocks of flats, including replacement fire doors to ensure availability of stock to complete the programme for all blocks of flats as planned.

Council notes that current legislation does not require residential blocks to have sprinkler systems and that this has not been a recommendation following Fire Service inspections. However, Council supports the Leader of the Council's decision that sprinkler systems be installed in communal areas of blocks of flats and that tenants and leaseholders will be consulted on the installation of sprinklers in individual properties, as well as reviewing the use of this measure in other Council buildings."

Following debate (Councillor Bianco and Morse), it was unanimously:

RESOLVED: That this Council notes the programme of fire safety inspections at Council blocks of flats and the decision made earlier this year to replace all fire doors, currently universal standard doors, with what is regarded as the best currently available on the market.

In view of the likely demand for fire doors across the country that this Council welcomes the use of emergency powers in respect of fire safety and prevention in Council owned blocks of flats, including replacement fire doors to ensure availability of stock to complete the programme for all blocks of flats as planned.

Council notes that current legislation does not require residential blocks to have sprinkler systems and that this has not been a recommendation following Fire Service inspections. However, Council supports the Leader of the Council's decision that sprinkler systems be installed in communal areas of blocks of flats and that tenants and leaseholders will be consulted on the installation of sprinklers in individual properties, as well as reviewing the use of this measure in other Council buildings.

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.45 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Lloyd White, Head of Democratic Services on 01895 556743. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.