

## Minutes

### COUNCIL

28 September 2023

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



HILLINGDON  
LONDON

Councillor Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana (Mayor)

	<p><b>MEMBERS PRESENT:</b></p> <p>Councillors: Naser Abby                      Jas Dhot                      Gursharan Mand                     Kaushik Banerjee                      Ian Edwards                      Stuart Mathers                     Labina Basit                      Scott Farley                      Douglas Mills                     Adam Bennett                      Elizabeth Garelick                      Richard Mills                     Kishan Bhatt                      Narinder Garg                      June Nelson                     Jonathan Bianco                      Tony Gill                      Barry Nelson-West                     Wayne Bridges                      Martin Goddard                      Susan O'Brien                     Tony Burles                      Ekta Gohil                      Jane Palmer                     Keith Burrows                      Becky Haggard                      Sital Punja                     Reeta Chamdal                      Henry Higgins                      John Riley                     Roy Chamdal                      Mohammed Islam                      Raju Sansarpuri                     Farhad Choubedar                      Kamal Preet Kaur                      Jagjit Singh                     Philip Corthorne                      Eddie Lavery                      Peter Smallwood                     Darran Davies                      Richard Lewis                      Jan Sweeting                     Nick Denys                      Heena Makwana                      Steve Tuckwell</p>
	<p><b>OFFICERS PRESENT:</b> Tony Zaman, Andy Evans, Dan Kennedy, Perry Scott, Sandra Taylor, Glen Egan, Lloyd White, Mark Braddock, Morgan Einon and Nikki O'Halloran</p>
19.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from the Deputy Mayor (Councillor Sullivan), Councillors Chapman, Curling, Gardner, Judge Lakhmana and Money.</p>
20.	<p><b>MINUTES</b> (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.</p>
21.	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest in any matters coming before the Council.</p>
22.	<p><b>MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b> (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>The Mayor advised that he had been honoured to represent the Borough at a range of events and provided a summary of his civic activities since the last Council meeting. He also congratulated a local 99 year old resident, Ann, on completing her marathon challenge, one lap at a time. This had been a truly magnificent achievement.</p> <p>A charity fundraising lunch had been organised for Sunday 19 November 2023 at the London Heathrow Marriott Hotel to raise funds for the Mayor's charities. Everyone</p>

was welcome and the Mayor urged Members to invite their friends and families to come along.

23. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME** (*Agenda Item 5*)

**5.1 QUESTION FROM CHRIS WATERS OF FERRERS AVENUE, WEST DRAYTON TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR RESIDENTS' SERVICES - COUNCILLOR LAVERY:**

*"The Council has recently been part of a legal battle against the expansion of the ULEZ zone, with the highlighted factor being the £12.50 charge during the 'cost of living crisis' – all pointing at this being more of a money-making than pollution reduction scheme by the Mayor of London.*

*"On the other hand, the Hillingdon Council deems it suitable to increase various vehicle related costs for its residents. General parking increasing 166% for residents to 80p per hour whilst the increase to non-residents is 20p or 11%. Blue badge renewals for the disabled residents to go up 376% or £7.90 and residents who live in permit zones, the 1st permit which was previously free will now cost £75.*

*"Without comparison to other or neighbouring Boroughs, can the Council provide justification as to why their increases should be acceptable however the cost associated with the ULEZ expansion, which will also provide a health benefit, is not acceptable considering that the Council, TfL and City Hall all have cost pressures to consider?"*

As the questioner was unable to attend the meeting, the Mayor asked the question on behalf of Mr Waters. Councillor Lavery thanked Mr Waters for his question and advised that he would provide him with a written response.

*[NOTE: The following written response was forwarded to Mr Waters after the meeting:*

*Thank you for your question submitted to the September Council meeting that you were regrettably unable to attend.*

*I must disagree with your attempt to equate the Mayor of London's ULEZ expansion with the provision of parking by the Council. The cost of ULEZ to a non-compliant vehicle would be £62.50 per week, based on a traditional working week, this was introduced whilst ignoring public consultation and when Sadiq Khan's own documents showed there would be a negligible impact on air quality especially here in Hillingdon.*

*The Council's fees and charges are part of the annual budget consultation, in which proposals are published in December and reconsidered in February, taking into consideration public comments.*

*Whilst it may not suit a certain political narrative to compare across neighbouring boroughs this remains one of the only metrics councils have to compare value for money.*

*Following years of charging some of the lowest levels of fees and charges across all London boroughs, Hillingdon has made some changes to bring the borough more in line with its outer London counterparts. Our updated fees and*

*charges are still among the lowest of all outer London boroughs and many of our Labour controlled neighbours, whilst we still remain one of the only London boroughs to provide free parking for residents.*

*Our aim is to recover more of the costs for discretionary services, like parking, from the people accessing them, rather than every council taxpayer subsidising these costs.*

*The quoting of percentages can of course be misleading and I'm grateful for the opportunity to confirm that the price for the first vehicle residents parking permit is £75 per year, which pales into insignificance when compared to the £62.50 a week levied by the ULEZ expansion.*

*Residents have benefitted from free resident permits for a number of years; however, Parking Management Schemes are implemented at the request of residents and there are associated costs incurred to operate these schemes. The charge was introduced to cover these costs from those who use them, effectively removing the wider council taxpayer subsidy.*

*The increase in fees for Blue Badge renewals to £10 is in line with the statutory fee limit for Local Authorities and will also enable some of the costs of administering it to be recovered from those who benefit from it. The £7.90 increase is equivalent to £2.60 per year (22p per month) for a renewal as they remain valid for a period of 3 years and is in my opinion very good value.*

*Thank you for submitting the question.]*

24. **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES** (Agenda Item 6)

**6.1 MEMBERS ALLOWANCES 2023/24**

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

**RESOLVED: That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to increase the level of the Basic Allowance paid to elected Members by 3.88% to £12,480 pa, backdated to 1 April 2023 (subject to the final agreement of the annual pay award to staff).**

**6.2 WAIVER OF 6 MONTH COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE RULE.**

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

**RESOLVED: That, pursuant to Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, Councillor Judge's non-attendance at meetings of the authority due to ill health, be approved for a period ending on 31 December 2023.**

**6.3 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE 2022/23**

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

**RESOLVED: That the annual report of the Audit Committee 2022/23, as set out**

in Appendix B to the report, be noted.

#### 6.4 HILLINGDON PLANNING COMMITTEE

Councillor Edwards moved, and Councillor Bianco seconded, the motion as set out on the Order of Business, with the following two additions:

1. As a result of the membership nominations, the Labour Group had requested that Councillor Sansarpuri replace Councillor Mand on the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee; and
2. The Committee terms of reference as contained in the agenda be amended to ensure that: all call-in requests were determined by the Chief Planning Officer; and all valid planning reasons raised by a Councillor when calling in an application were addressed by officers in the official public report for determination, whether by the Planning Officer or if referred to the Committee.

#### **Revised amendments to section 2 of matters to be determined by the Committee: (shown in bold)**

*Any 'Major' planning application as defined in ~~The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended)~~ where a Ward Councillor requests, in writing to the Chief Planning Officer, ~~Head of Development Management and Building Control or Area Planning Service Managers~~ **Head of Development Management and Building Control or Area Planning Service Managers** within 21 days of the publication of the relevant weekly list of applications received by the Council, that it be determined by a Committee.*

*The Ward Councillor must include a valid planning reason for the request. Determination of what constitutes a valid planning reason will be made by the Chief Planning Officer or their sub-delegates, ~~in consultation with the Planning Committee Chair~~. In exceptional circumstances, as determined by the Chief Planning Officer **or their sub-delegates, Head of Development Management and Building Control or Area Planning Service Managers**, the 21-day rule may be waived.*

*Should the desired outcome subsequently be in accordance with the 'Officer's Recommendation' or the call-in request be withdrawn, then the application will not be referred to Committee.*

***All reasons raised by Ward Councillors in a call-in request will be addressed in the officer report to determine the application, whether the report is referred to Committee or determined by a Planning Officer.***

Although it was recognised that there was a need for change, concern was expressed in relation to the proposed changes to the Petition Scheme as it was suggested that changes should not weaken Ward Councillors' ability to represent their wards. The main concern was in relation to reducing residents' right to speak as it was important to ensure that petitioners' voices were heard even if their stance aligned with that of the officers' recommendations.

#### **RESOLVED: That:**

- a) **w.e.f 12 October 2023, the Borough Planning Committee and the Major Applications Planning Committee cease to exist, and a single Hillingdon Planning Committee be appointed with membership as shown below and Terms of Reference as set out in the appendix to the**

report and as amended above:

- **Conservative: Councillors Higgins (proposed Chairman), Bennett (proposed Vice-Chairman), Roy Chamdal and Davies.**
- **Labour: Councillors Garelick, Mand and Singh.**

- b) **the consequential change in membership on the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee, with Councillor Sansarpuri replacing Councillor Mand, be approved.**
- c) **the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to make the necessary changes to the Constitution, including Chapter 7 and the Petition Scheme, as detailed in the appendix to the report, and any other amendments required as they occur elsewhere in the Constitution.**

25. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS** (*Agenda Item 7*)

**7.2 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR BRIDGES TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PROPERTY, HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT - COUNCILLOR BIANCO:**

*"Could the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the current situation regarding the new Platinum Jubilee Leisure Centre in West Drayton, following the collapse of Buckingham's, our appointed contractor?"*

Councillor Bianco advised that Buckingham Group Contracting had been appointed to build the leisure centre some time ago and that the company had passed the due diligence and finance tests when appointed. Work had been progressing well on the build and there had been no indication that the company had been experiencing difficulties, so it had been a surprise when the company's problems became apparent.

Council officers had been taking steps to mitigate the impact of this change in the circumstances and had met with the administrators. A Performance Bond had been in place at the start of the contract and discussions were being undertaken with the Bond Agents. The Council had also taken legal advice to ensure that the correct procedures were followed with regard to the contract and the bond and to ensure that due process was followed. Steps had been taken to secure and protect the site and reduce the impact on the building until a new contractor had been appointed. Action was being taken to ensure that the leisure centre build was completed as soon as possible but it was recognised that the construction industry was currently in a difficult position.

There was no supplementary question.

**7.4 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR SWEETING TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL – COUNCILLOR EDWARDS:**

*"Does the Leader recall that a Motion to Council on 10th September 2020 asked that all from this borough who died in the Great War and who are listed on the memorials and church plaques across the borough and were not included in the only book published by the Council to remember it's war dead from the Great War, entitled, "We Will Remember Them," be included in an addendum to this book?"*

*"This Motion was passed and in response the Cabinet at its meeting of 10th*

*December 2020 committed the Council to completing this book by producing an addendum which would include all of the additional memorials which had been identified, including the plaque in St Martin's Church West Drayton.*

*"This addendum has still not appeared in copies of this booklet in the borough's libraries and elsewhere, so when will this commitment by both Council and Cabinet almost three years ago be accomplished?"*

The Leader of the Council apologised for the delay in publishing information on the memorials and advised that the booklet would be updated with what was currently known. A draft would be shared with Councillor Sweeting in the next week and would then be updated in the Borough's libraries. Should any more evidence come to light, the records would be reviewed and updated but any future changes to the records would only be published online.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Sweeting asked if the Leader would act on a previous commitment to former Councillor Janet Duncan that the Council would fund a memorial to those from West Drayton that had not been mentioned on any other memorial.

The Leader of the Council assured Councillor Sweeting that the Council would appropriately record the details of these residents but that it was important that this information was accurate before appropriate steps were taken.

**7.7 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MAKWANA TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION - COUNCILLOR O'BRIEN:**

*"Can the Cabinet Member please update Council on the 2023 Summer Holiday Activities Programme that was available to the school age children and young people of Hillingdon?"*

Councillor O'Brien advised that Hillingdon had been able to offer around 19k summer places over five weeks through 34 providers to children from Reception to Year 11 who were on benefits or claiming free school meals. There had been 180 discretionary places for vulnerable children and 150 accessible places. There had been sports and arts-based provision as well as life skills provision which had taken place across 53 venues including children's centres, schools, Brunel University and community buildings.

Activities had included a four-day outdoor residential camp for adolescents, drama and a SEND programme. Comments from participants and parents had been very positive.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Makwana asked for an update on how much of the Hillingdon activities food fund had been allocated to support children with SEND during the summer period.

Councillor O'Brien advised that funding had been provided to Primary Sporting Development, the Eden Academy Trust, Hedgewood School, Hillingdon Autistic Care and Support to provide a specialist SEND programme for children with more complex needs. £180k had been provided towards these programmes as well as £4k for the London Taekwondo Falcons who delivered a mainstream programme and offered weekly sessions for children with SEND. £2,100 had been made available towards

extra staffing for sessions provided by Skips and Get Active.

She noted that all providers had been expected to include SEND in their mainstream provision. Furthermore, children had benefitted from being in a familiar environment which had been accommodated by the varied and inclusive programme that had been put together by Marie Flemming and her team.

**7.6 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR PUNJA TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PROPERTY, HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT - COUNCILLOR BIANCO:**

*"Can the Cabinet Member please explain why, when there are multiple potholes in an area of road, only the one photographed and submitted as a Service Request is filled in despite being informed of the others in the further information box?"*

Councillor Bianco advised that a strict scheduled safety programme had been put in place to deal with the 435 miles of carriageway and 755 miles of footway in the Borough. However, this did not mean that the Council was required to repair every defect that it was aware of or had been notified about. Intervention levels had been set so that only the most hazardous or serious defects would have to be dealt with and significant savings had been made in relation to claims against the Council which meant that resources could be targeted where they were needed most. All required safety inspections were undertaken as well as ad hoc inspections.

It was noted that the funding from Transport for London (TfL) had continued to decrease each year. The Council had previously received £1m per year to repair TfL roads but this had reduced to £200k last year and £0 this year (and £0 during the first year of the pandemic). This had meant that the Council had had to use its own resources to repair TfL roads at a cost of over £1m.

There had been an increase in the number of repairs completed by officers. This had partly been due to investment in a new maintenance machine which repaired defects quicker, using largely recycled materials. This had been an example of investing to save.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Punja asked if it would be possible for the contractors to go out and fill in the holes that they had previously missed.

Councillor Bianco was unable to answer specifics but agreed to look into the matter further if Councillor Punja provided him with the details.

**7.1 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR REETA CHAMDAL TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR RESIDENTS' SERVICES - COUNCILLOR LAVERY:**

*"Can the Cabinet Member please update Council on the rollout of 'PayByPhone' parking across the Borough?"*

Councillor Lavery advised that the PayByPhone pilot had started on 5 June 2023 in Eastcote, South Ruislip and Ruislip. As it had been successful, the full roll out had started on 31 July 2023 in all car parks across the Borough except the two in Uxbridge town centre which were currently paid for on exit. The payment facilities in these two car parks were being changed to PayByPhone on 3 October 2023.

There had been 77k PayByPhone uses, 19,938 of which had used a Hillingdon First

card, and 7,358 residents had linked their account to PayByPhone. Councillor Lavery thanked the parking team and contact centre staff for their work on this.

There was no supplementary question.

**7.5 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MATHERS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL – COUNCILLOR EDWARDS:**

*"Can the Leader of the Council shed some light on how the determination is made on whether to use in-house officers or external consultants when conducting transformation and service reviews or consultations?"*

Councillor Edwards advised that the administration had been committed to sound financial management which had been delivered through the Hillingdon Improvement Plan and Business Improvement Delivery. It had never been more important to improve the Council's efficiency and to use managers and reviews to ensure the Council achieved best value for money.

The staff structure was much more flexible but, as there was a need for ongoing transformation, a permanent team was being built. The Council had developed a lean management structure and external resources had been used to support this structure when needed. The Leader of the Council noted that the external review provided by consultants brought objective insight and external perspective. Consultants were also used for sensitive issues and had been used to reexamine the savings programme and provide the agenda for change and savings.

Reviews had identified that digital transformation required expertise which had not been available within the Council. Reviews had also been undertaken within areas such as housing, homelessness, tenancy management, repairs and family hubs. Each review had been undertaken on its own merits and had focussed on the benefits to the Council.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Mathers asked whether asset disposal to fund transformation was being used sparingly as this could have an effect on Council housing.

The Leader of the Council noted that asset disposal should be undertaken with caution and that assets should be retained where possible so that they could provide the authority with a return on investment.

**7.3 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR DENYS TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION - COUNCILLOR O'BRIEN:**

*"Can the Cabinet Member please provide an update on RACC (reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete) in Hillingdon's community and Foundation schools?"*

Councillor O'Brien advised that it hadn't been thought that any of the Council's schools had RACC but investigations had been undertaken as soon as the issue had been raised. It had been confirmed that RACC had not been present in 37 of the Council's schools, two were being rechecked and one had had a small area that had been inaccessible when previously visited so needed to be investigated (but it was unlikely that RACC was present). The Council was not responsible for checking academies, universities, etc, but had offered to undertake their inspections at cost. It



was noted that RACC had not been used in the construction of new schools in Hillingdon.

Three early years centres had been inspected but no RACC had been found. However, RACC had been found in one secondary academy in Hillingdon. The school had been closed for two days, had delivered classes online for one day and was now fully operational.

There was no supplementary question.

26. **MOTIONS** (*Agenda Item 8*)

**8.1 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR KAUR**

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

*That this Council regrets a consistently low response rate to its public consultations and will review its consultation process to ensure geographical parity, and that the voices of our diverse communities are heard equally.*

Those speaking in favour of the motion advised that, although Hillingdon was a diverse, multi-cultural Borough, it received disappointingly low response rates to its consultations which were skewed and disproportionate. There was a need to review the consultations undertaken in the Borough as they never received over 1k responses and resultant changes had a lasting impact on residents. A consultation in relation to a local infant school had received two responses and a consultation on the Council Strategy had received 350 responses, the majority of which had been from white people.

It was recognised that the Council could not consult everyone on everything but it was important to solicit the different views of the community. Digital transformation was ignoring and marginalising residents and did not have empathy or sympathy with them. It was suggested that consideration be given to creative ways of engaging with groups in alternative languages.

Councillor Edwards moved, and Councillor Bianco seconded, an amendment to the motion as follows (deleted words ~~crossed through~~ and additional words in **bold**):

*That this Council regrets a ~~consistently~~ low response rate to its public consultations **and asks the Finance and Corporate Services Select committee to** will review ~~it's~~ **the Council's** consultation process to ensure **the voices of our diverse communities are heard, working towards** geographical parity. ~~and that the voices of our diverse communities are heard equally.~~*

Those speaking in support of the amendment agreed that there had been a consensus with what had been said on the original motion. Officers had done a lot of work trying to engage with different groups in the community but with limited results. Hillingdon was not the only Council with this challenge. Consultation was not a single process; engagement should be an ongoing process and should be undertaken in ward surgeries as well as during consultations on things like the budget and Hayes regeneration. The method for consultation needed to be tailored and used proportionately as there were costs associated with it.

It was suggested that it was also about encouraging the interest of those people that were not currently responding to consultations. Although a 100% response rate was impossible, it should not stop the Council from trying to achieve this.

Although some residents had been responding to consultations, these had been from a narrow group. As such, consideration needed to be given to what could be done differently and how the response rates and diversity could be improved. It was hoped that a review of consultation by the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee could identify some improvements.

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 regrets a low response rate to its public consultations and asks the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee to review the Council's consultation process to ensure the voices of our diverse communities are heard, working towards geographical parity.**

The meeting, which commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.49 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.