

Minutes

COUNCIL

11 September 2025

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



Councillor Philip Corthorne (Mayor)
Councillor Reeta Chamdal (Deputy Mayor)

	MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors: Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana Elizabeth Garelick Stuart Mathers Kaushik Banerjee Narinder Garg Douglas Mills Labina Basit Tony Gill Richard Mills Kishan Bhatt Martin Goddard Barry Nelson-West Jonathan Bianco Ekta Gohil Susan O'Brien Wayne Bridges Becky Haggar OBE Jane Palmer Tony Burles Mohammed Islam Sital Punja Peter Curling Rita Judge John Riley Darran Davies Kamal Preet Kaur Raju Sansarpuri Nick Denys Eddie Lavery Jagjit Singh Jas Dhot Heena Makwana Colleen Sullivan Ian Edwards Gursharan Mand Jan Sweeting Janet Gardner Kelly Martin Steve Tuckwell		
	OFFICERS PRESENT: Tony Zaman, Steve Muldoon, Dan Kennedy, Sandra Taylor, Matthew Wallbridge, Lloyd White, Mark Braddock, Morgan Einon, Alice Pringault and Nikki O'Halloran		
	ONE MINUTE'S SILENCE Those present observed a one minute's silence in memory of former Councillor Pat Jackson.		
20.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE <i>(Agenda Item 1)</i> Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Adam Bennett, Keith Burrows, Roy Chamdal, Farhad Choubedar, Scott Farley, Henry Higgins, Kuldeep Lakhmana, Richard Lewis, Peter Money, June Nelson and Peter Smallwood OBE.		
21.	MINUTES <i>(Agenda Item 2)</i> It was noted that the minute's silence observed at the previous meeting had been omitted from the minutes and would be included. RESOLVED: That, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2025.		
22.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST <i>(Agenda Item 3)</i> There were no declarations of interest in matters coming before this meeting.		

23.	<p>MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>The Mayor advised that he had held two very successful fundraising events over the last couple of weeks and thanked everyone who had attended for supporting his charities. The next quiz night would be held on 30 October 2025 at Hayes Cricket Club and everyone would be welcome.</p> <p>The Mayor had been engaging with various individuals and organisations and building relationships. He had also been delighted to spend time with a range of volunteers and had attended a lemonade and cake sale that had been organised by a six year old resident to raise money for Great Ormond Street.</p>
24.	<p>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>5.1 QUESTION FROM ANDREA SCRIVENS OF BROADWOOD AVENUE, RUISLIP, TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES & PROPERTY - COUNCILLOR BIANCO:</p> <p><i>"Since the announcement on 30th May of the plan to close the RAGC the Council has repeatedly stated that it has no other plans for the site. There is a rumour that the land has been offered for sale. Please could you confirm or deny this rumour?"</i></p> <p>Councillor Bianco confirmed that this was no more than a rumour and that the Council had no plans to sell the part of the RAGC site that it owned.</p> <p>5.2 QUESTION FROM JOHN SCRIVENS OF BROADWOOD AVENUE, RUISLIP, TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES & PROPERTY - COUNCILLOR BIANCO:</p> <p><i>"Friends of RAGC used the procedures laid down on the Council website to nominate the Rural Activities Garden Centre as an Asset of Community Value as specified in the Localism Act 2011. The statutory 8-week period during which the Council is required to make a decision on the nominations expired before the end of August so at the time of writing, the Council is in breach of the Localism Act.</i></p> <p><i>"Why did the Council neither process these ACV nominations within the statutory time limit nor provide us with any reason for this failure?"</i></p> <p>Councillor Bianco apologised for the delay in confirming the decision on this. The timing had coincided with the summer holidays which had had an impact but this should not have prevented the Council from advising of the delay. Work was underway to reach a decision which should be made in the next fourteen days.</p> <p>5.3 QUESTION FROM LYNN JACKSON OF DOWNS BARN ROAD, RUISLIP, TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT - COUNCILLOR LAVERY:</p> <p>The Mayor read out the following question on behalf of Lynn Jackson:</p> <p><i>"Having paid to have our garden waste collected, can I please ask why bags are being collected from homes where no payment has been made and the bags have no address or green tags on either? Is there a protocol in place to ensure this doesn't happen, if so, are all workers fully appraised of it? Are the Council also ensuring that garden waste placed in black bags are being refused?"</i></p>

Councillor Lavery advised that the new garden waste service had been working well but that there had been a delay in getting the tags to all of the properties that had subscribed to the service. In the meantime, the refuse vehicles had been fitted with the technology to identify which properties had paid for the service. If garden waste was left outside properties that had not subscribed to the service, the crews had been putting stickers on the bags and leaving them in situ.

5.4 QUESTION FROM DANIEL O'NEILL OF ASHBURTON ROAD, RUISLIP, AND ON BEHALF OF THE HILLINGDON ALLIANCE OF RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES & PROPERTY - COUNCILLOR BIANCO:

The Mayor read out the following question on behalf of Daniel O'Neill:

"The July Cabinet meeting was informed of a "particularly damning" fire risk assessment which identified urgent building safety concerns from inadequate fire detection systems at the Union Park Estate on Packet Boat Lane.

"Consequently, Cabinet approved funding for a 'Waking Watch' at £4200 per day for six weeks, a measure deemed more cost-effective than the alternative of rehousing 250 households.

"Could the Cabinet member please provide an update on the situation, including

- how our borough came to have thirteen residential units on a new development with such safety concerns?*
- what the Waking Watch entails?*
- how its contract was awarded?*
- what the day-to-day situation is for the residents on the estate?*
- the future plan to ensure the buildings are made safe?*
- when that might be and how the cost will be borne?"*

Councillor Bianco acknowledged that the situation at the Union Park Estate had been concerning but advised that the Council would continue to try to protect residents. He was unable to provide too much detail as the development was owned privately and an active enforcement case was underway.

Seven years ago, the Council had acquired 13 affordable units in the development based on the building regulations for the development being signed off by a private inspector that had been commissioned by the developer. When it had become apparent that there were safety concerns, the Council had worked with Home Group to secure their waking watch provider at short notice. The waking watch entailed trained individuals being on site 24/7 to inspect the premises for any risk of fire and provide alert arrangements in the event of a fire – this was being delivered to London Fire Brigade safety standards.

The Council had proactively assessed the risks associated with its properties, would be undertaking remedial works (such as installing an upgraded fire safety alarm system) and had risk assessments and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans for each tenant. One tenant had been unable to self evacuate and was being helped to decant elsewhere.

Priorities included the installation of the fire safety alarm system which would take up to ten weeks to complete. This would depend on the freeholder actively progressing

	<p>grant application funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Council had also asked the freeholder about addressing residents' concerns about building safety and maintenance.</p> <p>The wider programme of works and how these would be funded was not yet clear. Although the Council was not responsible for the building safety works, it had been pressing the freeholder to confirm their plans. The local authority would also be seeking repayment from the freeholder of the costs for providing the waking watch.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member thanked Council officers for acting quickly and decisively to protect residents and for keeping a close watch on site to ensure residents' continued safety.</p> <p>5.5 QUESTION FROM ADE BANJOKO OF THE FAIRWAY, SOUTH, RUISLIP TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR EDWARDS:</p> <p><i>"The protests on Saturday 30th August have spurred racial hatred both online and on the streets of Hillingdon, with calls for immigrants to be sent back. As a resident of the borough, I am deeply saddened and concerned by the rising levels of racial hatred being experienced here.</i></p> <p><i>"How can the Council reassure residents that it takes hate crime seriously when its own communications appear to be fuelling hostility against migrants.</i></p> <p><i>"I am especially worried about the impact this environment is having on children and young people. Research shows that racial prejudice can begin from as early as the age of four, and recent data reported in the Evening Standard shows over 15,000 suspensions last year for racist behaviour in schools – more than doubling since the pandemic, with incidents involving children as young as four.</i></p> <p><i>"Given this worrying trend, what specific actions will the Council take both to challenge racial hatred in our communities and to prevent the normalisation of racism among the next generation?"</i></p> <p>Councillor Edwards advised that the Council rejected the suggestion that its communications had fuelled racism in the Borough as calling for illegal immigrants to be returned to their country of origin was not racism. The Government had failed to secure the country's borders and remove people to their own country or a safe third country.</p> <p>Racism had been fuelled by thoughts that illegal immigrants were being treated more favourably than residents. The burden was concentrated in four of Hillingdon's 21 wards and had been testing residents' tolerance but the peaceful protest in London on 30 August 2025 had been hijacked by extremists who should be held to account.</p> <p>The Council would continue to provide ongoing assurance and, although flying the St George flag had been associated with xenophobia, it should be a symbol of pride. The Council had been working with the police and other partners to monitor community tensions and would continue to support the interfaith network.</p>
25.	<p>REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES <i>(Agenda Item 6)</i></p> <p>i) Urgent Implementation of Decisions</p> <p>Councillor Edwards moved, and Councillor Bianco seconded, the motion and it was:</p>

RESOLVED: That the urgent decisions taken since the last Council; meeting in July 2025, as detailed in the report, be noted.

ii) Cabinet Portfolios

Councillor Edwards moved, and Councillor Bianco seconded, the motion and it was:

RESOLVED: That it be noted that the responsibility for Fleet Management had been transferred from the Finance & Transformation Portfolio to the Planning, Housing and Growth Portfolio.

26. ISSUANCE OF RECOMMENDATIONS UNDER SECTION 24, SCHEDULE 7(2) OF THE LOCAL AUDIT AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT 2014 (*Agenda Item 7*)

Councillor Edwards moved, and Councillor Goddard seconded, the motion as set out on the Order of Business.

Councillor Mathers moved, and Councillor Punja seconded, the following amendment (additional words in ***bold italics*** and deleted words ~~crossed through~~):

That:

a) the recommendations of the external auditor contained within the report issued under Section 24 Schedule 7(2) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, be ***welcomed and*** accepted.

b) the programmes of work and actions which were already in place to address the S24 Report recommendations, as clearly set out in the Financial Modernisation Programme (FMP) which commenced in February 2025, and the Governance Review Improvement Plan (GRIP) which commenced in March 2025, be ~~welcomed and approved~~ ***revised immediately to be sufficiently robust in order to meet the urgent pace of action required.***

c) the Audit Committee, who have already been monitoring the progress of the FMP and GRIP, be instructed to continue to monitor the delivery of the actions and report back to Council ***in a separate itemed report at every Council meeting ahead of the February budget setting meeting, as well as finally*** report back to Council in no later than 42 6 months, ~~or earlier if required,~~ to ensure the S24 Report recommendations have been fully addressed.

Those speaking in support of the amendment stated that the original motion had not reflected the seriousness of the situation that the Council was in. Although “at pace” had been used in the report, the recommendation requested an update in twelve months which did not seem “at pace”. It was suggested that a report be considered at every meeting of the Council until the budget setting meeting in February 2026 to meet the need for urgency, accountability and transparency. The Independent Chair of the Audit Committee had also been concerned about the pace so urgent, decisive action was needed.

The Section 24 (S24) notice should be taken very seriously and robust action was needed as Councillors would be personally legally responsible. Even though the S24 Report had highlighted weak oversight and no assurance could be given, it had taken six months to commission the GRIP and only two actions had subsequently been rated green (although most areas had been rated amber, this had not been agreed by

Ernst & Young (EY)).

Concern was expressed that £1.7m had been spent on external auditors, there had been a high turnover of senior staff (which had caused risk) and the culture leant too heavily on the Finance team. Much of the financial modernisation was being undertaken to clean up years of inaccurate financial reports and transparency had been missing.

The message from EY could not have been clearer – there had been systemic weaknesses that had not been recognised by the decision makers. The officer recommendations suggested a ‘business as usual’ response when urgent action was required. Progress had been painfully slow and the Council had been forced to borrow. The Council needed to commit to demonstrating that it could get out of this crisis and needed robust accounts. The amendment called for accountability, humility and immediate action.

Those speaking against the amendment noted that the amendment did not add value and had no credibility. Action had been taken with regard to the GRIP before the EY report and monitoring had been undertaken by the Audit Committee and Select Committee. The opposition seemed to denigrate the Council rather than celebrate its successes in areas such as Social Care and Children’s Services.

S24 reports were becoming more common and Hillingdon continued to manage pressures around Heathrow Airport. London Councils had now recognised that Hillingdon was one of the most underfunded local authorities in London.

Although the amendment suggested that the actions being taken were not robust, EY had not advised that they were not happy with progress and no negative feedback had been given in relation to the actions being taken. The administration had confidence that the Independent Chair and Members of the Audit Committee would highlight if actions were not on track.

The amendment was put to a vote and lost.

Those speaking in support of the original motion stated that there was no argument about the gravity of the situation and that the S24 Report was important but reflected the situation from six months ago. Audit Committee Members had been asking how, why and what was being done and the Council had been working to achieve its targets. Pace was not just about speed. Training was being rolled out to officers and regular budget reports were now being scrutinised by the Select Committees.

The Council’s financial position had been caused by significant underfunding from the Government. This had been further impacted by the cost of things like inflation and asylum seekers. The Council had always provided great value for money services to residents and its per capita costs were lower than its neighbours.

The motion was put to the vote and it was unanimously:

RESOLVED: That:

- a) the recommendations of the external auditor contained within the report issued under Section 24 Schedule 7(2) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, be accepted.**

	<p>b) the programmes of work and actions which were already in place to address the S24 Report recommendations, as clearly set out in the Financial Modernisation Programme (FMP) which commenced in February 2025, and the Governance Review Improvement Plan (GRIP) which commenced in March 2025, be welcomed and approved.</p> <p>c) the Audit Committee, who have already been monitoring the progress of the FMP and GRIP, be instructed to continue to monitor the delivery of the actions and report back to Council in no later than 12 months, or earlier if required, to ensure the S24 Report recommendations have been fully addressed.</p>
27.	<p>MEMBERS' QUESTIONS (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>8.3 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MAKWANA TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION - COUNCILLOR O'BRIEN:</p> <p><i>"Can the Cabinet member please provide an update on the progress of managing the High Needs budget and how the team are progressing the SEND improvement plan whilst being more financially efficient?"</i></p> <p>Councillor O'Brien advised that the Education team had worked to improve the position of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and an in-year improvement plan had been set. The strategy set out the vision for SEND in Hillingdon and reset expectations underpinning the priority areas to provide early intervention as well as the right support at the right time.</p> <p>There had been a 1% net growth in delivering Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and Hillingdon had achieved 91% compliance in 2024. There had been 3,441 EHCPs at the end of 2023/24 and 5,421 at the end of 2024/25. Early intervention had also helped to deal with persistent and severe absence, which was above compliance levels.</p> <p>Special school banding models had been introduced which provided a fairer and more effective scheme. The Council continued to provide good value for money and the Education and SEND teams had been working to manage the overspend and reduce the deficit this year.</p> <p>There had been an increase in further education placement capacity to meet the complex needs of Hillingdon's residents but there had been a 15% reduction in funding to independent settings. The average cost of each placement had reduced from £54k to £49k. The outlook was stable and it was anticipated that savings would be seen in 2026.</p> <p>The pressure in the high needs block continued to be significant and there was a high cost pressure on high needs placements. The strain on DSG budgets was being felt across the country and a significant decrease would be needed to reduce the in-year deficit.</p> <p>There was no supplementary question.</p> <p>8.15 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR BURLES TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION - COUNCILLOR GODDARD:</p> <p><i>"The Chief Finance Officer's Section 25 Statement clause 21 stated, "Government will</i></p>

be reluctant to provide exceptional financial support midyear and therefore, were the authority to be in a position where its outgoings were to exceed its income there is a possibility that a s114 Notice would need to be issued”.

“With a forecast opening balance of £6.7M, a £16.4M in-year overspend and a Section 24 notice by external auditors Ernst & Young, the then fragile balanced budget for 2025/26 now looks untenable.

“What level of Exceptional Financial Support funding from central Government does the Cabinet member calculate that the Council needs to avoid a Section 114 Notice and what will be the cost to Hillingdon Tax Payers?”

Councillor Goddard advised that the Council had been in discussions with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) who had indicated that there was no need for Hillingdon to issue a Section 114 notice. The Council’s request for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) would be considered for 2024/25 and 2025/26. EFS could be in the form of Government grants, revenue expenditure redone as capital or an increase in the council tax base above the normal limit – the Council had not been pursuing the third option.

Hillingdon had received positive service ratings for its adult social care, children’s services and housing and benchmarked favourably with other local authorities. Reforms in relation to digital technology, business intelligence, etc, had started to help officers to make more informed decisions and the Council continued to provide great value for money from a low council tax base.

The Cabinet Member noted that public disclosure now would be inappropriate and could affect the outcome of the Council’s request for EFS. MHCLG and the Home Office would need to discuss grant funding for the dispersal programme.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Burles asked why, with a £18.3m overspend, the Council had failed to offer credible solutions or acknowledge the scale of the crisis.

Councillor Goddard advised that the problems being faced by the Council were the end product of a lack of funding from successive Governments but that he looked forward with optimism. The Council would need to drive down operating costs as much as possible.

8.13 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR BANERJEE TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION - COUNCILLOR GODDARD:

“There has been much comment in the national media about the indebtedness of councils and the amount of residents’ council tax used to pay the interest on the debt. Would the Cabinet member please tell me what is our level of borrowing and how we compare with other councils?”

Councillor Goddard advised that, in quarter 1 of 2025/26, the twenty outer London boroughs had £13.9bn in borrowings (an average of £6.97m). However, Hillingdon was bottom of the third quartile of London boroughs with £5.35m in borrowings.

By way of a supplementary question, with £1 in every £5 of council tax applied to debt, Councillor Banerjee asked how Hillingdon was doing.

Councillor Goddard advised that, as a result of underfunding from Government over many years, nine London boroughs had sought a total of £989m in Exceptional Financial Support. In Hillingdon, as low interest rates had been secured, only 29p per £5 was being used to service debt.

8.7 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR SINGH TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION - COUNCILLOR GODDARD:

“The budget report agreed by Cabinet in July 2025 points the finger at previous Section 151 officers for not remedying the situation. So, will the Cabinet member now be seeking to provide an independent report from Ernst and Young on the reported actual savings against target for the past 15 years, so that this Council has a clearer picture on the state of the Council’s finances?”

Councillor Goddard advised that auditors had undertaken a review of savings as part of the annual value for money report. As such, a report would not be sought on this matter.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Singh asked why previous Section 151 officers had been blamed when they had been trying to help.

Councillor Goddard advised that he was not trying to point to the finger at the officer team. It was a collective endeavour and he had a lot of confidence in officers. Over the last five years, £87m of savings had been generated.

8.12 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR BRIDGES TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR EDWARDS:

“The Home Office told the Court of Appeal that the rights of people who are in this country illegally outweighed the concerns of British citizens. Does the Leader agree with the Home Secretary, and will her approach determine the actions of this Council?”

Councillor Edwards advised that he did not agree with the Home Office or the Home Secretary and that the comments had caused widespread anger and highlighted that the Government was out of touch with communities. The Council continued to protect residents’ safety and wellbeing. The suggestion that the rights of illegal immigrants outweighed those of residents was not acceptable.

The Government had failed to stop illegal immigrants from entering the country and had insisted on housing them in HMOs and hotels. Councils had been left having to cope with the consequences of these policies. The ‘move on’ period was being reduced from 56 days to 28 days for single adults and would affect most in London accommodation and could increase levels of rough sleeping. 56 days provided more time to organise support for these individuals.

The national policy should not undermine local action and the Council would not let misplaced national priorities dictate.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Bridges asked if residents and Councillors were free to comment and take action to protect freedom of speech.

The Leader advised that freedom of speech must be protected but not the incitement of hate or violence. He had met with the Borough Superintendent and Council officers

to look at facilitating peaceful protest and to identify those who committed violence. Following a review of the protest on 30 August 2025, alcohol had been deemed to be a problem so the Council would be deploying enforcement officers to ensure that fines were issued for alcohol consumption in areas with a Public Space Protection Order.

The Council would not be removing any flags that had been put up unless they posed a risk to pedestrians or vehicle users. The Council would not tolerate any graffiti.

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

"The Audit Committee report of 28th August 2025, page 60, provides details, in the Value For Money section, of the weaknesses highlighted with regards to Financial Sustainability and Quality of Council information, with 7 recommendations proposed in the Final 2023/24 Auditor's Annual Report, one of which being: "that the Council should seek to balance the schools' budget to prevent further growth in its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit.....and that the Council should also perform scenario planning for how it would manage the impact of the current deficit on its financial position when the current statutory override ends."

"Although the Government statutory override has now been extended to March 2028, and although the Council has taken action to reduce annual overspend on DSG to £15M at the end of March 2025, could the Cabinet member, provide details of how the deficit of £65.71M is being addressed, as it is still the highest of any London borough and is still increasing?"

Councillor O'Brien advised that, at £65.7m, there was no doubt that this was a significant deficit and the highest in London but it was not the highest deficit in the country. In 2023/24, the national DSG deficit had been £2.3bn. The statutory override had been extended to March 2028 and officers had worked hard to get the Council to its current position and would continue to reduce the in-year deficit to break even.

The Council had been talking to schools about sustainability and investing in capital programme. Projects planned for the next year included a move to educate closer to home. However, the issue was for the Government to address. Although the Government recognised the challenges faced by local authorities, the DSG deficit needed to be reduced.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Sweeting asked why Hillingdon's DSG deficit was so many times higher than the average of all of the other London local authorities.

Councillor O'Brien advised that she would provide Councillor Sweeting with a written response. However, she noted that the complexity of needs and increased demand had had an impact, alongside the banding structures which had been too favourable (and which had now been revised).

WRITTEN RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION PROVIDED AS FOLLOWS:

The question you have posed asks for information that the Council does not possess as we do not have the full details of other London councils' financial positions or their individual contexts, particularly in respect of the DSG and local demand pressures.

That said, there are a number of factors which have contributed to Hillingdon's position:

- Funding formulae differ between areas, and this council sits at the lower end of funding compared to other boroughs, which doesn't reflect the scale of our demographics.*
- As an outer London borough with high mobility, Hillingdon is effectively an importer, which adds to pressure on services.*
- Historically, the level of inclusivity in mainstream schools has not been as high as in some other areas, creating greater reliance on specialist placements that come at a higher cost.*
- In the past, the authority did not have enough local SEND school placements, meaning we had to fund more expensive out-of-borough provision. Significant work has been done in recent years to expand local capacity, but the legacy of that historic gap is still being felt.*

It is, in reality, a mixture of factors that have combined over time to put us in the position we now find ourselves.

What is important, however, is that significant progress has already been made. The fact that our in-year deficit decreased so much last year is a very positive sign that our early intervention work and closer partnership with schools are making a real difference.

8.1 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR GOHIL TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING, HOUSING & GROWTH – COUNCILLOR TUCKWELL:

“Can the Cabinet member provide an update on the practical steps the Council has been taking, alongside government, the London Fire Brigade, and the freeholder, to address the building safety issues at Union Park in Cowley - and to give residents the reassurance they need?”

Councillor Tuckwell advised that Union Park comprised 253 flats in ten blocks and included 13 Council homes. A fire risk assessment had identified defects but the developer was no longer around to resolve these and the freeholder was overseas. The Council had intervened in July 2025 and agreed to pay for an emergency waking watch to enable the residents to stay in their homes. Although the Council had already undertaken work in relation to the 13 properties that it owned, one of its residents had been supported to move into alternative accommodation.

The Council had been working with the Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government and the London Fire Brigade to take action. Significant works would be needed to fix the original structural defects and the Council would use its statutory powers to hold those responsible to account. The Council would continue to act decisively.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Gohil asked if residents could be reassured that the Council would take steps to keep them safe until the issues were permanently fixed and those responsible had been held to account.

Councillor Tuckwell advised that the Council would continue to pursue the matter and had been taking legal steps to act firmly and decisively on behalf of the residents.

8.9 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR GILL TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION - COUNCILLOR GODDARD:

“Can the Cabinet member provide clarity on the reasons why there is now an adverse

variance of £31.5M against the outturn 2024/25, representing an adverse movement of £20.5M from month 10 which is made up of the need to write out a negative reserve of £5.5M, an assessment of the Council's Treasury Approach which has led to an adjustment of £4.5M and an evaluation of the bad debt provision policy which has led to an adverse movement of £4.1M along with £5.1M of previously reported intervention not crystalising, meaning that reserves at the end of the 2024/25 financial year are now a meagre £6.7M which are deemed inadequate by the Section 151 officer?"

Councillor Goddard advised that paragraphs 19-32 of the Cabinet report considered at the meeting on 24 July 2025 had provided a comprehensive explanation.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Gill asked if the only reason that the Council had not issued a Section 114 notice was because it had asked the Government for a bail out.

Councillor Goddard advised that this was an accounting issue and that many local authorities had gone down this route. There would be no embarrassment about seeking support.

AS THE 45 MINUTE TIME LIMIT FOR MEMBER QUESTIONS HAD BEEN REACHED, THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WOULD RECEIVE WRITTEN RESPONSES.

8.4 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR DAVIES TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR EDWARDS:

"Could the Leader of the Council share his view on what message is sent to residents when Full Council votes unanimously to oppose plans for a 3rd runway at Heathrow and then one member of the opposition, who joined the vote to oppose the expansion, then appears in a promotional video supporting the scheme?"

WRITTEN RESPONSE PROVIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Thank you for your question and for bringing this matter to the attention of Council.

The vote to which you refer was a motion passed on 10th July reaffirming the Council's strong, cross-party opposition to a third runway at Heathrow - no ifs, no buts. The vote of each and every councillor present was recorded in favour of that motion - a statement of each councillor's personal opposition to the third runaway.

That a Councillor who voted in that motion should appear in a promotional video backing the third runway since posted on social media is potentially very damaging to that Councillor's integrity, honesty and openness, and consequently their fitness to hold office.

That the Councillor permits their image to be prominently used by BackHeathrow.org even today shows that the video was not an isolated matter but is part of a wider picture that is more likely a true reflection of their position with regard to Heathrow.

After the events of the last few days it would be an understatement to say that the public do not all have the most favourable opinion of the integrity of politicians. Where

it appears that one of us is clearly being two faced, making public statements in one way but acting personally in another, that behaviour, results in the further erosion of trust in what we all say and commit to as councillors. It undermines the work of this chamber and it Members and it damages democracy.

It is possible that until you asked this question the leadership of the opposition were not aware of this issue just as I was unaware. Labour will be judged on their actions from this point on as allowing this conduct to occur without challenge not only damages them but becomes a stain on all of us in this Chamber.

It does appear to me that there is a powerful argument that the conduct, if proven, breaches the Nolan principles of integrity, openness and honesty which underpin our code of conduct and I urge the appropriate body to now consider this.

The public might also expect the Labour group to consider whether this alleged behaviour meets their standards of behaviour and to take action accordingly.

8.8 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR GARELICK TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION - COUNCILLOR GODDARD:

“The Annual Audit report by external auditors, Ernst & Young, page 12, states that “We have not been able to complete our specific processes to address the risk of mis-statements due to fraud or error, nor were we able to complete all of our audit procedures over the financial statements and are therefore unable to conclude on whether the financial statements are materially misstated as a result of fraud or error.”

“When will this Conservative administration be in a position to provide the required information to the independent auditor which would establish whether the issue is either misstated information or actual fraud?”

WRITTEN RESPONSE PROVIDED AS FOLLOWS:

I refer to the answer that I provided in this chamber on 11 July 2024 in response to a question posed by Cllr Denys. As I reported at that time, there is a national problem within the audit profession in terms of the availability of suitable resources to complete audits in the public sector and in the case of Hillingdon, the external auditors were unable to complete all required audit work by the Government defined backstop date. Cllr Garelick therefore incorrectly assumes that the auditors were unable to complete their work due to shortcomings in the Councils books, records and supporting material. This is not the case.

It is notable that 47% of Councils in England received disclaimer audit opinions on their 2023/24 Statutory Accounts.

Furthermore, the auditor's report does not imply that there has been a misstatement of information or actual fraud, what is being said is that the auditors were unable to complete their work in order to give such an assurance of the absence of misstatement or fraud.

The Council will continue to provide all necessary information and will work with the auditors in order to reach an improved and satisfactory conclusion to the 2024/25 audit within the updated legislative framework. A particular priority will be ensuring that all required material is delivered to the auditors on a timely basis.

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

"The government announced in November 2024, wide reaching reforms to Children's Social Care. Can the Cabinet member provide an update on progress made to date in preparing for these reforms and offer assurance of readiness for 2026?"

WRITTEN RESPONSE PROVIDED AS FOLLOWS:

I am pleased to provide an update on the progress and offer assurances regarding the council's preparedness for full implementation of the Children's Social Care Reforms that will come into force in 2026.

Nationally, the reforms are being delivered through the Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme with an aim to rebalance the system of early help, family support, and expert-led child protection, which is outlined in the Children's Social Care National Framework and the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024.

It is important to note, that, even though the reforms are being led by the Councils Children's Services, the reforms cover the multi-agencies who respond to Children and Families in need of help and/or protection.

Hillingdon has made considerable progress to position the local delivery model to reflect national expectations. By using best practice, as recommended in the DfE's guidelines, the council has engaged in extensive consultation with staff, unions and partner agencies by holding a range of knowledge sessions, in order to shape our response and delivery models, to ensure transparency, support, and shared ownership of the changes.

Phase 1 of our Family Help locality model went live at the end of August marking a major milestone in the transformation journey, which amalgamated the Stronger Families Key working Service, Referral and Assessment Service and Children's Social Work Service into a single Family Help Service, structured across three localities, in the South West, South East and North of the borough.

Each locality is led by a dedicated Service Manager, with a mix Family Help Key Workers and Social Workers who deliver and support under one umbrella using one framework to create a practice of reducing handovers, avoid repetition and retelling experiences, the goal is to empower families through consistent support.

A New Beginnings team has been created to give intensive support to vulnerable mothers who have had previous babies removed from their care or who are at risk of having their baby removed, aiming to prevent repeat removals and improve long-term outcomes. From this initiative, it is hoped that there will be a reduction in children coming into care by wrapping support around these vulnerable parents as early as possible.

The council's transformation is underpinned by robust governance and strategic planning, and includes an Executive Transformation Group overseeing delivery, it includes representation from health, education, police, and the voluntary sector, ensuring accountability and progress tracking.

A detailed Delivery Plan for 25-26 has been submitted to the DfE, explaining the phased implementation, anticipated spend, and workforce development strategy.

Officers are working on the next submission which will be due towards the end of 2025.

With Phase 1 now operational and planning for Phase 2 and 3 is progressing, the council remains committed to delivering a system that is responsive, inclusive, and focused on improving outcomes for children and families.

Our children's social care team are confident that by 2026 the transformation programme will be well underway as Hillingdon is one of the national pathfinder Local Authorities. Updates will continue to be provided through the Children, Families and Education Select Committee.

8.6 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR PUNJA TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION - COUNCILLOR GODDARD:

"Can the Cabinet member explain why Grant Thornton were procured for the implementation of the Financial Modernisation Programme in a sole procurement tender, when Cabinet had resolved in February in 2025 that CIPFA would be delivering on financial improvements?"

WRITTEN RESPONSE PROVIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Members should be aware that I wrote to the then s 151 Officer on 24 November 2024, requesting that a programme of work be initiated, which ultimately came to be known as the Finance Modernisation Programme.

I must make it clear that recommendations as to the appointment of advisers within the Finance Modernisation Programme have all been considered and made by Senior Council Officers and referred to the Leader and Cabinet for a decision after fully compliant Procurement processes have been undertaken.

I can advise that it is my understanding that Officers proposed the switch from CIPFA to Grant Thornton and that they made this proposal in order to capitalise on Grant Thornton's existing involvement with and knowledge of Hillingdon, also GT's expectation that they could deliver the project at a faster pace than CIPFA.

I must emphasise that there is no obligation imposed by legislation or the Councils own internal rules to operate a competitive, multi-party tendering process and in the judgement of officers, the imposition of such a competitive process would have caused costly delays, which had the significant potential to outweigh the cost benefits which might have accrued from a competitive tender.

I can confirm that I did not make those decisions where the Finance Modernisation Programme was concerned, neither did I actively promote the case for appointing any contractor.

8.11 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MAND TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES & PROPERTY - COUNCILLOR BIANCO:

"At the Corporate Resources and Infrastructure Select Committee Meeting of 23rd July 2025, (page 16 refers), it was confirmed that, "There is still no central register of all known hireable Council spaces and buildings, who is responsible for them, how they are let, or importantly, how they are promoted or if they are promoted at all. It appears that there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of what spaces are

available, their potential and strategic management of these spaces.”

“Therefore, could the Cabinet member provide the timescale for when this vital and important audit of the Council’s spaces and buildings will be completed which would need to show where the responsibility lies for ensuring all marketing potentials are explored?”

WRITTEN RESPONSE PROVIDED AS FOLLOWS:

The development of a central register of all known hireable council spaces and buildings is under review with the Select Committee as part of a Council wide initiative to capture all known spaces within both operational and non-operational assets.

As part of this work programme, we are reviewing the development of suitable systems to manage the bookings and promotion of these spaces. An audit is underway and will report its progress to the Select Committee on a regular basis in accordance with its agreed work programme.

This will enable the Committees findings to be reported to Cabinet along with recommendations as to how the resources will be managed in the future on the basis that they span a number of service areas. Cabinet will be able to decide on where the responsibility for this programme will sit.

A good example of where we have sought to increase income from bookings is in the library service which already has a bespoke system in place with all generated income being retained in that service. We are using this model to help us develop a council wide system working in conjunction with the Digital Services Team.

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

“A report on Hillingdon’s Youth Offer was presented to the Children, Families and Education Select Committee Meeting of 13th November 2024 which stated that, “the Transporter buses were an invaluable resource in youth work...and that funding for two new Transporter buses had been secured and that the Fleet Team were currently working on the tender process, using a similar specification to that of the London Borough of Barnet Youth bus.”

“Therefore, could the Cabinet member explain why it has taken multiple attempts by opposition members of the Select Committee in November, January, April and June, plus a Member’s Enquiry and a further enquiry through Democratic Services, to establish that the procurement process for delivering the 2 new Transporter buses had only started in late July 2025, with the estimated completion date being as late as June 2026, meaning that certain areas of the borough with limited or no venues to deliver the Youth Offer will, until June 2026, continue to be deprived of this publicly acknowledged “invaluable resource”.”

WRITTEN RESPONSE PROVIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Both Youth Services and I recognise that the Transporter Youth buses are vital component of Hillingdon’s Youth Offer, particularly in areas of the borough where there is limited static availability and therefore we have to consider more dynamic means of reaching out to our young people, both in, the South and North of the borough. Even without the Transporter buses, officers ensure that they are delivering

mobile, community-based youth work which has been consistently acknowledged including in the report presented to the Children, Families and Education Select Committee on 13 November 2024 as well as the written update at the last select committee meeting.

The acquisition of such assets are subject to prioritisation, procurement and governance processes. Work on this began in July 2024 with officers across services establishing the specifications which would be required, Cabinet agreed in principle to the provision of the transporter buses in the November 2024 report.

The timeline from the end of 2024 is as follows:

- The proposal requiring Capital budget approval & setting of the Fleet Capital Budget March 2025.*
- Further detailed work took place, with the Procurement launch start and finish in July 2025.*
- Tender Publication and Evaluation commenced this week.*
- Governance and Scrutiny takes place between October–December 2025*
- The Delivery Timeline is estimated between January–October 2026*

In the interim our Hillingdon Youth Offer continues to use the outreach model ensuring service delivery is maintained. Detached and outreach work continues across the borough, with staff deployed to key locations to engage young people, build relationships and provide support. The service continues to be proactive, with staff rotation across wards, to ensure a broader coverage to priority delivery areas, using the teams data analysis and community feedback. The service therefore remains responsive to the needs of children and young people in Hillingdon during this transitional period.

The procurement of the Transporter youth buses is a priority for the Council and is being pursued with due diligence and urgency. The timeline reflects the necessary governance and financial protocols that underpin all capital investments. The Youth Service continues to engage with stakeholders to ensure transparency and responsiveness throughout the process.

8.14 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR NELSON-WEST TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT - COUNCILLOR LAVERY:

“Can the Cabinet member explain the rationale behind closing the RAGC to members of the public who also used and enjoyed the garden for a place of sanctuary and peace?”

WRITTEN RESPONSE PROVIDED AS FOLLOWS:

- The Cabinet report presented to the June Cabinet meeting set out the rationale for closing the retail provision of the Rural Activities Garden Centre (RAGC) and the retail garden centre element of the service closed at the end of July 2025.*
- Further consultation is underway to consider the remaining services being operated at the Centre and the responses to this further consultation will be considered at the end of October.*
- The RAGC was open to the public as a retail garden centre and not strictly as a public open space although we acknowledge that whilst the retail operations were underway it had been used as such.*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents of Hillingdon continue to enjoy access to many areas of open space and award-winning parks and gardens open to the public for peaceful enjoyment.
28.	<p>MOTIONS (Agenda Item 9)</p> <p>9.4 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR RILEY</p> <p>Councillor Riley moved, and Councillor Tuckwell seconded, the following motion:</p> <p>That this Council has a proud record and tradition of promoting Civic Pride in many forms and celebrating its heritage encouraging the coming together of our diverse communities.</p> <p>This Council, therefore, reaffirms and supports whole heartedly the Leader's words in his recent statement about the flying of the flags of the United Kingdom and England across the borough. Those flags represent the history, freedoms and values of this country and its people and they are a beacon to others. We eschew the disgraceful negative attitude of those who are willing to surrender our national flags to extremists by claiming them to be symbols of racism. Flying our country's national flags serves any numbers of good purposes, providing a sense of identity and belonging and it is supported by our residents.</p> <p>This Council also recognises that increasing protest against the failure of the government to stop illegal entry into this country and stop the housing of asylum seekers in our hotels, may be unnerving to more recently settled residents of this country. It therefore welcomes the recent public statement by Hillingdon Inter Faith Network and commits to working with the Network to ensure community cohesion.</p> <p>Councillor Mathers moved, and Councillor Punja seconded, the following amendment (additional words in <i>bold italics</i> and deleted words crossed through):</p> <p>That this Council has a proud record and tradition of promoting Civic Pride in many forms and celebrating its heritage encouraging the coming together of our diverse communities.</p> <p>This Council, therefore, reaffirms and supports whole heartedly the Leader's words in his recent statement about the flying of the flags of the United Kingdom and England across the borough. Those flags represent the history, freedoms and values of this country and its people and they are a beacon to others. We eschew the disgraceful negative attitude of those who are willing to surrender our national flags to extremists by claiming them to be symbols of racism. <i>Appropriate</i> flying <i>of</i> our country's national flags serves any numbers of good purposes, providing a sense of identity and belonging and it <i>which</i> is supported by our residents.</p> <p>This Council also recognises that increasing protest against the failure of the government to stop illegal entry into this country and stop the housing of asylum seekers in our hotels, may be unnerving to more recently settled residents of this country. It therefore welcomes the recent public statement by Hillingdon Inter Faith Network and commits to working with the Network <i>increase tangible council activities to reduce hate crime and increase</i> ensure community cohesion.</p>

Those speaking in support of the amendment stated that the original motion used divisive language. Whilst flying flags was not seen to be an issue, the use of Council platforms was seen as an issue and the amendment assisted the Council in remaining neutral.

Under the Equalities Act, there was a need to foster cohesion and it would be important to not add fuel to the fire. The country could not be built by pitting neighbours against each other and solidarity was needed to ensure civic pride.

It was recognised that this was an emotive subject which had become a symbol of division. Whilst a flag was just a piece of cloth, it was about context. Some flags were being flown for pride whilst others were being used to intimidate asylum seekers.

The flags united everyone and it was right to display the flags and be able to hold a peaceful protest. Faith leaders, schools and charities had been working hard to promote cohesion but hotels in West Drayton had been used to house asylum seekers for four years. The interfaith statement had noted that the flags belong to all of us and that it was not right that they were being weaponised. Residents were feeling unnerved by the escalating hate in the Borough.

Those speaking against the amendment stated that the original motion had been clear and unapologetic. The amendment had watered down the motion and had cast doubt where there should be certainty. It was a half-hearted statement that stripped recognition of the issue that was concerning residents and weakened the point of the motion.

The amendment was put to a vote and lost.

Those speaking in support of the original motion stated that Councillor Edwards had provided a strong display of leadership and that the flying of the St George and Union flags displayed a coming together and provided a symbol of unity. Nations' flags were regularly flown for sporting, mourning and military occasions and were now being used to object to the Government's poor performance in relation to asylum. The flags were vital and important for unity and national pride but should not be allowed to be denigrated by racists. The flags sent a powerful message to Government and illustrated the concerns of the community.

National flags should not be controversial and did not belong to a select few – they belonged to everyone and individuals should not be afraid to use them to show pride in their country.

Flags represented history, freedoms and values and the motion supported pride in the nation and its values. The motion was well meant and highlighted that the flags were for everyone and their denigration should not be tolerated.

The original motion was put to the vote and it was:

RESOLVED: That this Council has a proud record and tradition of promoting Civic Pride in many forms and celebrating its heritage encouraging the coming together of our diverse communities.

This Council, therefore, reaffirms and supports whole heartedly the Leader's words in his recent statement about the flying of the flags of the United

Kingdom and England across the borough. Those flags represent the history, freedoms and values of this country and its people and they are a beacon to others. We eschew the disgraceful negative attitude of those who are willing to surrender our national flags to extremists by claiming them to be symbols of racism. Flying our country's national flags serves any numbers of good purposes, providing a sense of identity and belonging and it is supported by our residents.

This Council also recognises that increasing protest against the failure of the government to stop illegal entry into this country and stop the housing of asylum seekers in our hotels, may be unnerving to more recently settled residents of this country. It therefore welcomes the recent public statement by Hillingdon Inter Faith Network and commits to working with the Network to ensure community cohesion.

9.2 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR PUNJA

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

That this Council notes:

- The Council's finances are in a "critical" state, according to independent auditors Ernst & Young (EY) who have served notice under the Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.
- The Council's reserves are the lowest of any London borough with insufficient reserves for this financial year.
- This Council has had 4 Section 151 officers in the past 18 months.
- Persistent delay notices relating to the Financial Report for year ending 2024-25.
- Auditors Ernst & Young report "fundamental governance weaknesses", including poor-quality data and unreliable forecasting.
- The Internal Audit report offered "no assurance" on internal controls, risk management, or governance.
- The Council Forecasts for 2025-26 show a further £16.4m overspend, more than double the reserves left.
- The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit has hit £65.71 million, nearly ten times the Council's reserves, threatening the future of education funding.
- Failure to achieve savings targets year on year leaving £34million in year savings target for 2025/26.
- The Council is now seeking an unplanned, midyear "Exceptional Financial Support" from the Labour Government, to cover up their inability to deliver a balanced budget, proving that the Conservative administration has lost complete control of the accounts.

Therefore, this Council expresses its complete lack of confidence in:

- Cllr Ian Edwards, Leader of Hillingdon Council – for failing to provide leadership or accountability during this financial collapse; and
- Cllr Martin Goddard, Cabinet Member for Finance – for presiding over catastrophic budget management, failed reforms, and a total loss of public trust.

This Council calls upon the two Members to resign with immediate effect and further instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Government calling for an

urgent formal investigation into the financial position of this local authority.

Those speaking in support of the motion stated that residents required transparency and accountability. Paragraph 25 of the Section 25 statement had said that action would be taken but that the Council had since had an overspend, had appointed three Chief Finance Officers and didn't have enough money to run the Council. There had been a heavy reliance on interims, consultants and scapegoats. The Council's finances were not under control and it had two lame ducks in Section 114 territory.

Councillors Edwards and Goddard did not know how much was in the accounts and they were using the excuse of costs associated with temporary accommodation, asylum seekers and SEND. This was not bad luck, it was financial mismanagement and residents were paying for yesterday's mistakes. They had continually failed the Borough, masked a huge overspend with a budget built on sand and been the only London council not to have published accounts.

Hillingdon had the lowest reserves of all the London boroughs and had spent £1.7m on a contract with Grant Thornton. The auditors had lost confidence and it was now time for Council to show that it too had lost confidence.

The administration had closed its eyes to financial ineptitude and now needed to take urgent action. Ernst & Young had noted that the Council needed to get an understanding of its finances but the authority did not have proper arrangements in place to manage risk. There were significant concerns about the Council's lack of reserves and its financial position was not compliant with its legal obligation to set a balanced budget. Hillingdon residents would be paying for this financial incompetence for years to come.

Accounting errors stretched back to 2013/14 and £13.4m of one-off adjustments had had to be forced into last year which then left the Council with £6.7m in reserves. As the administration had been in power for over 20 years, all of the decisions that had resulted in this situation had been made by them but every Councillor was personally responsible for ensuring the Council's lawful, accountable and transparent finances.

Those speaking against the motion noted that the Council had been under unprecedented pressure which had been impacted by years of shrinking grants and failed asylum policy support. Action had been taken to address the system level issues that had been identified by auditors.

It was recognised that Exceptional Funding Support was not a loan and that calls for the resignations of the Leader and Cabinet Member amounted to empty grandstanding and seemed to be a personal attack. Council services had been protected and every audit recommendation had been translated into action.

The decision in 2010 to keep fees lower than neighbouring authorities and freezing council tax had had a long-term effect. Cuts to local authority funding by successive governments had had an impact.

Opposition claims that the Council was on the verge of bankruptcy were not true and this was not a good message to be sending to staff. The opposition had refused to listen to the answers that they were being given.

The motion was put to a recorded vote.

Those voting for: Councillors Burles, Dhot, Garelick, Garg, Gill, Islam, Kaur, Mand, Mathers, Nelson-West, Punja, Sansarpuri, Singh and Sweeting.

Those voting against: The Mayor (Councillor Corthorne), the Deputy Mayor (Councillor Reeta Chamdal), Councillors Ahmad-Wallana, Banerjee, Bhatt, Bianco, Bridges, Davies, Denys, Edwards, Goddard, Gohil, Haggard, Lavery, Makwana, Martin, D Mills, R Mills, O'Brien, Palmer, Riley, Sullivan and Tuckwell.

Those abstaining: Councillors Basit, Curling and Gardner.

The motion was lost.

9.1 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR CURLING

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

That this Council notes that research clearly demonstrates adult gaming centres and betting shops are disproportionately located in some of the most deprived areas, and that places such as Hayes Town already has more than its fair share, with yet another gaming centre due to open in the old Barclays Bank building.

Council also notes that, with changing shopping habits, all our high streets are subject to dramatic change and susceptible to increased gaming centres and betting shops, which could come to dominate our local high streets, if their proliferation is not more robustly controlled.

Council further notes that local councils have very little powers to stop new gaming centres opening, and that a coalition of over 40 councils, of all political persuasions, is calling for 'urgent gambling reform' to prevent betting shops and gaming centres from 'taking over' high streets.

Council therefore calls for the Cabinet to consider joining the coalition of councils seeking the appropriate changes to gambling regulations.

Those speaking in support of the motion stated that betting shops had been concentrated in the most deprived areas and had targeted areas that were more financially vulnerable. There had been a growth in online shopping so protection was needed to prevent the betting shops from dominating town centres. As they had limited powers to control this, 40 cross party councils from across the country had been working together to demand change. The motion called on Cabinet to consider joining this coalition of councils to send a clear message.

This motion was not about banning gambling but about improving the diversity of shops and protecting residents. There had been a 7% increase in the number of slot machine premises since 2022 (this was one of the most addictive gambling activities). The challenges were well known but the Licensing Act had given Licensing Committees little power to regulate these businesses. The GLA would be having a round table about this issue which had cross party support.

At 10.30pm, Councillor R Mills moved, and Councillor Gohil seconded, that the meeting continue so that a vote could be taken in relation to Agenda Item 9.1 and that the remaining business (Agenda Item 9.3) be deferred to the next

meeting on 27 November 2025.

This motion was put to the vote and agreed.

Motion 9.1 was put to a vote and unanimously:

RESOLVED: That this Council notes that research clearly demonstrates adult gaming centres and betting shops are disproportionately located in some of the most deprived areas, and that places such as Hayes Town already has more than its fair share, with yet another gaming centre due to open in the old Barclays Bank building.

Council also notes that, with changing shopping habits, all our high streets are subject to dramatic change and susceptible to increased gaming centres and betting shops, which could come to dominate our local high streets, if their proliferation is not more robustly controlled.

Council further notes that local councils have very little powers to stop new gaming centres opening, and that a coalition of over 40 councils, of all political persuasions, is calling for ‘urgent gambling reform’ to prevent betting shops and gaming centres from ‘taking over’ high streets.

Council therefore calls for the Cabinet to consider joining the coalition of councils seeking the appropriate changes to gambling regulations.

9.3 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR GARELICK

Councillor Garelick’s motion was deferred to the meeting on 27 November 2025.

The meeting, which commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.31 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.