

Minutes

COUNCIL

26 September 2024

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



HILLINGDON
LONDON

Councillor Colleen Sullivan (Mayor)
Councillor Philip Corthorne MCIPD (Deputy Mayor)

	<p>MEMBERS PRESENT:</p> <p>Councillors: Naser Abby Scott Farley Kelly Martin Kaushik Banerjee Janet Gardner Stuart Mathers Labina Basit Elizabeth Garelick Douglas Mills Adam Bennett Narinder Garg Richard Mills Kishan Bhatt Tony Gill Peter Money Jonathan Bianco Martin Goddard June Nelson Wayne Bridges Ekta Gohil Susan O'Brien Tony Burles Becky Haggart OBE Jane Palmer Keith Burrows Henry Higgins Sital Punja Reeta Chamdal Mohammed Islam John Riley Roy Chamdal Rita Judge Raju Sansarpuri Farhad Choubedar Kamal Preet Kaur Jagjit Singh Peter Curling Kuldeep Lakhmana Peter Smallwood Darran Davies Eddie Lavery Jan Sweeting Nick Denys Richard Lewis Steve Tuckwell Jas Dhot Heena Makwana Ian Edwards Gursharan Mand</p>
	<p>OFFICERS PRESENT: Richard Ennis, Dan Kennedy, Sandra Taylor, Glen Egan, Lloyd White, Mark Braddock, Morgan Einon, Alice Pringault and Nikki O'Halloran</p>
20.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana and Barry Nelson-West.</p>
21.	<p>MINUTES (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2024 be agreed as a correct record.</p>
22.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>Mr Lloyd White, Head of Democratic Services, declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5ii, as the item related to his role, and remained in the room during the consideration thereof.</p> <p>Mr Richard Ennis, Corporate Director of Finance, declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5ii, as the item related to his role, and remained in the room during the consideration thereof.</p>

23.	<p>MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>The Mayor advised that, since the last Council meeting, she had visited care homes and attended a 100th birthday party. She had attended a wide range of engagements involving young people which had showcased their talents, determination and creativity.</p> <p>The Mayor had laid a wreath at the Polish Air Force Commemoration event at the Polish War Memorial and attended the Emergency Services flag raising on the Civic Centre forecourt. Other events had included attending a cake sale organised by the Daniella Logun Foundation and judging various entries at the Autumn Show.</p>
24.	<p>REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Leader provided an update regarding the flooding experienced in the Borough this week which had had a significant impact on some residents. There had been concern expressed in relation to a school that had had to close following flood damage and Council officers continued to help try to resolve the matter and get the school reopened as quickly as possible.</p> <p>121 homes in Ruislip Gardens had also been significantly impacted by flooding. Whilst the insurance process was progressing, officers had been instructed to investigate the causes of the flooding and report back within the next two weeks. A more comprehensive investigation covering the whole of the Borough would also be undertaken. It appeared that the flood alleviation measures introduced in some areas that had previously been affected had prevented surface water flooding.</p> <p>The Leader advised that, whilst the damage caused by flooding was being repaired, the Council would be adopting a more lenient approach to disposals at the Civic Waste and Recycling Centre.</p> <p>Regarding the situation in Lebanon, the Leader advised that the Council had met with Heathrow to ensure that support would be in place for refugees when arriving in the Borough.</p> <p>i) URGENT IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS</p> <p>Councillor Edwards moved, and Councillor Bianco seconded, the motion as set out on the Order of Business and it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Urgency decisions taken since the last Council meeting, as detailed in the report, be noted.</p> <p>ii) APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY OFFICERS</p> <p>Councillor Edwards moved, and Councillor Bianco seconded, the motion as set out on the Order of Business.</p> <p>Whilst the appointment of Mr Ennis as the Council's Chief Financial Officer and Section 151 Officer was welcomed, a request was made that the appointment be limited to a specific time period rather than being left open ended. It was noted that the Council was in a stable financial position but faced significant challenges, similar to that of many other councils. However, it was not in the position that some other London boroughs found themselves, i.e., on the verge of special financial measures.</p>

RESOLVED: That:

- a) Mr Richard Ennis be appointed to the statutory role of Section 151 and Chief Financial Officer of the Council.
- b) the Constitution, Financial Regulations and the Officer Scheme of Delegations be amended, and Mr Ennis be empowered to undertake all of the statutory functions of a Section 151 Officer and Corporate Director of Finance as set out in the Constitution on an interim basis until such time as a formal appointment to the position of Corporate Director of Finance is made.
- c) Mr Lloyd White be appointed as interim Monitoring Officer of the Council upon departure of the current Monitoring Officer.

iii) ELECTORAL COUNT ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor Edwards moved, and Councillor Bianco seconded, the motion as set out on the Order of Business and it was:

RESOLVED: That:

- a) the Head of Democratic Services, in his role as Returning Officer, be requested to carry out a review of electoral count arrangements to ensure that all parties, candidates, counting agents and observers attending the count can be assured of a process that is transparent, efficient and consistent.
- b) the count for the local elections in May 2026 take place during the day on Friday 8 May rather than immediately after polling closes on Thursday 7 May.

iv) MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2024/25

Councillor Edwards moved, and Councillor Bianco seconded, the motion as set out on the Order of Business and it was:

RESOLVED: That w.e.f 26 September 2024:

- a) the SRA paid to the Independent Chair of the Audit Committee be increased to £8,000pa for the remainder of 2024/25; and
- b) an SRA of £8,000pa be paid to the Member carrying out the role of Chair of the Pensions Committee.

NB: both SRAs to remain at this level until reviewed with all other allowances in February 2025.

v) AMENDMENT TO CABINET PORTFOLIOS

Councillor Edwards moved, and Councillor Bianco seconded, the motion as set out on the Order of Business and it was:

RESOLVED: That the amendment to the Cabinet Portfolios be noted.

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

6.2 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MAKWANA TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR RESIDENTS' SERVICES - COUNCILLOR LAVERY:

"What action has the Council taken to safeguard residents from the harm caused by

the recent incidents of traffic light destruction?”

Councillor Lavery advised that the Council condemned the reckless vandalism of the traffic signals that were owned and maintained by Transport for London (TfL). The Council's Leader and Deputy Leader had met with senior officials at TfL to discuss the issue of vandalism and the time taken to repair the damage.

Although it had been disappointing that the Mayor of London had not listened to residents and gone ahead with implementing the ULEZ scheme in outer London, the Council had been working jointly with the police and TfL to address the vandalism. The Council had taken a proactive approach and would provide Members with an update when information was available.

There was no supplementary question.

6.1 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR BURLES TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR RESIDENTS' SERVICES - COUNCILLOR LAVERY:

“Regarding access to the new Uxbridge Library, the main ramp to reception and the ramp to the Middlesex suite are long and steep, so it is likely that manual wheelchair users will try to use the shorter ramp leading to the lift.

“We have been informed that the internal dimensions of the lift to the library do not meet the minimum requirement for wheelchairs. Can the Cabinet Member please assure us the all-wheelchair users will be able to use the lift and the library?”

Councillor Lavery advised that he was pleased that there was so much interest in the new Uxbridge Library project. He noted that that lift dimensions had been measured and advised that the lift would be DDA compliant.

There was no supplementary question.

6.3 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MARTIN TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR EDWARDS:

“It has taken Danny Beales, MP for Uxbridge and South Ruislip, less than 3 months to break his election pledge, “to put money into the pockets of local people.”

“With his support, the Government has cut the winter fuel allowance to pensioners, whilst agreeing inflation busting pay rises for their union friends. Many of our older residents must now be fearful of the coming winter.

“What steps might the Council take to mitigate the harm that has been widely predicted will be caused by this callous and ill-considered change?”

Councillor Edwards was disappointed that, although David Simmonds MP and John McDonnell MP had voted against the proposal, Danny Beales MP had put his party before his constituents and voted to cut the winter fuel allowance, along with the vast majority of Labour MPs. The Council would be looking to put support measures in place but would not be able to mitigate the entire impact that the withdrawal of the winter fuel allowance would have on Hillingdon residents.

The Council had been given a £2m extension to its Household Support Fund and would use some of this money to commission support to help residents who were

eligible to apply for pension credits but who were not currently claiming this benefit. The money would also be used to set up a Pensioners Support Fund and those who lived in Council housing would be given priority with regard to energy efficiency adaptations such as new boilers and improved insulation.

There was no supplementary question.

6.4 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR SWEETING TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION - COUNCILLOR O'BRIEN:

"Could the Cabinet Member provide an update on the recent Hillingdon Ofsted and Care Quality Commission Area SEND inspection of 29th April to 3rd May 2024, and the subsequent report which stated that, "overall, children, young people and their families have varied experience," and that, "the local area's approach to quality assuring ECH plans, and annual reviews is not robust."?"

Councillor O'Brien advised that the Hillingdon Ofsted and CQC Area SEND inspection had taken place roughly five months after the Council had completed its five year strategy, which had recognised the need for improvements. The inspectors had noted this awareness and recognised the good work that had already been undertaken such as the Council's approach to joint commissioning.

The Council had recognised that it needed to revise its approach to the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and Ofsted and the CQC had seen that the authority had involved NHS partners, schools and parent carers forums and put measures in place to this effect. Effort would be made to continue to improve the services and support that were available.

There were around 3,500 children and young people in the Borough who had an EHCP. Whilst their experiences might have varied, the Council was trying to get it right and manage the various expectations. The goal was to ensure that the annual reviews provided high quality assessments of need so that parents and carers continued to speak highly of the special education provision in the Borough.

The Cabinet Member was pleased that the inspection had highlighted the excellent partnership working and advised that she remained committed to working with partners and parents. Areas for development would be addressed and progress would be measured.

By way of supplementary question, Councillor Sweeting asked why it had taken an Ofsted and CQC inspection to identify the Council's failings and provided several examples of those failings.

Councillor O'Brien asked that Councillor Sweeting put her question in writing and she would then provide a full written response.

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

7.1 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR FARLEY

Councillor Farley moved, and Councillor Gardner seconded, the following motion:

That this Council asks the Cabinet Member for Residents Services to fix the current gap in co-ordination between Waste Services and Green Spaces so

that litter is removed before grass cutting is scheduled.

Those speaking in favour of the motion thanked the green spaces, waste services and street cleansing teams for the work that they regularly undertook. Over the summer, it had been apparent that litter picking was not being undertaken before the grass was cut which meant that the litter was being shredded by the blades and being distributed across a much wider area. Concern had been expressed by residents that this was causing a danger to those children, pets and wildlife that used these green spaces and caused costly damage to the grass cutting machinery. A request was made that there was better coordination between the timings of the litter picks and grass cutting in these green spaces.

Councillor Lavery moved the following amendment to the motion, which was seconded by Councillor Bianco:

- i. In the first line after the words "*That this Council*", insert the following words: "*notes the good work undertaken by Cabinet and officers in terms of its climate change commitment and its approach to re-wilding and biodiversity as part of the development of the verge cutting programme.*"
- ii. After the above, to insert the words "*That this Council...*"
- iii. Then to delete the words: "*fix the current gap between Waste Services and Green spaces so that litter is removed before grass cutting is scheduled,*"
- iv. and replace with: "*continue to liaise with the Corporate Director of Place to ensure that all maintenance activities are delivered in the most efficient way possible.*"

Those speaking in favour of the amendment noted that most grass verges and green spaces were cut approximately every six weeks between April and October. However, the timing of the grass cutting could be affected by things outside of the Council's control, such as adverse weather, which then made it difficult to coordinate the activity with litter picking. Reactive crews were available to deal with service requests and officers had been asked to review the scheduling / coordination of services.

Those speaking against the amendment noted that there was often rubbish left strewn across green spaces which then turned to confetti when it had been mowed over. This then made litter picking far more difficult, it took much longer to clear up the mess and the smaller pieces could be more harmful to animals. The amendment did not address the concerns that had been raised and did not demonstrate the Council's commitment to wildlife and rewilding. A true commitment to biodiversity needed a monitoring plan to measure impact.

The amendment was put to the vote and agreed. The substantive motion was then put to the vote and it was:

RESOLVED: That this Council notes the good work undertaken by Cabinet and officers in terms of its climate change commitment and its approach to re-wilding and biodiversity as part of the development of the verge cutting programme.

That this Council asks the Cabinet Member for Residents' Services to continue to liaise with the Corporate Director of Place to ensure that all maintenance activities are delivered in the most efficient way possible.

7.2 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR PUNJA

Councillor Punja moved, and Councillor Abby seconded, the following motion:

That this Council notes that the Grenfell Tower Inquiry report condemned unscrupulous manufacturers, a cost-cutting council and reckless deregulations for the disaster in Britain's worst residential fire since World War II killing 72 people.

For the benefit of public safety, this Council acknowledges that there are a number of residential buildings within the borough that are still subject to fire safety remediation from unsafe cladding to wooden balconies and other flammable materials, and instructs officers to provide the Corporate Resources and Infrastructure Select Committee with an up to date list of all these buildings, reporting and monitoring on their remediation progress until such time that all residential buildings in the borough meet the required fire safety standards.

Those speaking in favour of the motion recognised that the previous Leader of the Council, Sir Ray Puddifoot, had ensured that action had been taken to make all Council properties safe. However, this was not thought to go far enough and further action was needed to ensure that action was taken to complete remediation works in properties that were not owned by the Council. A request was made that the Council compile and share a list of non-Council properties where remediation work was needed and look at temporary accommodation until properties were made fire safe.

Councillor Bianco moved the following amendment to the motion, which was seconded by Councillor Lavery:

- i. In the first paragraph, to remove the words: "*cost cutting*" and "*reckless deregulations*";
- ii. and replace with: "*a failure of Government regulation, amongst others,*";
- iii. In the second paragraph, to remove the word "*this*" in the first line;
- iv. After the word "*acknowledges*" to insert: "*the hard work carried out speedily since the tragedy to ensure that all Council owned buildings are 'fire safe'. It is also aware*";
- v. Before the word "*residential*" insert the words: "*private sector*".

Those speaking on the amendment noted that policies would only work if consideration was given to the voice of the residents. Residents had raised concerns about homeless people living in areas at the base of the high rises and other tenants smoking on balconies and dropping their burning cigarette butts over the edge, which could set fire to possessions on other balconies. There was also some confusion about what set off the sprinkler systems and how to turn the sprinklers off when they had been set off accidentally. Other concerns had included there not being any sprinklers in the hallways, the lack of regular inspections and the Fire Brigade's machinery being unable to reach beyond the eighth floor.

It was noted that the Council had taken action after the tragedy to ensure the safety of its tenants in high rise blocks in the Borough. Sprinklers, wayfinding signage, electrical safety work and other remediation work had been undertaken and the Council's high rise buildings were now all classified as 'low risk' on the Government portal. Hillingdon was now seen as one of the best performing in London but the action taken did not guarantee a trouble free future.

The Council was required to take enforcement action with regard to private sector housing – there were 56 non-Council high rise blocks in the Borough and the Council had recently successfully prosecuted one of the management agents. The Council had an inspection programme in place but this would take time to complete and the Select Committee received an annual report on building safety.

The Leader of the Council advised that he would be following up on the issues that had been raised by the opposition to ensure that action was being taken to address the concerns. If residents were uncertain about arrangements in their building, they needed to get in contact with the Council.

The amendment was put to the vote and unanimously agreed. The substantive motion was then put to the vote and it was:

RESOLVED: That this Council notes the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Report condemned unscrupulous manufacturers, a council and a failure of government regulation, amongst others, for the disaster in Britain's worst residential fire since World War II killing 72 people.

For the benefit of public safety Council acknowledges the hard work carried out speedily since the tragedy to ensure that all Council owned buildings are 'fire safe'. It is also aware that there are a number of private sector residential buildings within the borough that are still subject to fire safety remediation from unsafe cladding to wooden balconies and other flammable materials and instructs officers to provide the Corporate Resources and Infrastructure Select Committee with an up-to-date list of these buildings, reporting and monitoring on their remediation until such time that all residential buildings in the Borough meet fire safety requirements.

The meeting, which commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.44 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 democratic@hillington.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.