

Minutes of the meeting of the Council

Date: Tuesday, 19 December 2023

Venue: The Atrium - Perceval House

Attendees (in person): Councillors

H Tailor (Mayor) M Ahmed, S Ahmed, J Anand, P Anand, J Ball, J Blacker, G Busuttil, J Gallant, K Sahota, C Anderson, T Sidhu, R Dheer, B Mahfouz, C Summers, L Brett, A Young, P Driscoll, Y Gordon, H Haili, M Hamidi, C Hersch, M Iqbal, A Jammu, S Jassal, Y Johnson, H Kaur Dheer, A Kelly, S Khan, I Kingston, P Knewstubb, S Kumar, K Dhindsa, T Mahmood, G Malcolm, S Manro, D Martin, J Martin, P Mason, F Mohamed, K Mohan, K K Nagpal, K Nagpal, I Nijhar, S Padda, G Quansah, F Conti, A Raza, M Rice, R Baaklini, C Sharma, G Shaw, D Costigan, G Stafford, A Steed, K Crawford, C Tighe, L Wall, R Wall, B Wesson, S Donnelly and A Zissimos

1 Apologies for Absence and Attendance

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Crawford, Rai, Murtaza, Kohli and Alexander.

Councillors Sahota, Kohli and Midha were in attendance virtually.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor P Anand declared that his brother owned a business that related to the opposition motion for debate. However this was not his own pecuniary interest and therefore he intended to remain in the meeting to speak and to vote.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 September 2023

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2023 be agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

4 Mayor's Announcements

Before making his announcements, the Mayor noted that Phil Portwood, former Mayor of Ealing, had passed away since the last Council meeting.

Councillors Johnson, Gallant and Ball paid tribute to Phil, and the Mayor then led Council in a minute's silence.

The Mayor updated the Council in important civic matters, including:

- The Borough had been honoured to receive a visit from the King, to Ealing Broadway centre. The Mayor had received the King as first

citizen of the borough, and the King had taken a look around the Christmas market and then Pitshanger Manor.

- Cllr Bains was congratulated on the birth of her baby boy.
- Councillor Raza was wished a happy birthday, and Cllrs Mahfouz and Stafford were congratulated on their candidate selections for Greater London Assembly and Parliamentary seats.
- The Mayor had been busy during December going to various faith based events such as Navratri, the Acton Crayle Service. A civic service was being organised for the new year.
- Some dates for the diary in the new year included Holocaust Memorial Day and LGBT History Month in February

5 Petitions from Members of the Public

There were no petitions from Members of the Public.

6 Petitions from Members of the Council

There were no petitions from members of the Council.

7 Questions from Members of the Public

David Devine asked the following question of Councillor Shital Manro, Cabinet Member for Good Growth and New Housing:

Why is it necessary to use taxpayer's money to purchase the greenbelt land at down barns farm to only build six traveller pitches, when you own enough land and could use a brownfield site, especially after the prime ministers statement in July about the misuse of greenbelt land?

Councillor Manro responded:

The process developing a local plan is highly technical and governed by strict regulations and requirements. Shaping the local plan requires the Council to take decisions on how the land in the Borough is used and managed in order to meet the needs of all of our residents. Our evidence base has identified the need for six gypsy and traveller pitches in the Borough. As a result we commissioned a study to find suitable sites for these pitches, then consulted on two different options. The site allocation for the pitches, which will be published in the regulation 19 version of the plan, will be based on the results of this consultation. The proposed site will need to balance the use of the space with the deliverability of the site. There will often be competing demands for land use and the local plan will allow us to take a holistic view of needs across the borough and ensure we meet the needs of all of our residents. All stakeholders will be able to comment on the regulation 19 version of the plan, and these comments will be considered by the planning inspector at public examination stage. The council's proposals will be entirely within government guidance on use

of green belt land as they state it is acceptable to alter the defined green belt boundary to meet a specific identified need for a gypsy and traveller site through the plan making process.

Toby Dalton asked the following question of Councillor Shital Manro, Cabinet Member for Good Growth and New Housing:

My Name is Toby Dalton, my family have been farming this land (Down Barns Farm Northolt) since the 1960's and we currently run 80 grass fed beef cattle with a 30 horse stable yard used by the local community which provides greener outdoor activities including well-being, there are also a small number of local companies renting yard space. In 2011 we lost land to a golf course. If we lose any more land it would make our farm financially unviable. What is your intentions with the remaining land if you only implement the minimum pitches. Why are you threatening the closure of the last working farm in Ealing?

Councillor Manro responded:

It is important for us to meet our requirements in planning law to provide pitches for use by the Gypsy and Traveller Community in Ealing, as they are one of the most marginalised communities in the borough. The Regulation 19 version of our local plan will be published in the new year and will make a site allocation to fulfil the objectively identified need of six Gypsy and Traveller pitches. If the pitches are allocated at Down Barns Farm it doesn't mean that the pitches will necessarily be delivered, and the Council is not threatening the closure of the farm. The Council would need to work with the owners and occupiers of any allocated land, and the plot of land identified for the pitches is only a very small geographical area in the larger site which would limit the impact on the farm, should the site be selected. Once the regulation 19 version of the plan has been agreed the Council is committed to working with any business or resident affected by site allocations.

8 Questions from Members of the Council

Councillor Faduma Mohamed asked Councillor Kamaljit Kaur Nagpal:

In April of this year, this Council voted to make experience of care a protected characteristic. Following that, multiple teams across the organisations made commitments to improve access to services and support for care leavers. Can the portfolio holder provide an update on the progress toward implementing those commitments?

Councillor Kamaljit Kaur Nagpal responded:

In April of this year, we took a significant step by voting to make experience of care a protected characteristic when it comes to accessing council services. This was our way of recognising how much of an impact experience of care has on the life chances of young people in our borough, and the importance of carefully supporting them as they transition from care settings. Today, I am pleased to share the strides we have made in translating this commitment into tangible improvements in our policies and practices. These are all on topics identified by care leavers as impacting their lives.

The Care Leavers summit pledges have seen commendable progress, with 47% already achieved, 48% on track, and the remaining 5% under regular review to ensure continuous advancement.

Our initiatives are varied, from ringfenced apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship programmes to free training for staff focusing on key areas affecting care leavers.

Housing options for care leavers, a critical concern, will take centre stage at the upcoming Corporate Parent Committee in January 2024, addressing the theme of independent, affordable housing options for our care leavers.

We've also introduced a dedicated Housing officer, a way to identify those leaving care within our housing database in order to offer them targeted support, and twelve ringfenced affordable opportunities in private housing developments for care leavers.

Collaborations across the council, partnerships with TFL for discounted transport, and waiving prescription charges for care leavers by NHS/West London Health Trust show how we are working across public services to support our care leavers.

We launched the Care Leavers APP, "Ealing Cares," on November 1st, which was designed alongside young people with experience of care and is already getting a lot of use. And on November 17th we hosted "Take Over the Council Day", where care leavers were put into positions of responsibility across the council.

The adoption of Care Experience as a protected characteristic within Ealing is an ongoing programme. While we are forging ahead with local interventions, the national landscape is evolving, and we are actively contributing to the broader discourse on the significance of this new status.

Councillor Malcolm asked Councillor J Anand:

Ealing, like many London boroughs, has many trans residents. Could the portfolio holder comment on the awful bill proposed by Liz Truss that would ban trans women from single-sex spaces and prevent

under-18s from transitioning?

Councillor J Anand responded:

I share your concerns about the potential impact of this legislation on the rights and dignity of trans individuals, particularly in Ealing.

This is an incredibly emotive issue. I would like to openly admit that I am not an expert in trans rights, and I would like to encourage us all to approach this topic, with open-mindedness and empathy for the views and lived experiences of our colleagues and constituents.

This Bill, proposed by a woman who has failed this country on more fronts than I can count, is not designed to benefit anyone, but to sow division.

At its core, this bill is prejudiced and transphobic, and I would question its compliance with Article 14 of the Human Rights Act.

Unilaterally banning trans women from single-sex spaces implies a denial of their gender identity and perpetuates harmful stereotypes that have long marginalised the transgender community and sought to prevent their full participation in society.

Seeking to restrict access to gender transition support and medical care for under-18s demonstrates an alarming lack of empathy for young people grappling with their gender identity and reveals a total lack of commitment to their wellbeing.

In Ealing, we pride ourselves on fostering an inclusive and accepting community that celebrates diversity.

In an environment in which transphobic crimes are increasing, political leaders are stoking division and transgender people's fears for their safety are increasing, I encourage us all to stand in solidarity with our trans neighbours, and work to create spaces where everyone, regardless of their gender identity, is respected, heard, and supported.

Councillor Conti asked Councillor Mahfouz:

I've recently been informed by officers that there is a significant backlog of license applications from private landlords, where applications submitted in January 2023 have yet to be processed. How long is the current backlog and why did the cabinet member allow this to happen?

Councillor Mahfouz responded:

Back in June of 2022, the council applied to the secretary for state to roll out our hugely ambitious private rental sector licensing scheme.

With over 40,000 privately rented properties in the borough, we wanted to take the opportunity to ensure that residents that rely on the private rented sector for housing, have somewhere to live that is safe, secure, and well managed.

The council would have appreciated a little more certainty from the government during the application process, since very similar applications for large scale property licensing programmes by Brent and Liverpool City councils were rejected. By the time that DLUHC made up their minds and granted us permission to roll out the scheme we were left with just 4 months' notice to commence the scheme, between September 2022 and January 2023.

Tremendous credit has to go to council officers for the huge effort in the build-up to the licensing scheme to encourage as many landlords as possible to ensure that they were signed up.

Council officers had diligently forecast an application rate of 10-20% in the first year of the scheme, which was based on comparator data from other boroughs. But by April 2023 over 37% licenses had been applied for. That represents 15,268 applications, and was double the estimated demand.

In some ways this demonstrates that we were victims of our own success in communicating the upcoming changes to local landlords, who were proactive in applying for licences.

I take issue with Cllr Conti throwing around accusations that officers and I aren't on top of the programme. I meet regularly with colleagues to discuss the progress of not only the application processing work, but also on the swift planned expansion of the team, recruiting officers to ensure that applications are being processed and determined as quickly as possible. I have every confidence in the ability of our officers to address outstanding applications.

The real story here is about this administration and our commitment to improving housing standards across the borough, and across tenures. Thousands of residents in Ealing rely on the private rental sector for a roof over their head, that's why the council decided to rollout the most ambitious property licensing scheme in London, that's why we've licensed almost 7,000 private rental properties and are licensing more and more every week, that's why we've sought to ensure that those in private rented homes in Ealing have somewhere safe and secure to rest their head and raise their families.

Councillor Raza asked Councillor Blacker:

Does the portfolio holder agree with me that the recent Autumn Statement fails to address the funding crisis at the heart of our NHS, caused by 13 years of Tory mismanagement?

Councillor Blacker responded:

The Autumn Statement remained conspicuously silent on many critical issues, leaving the well-being of our residents hanging in the balance. For example, the Chancellor's failure to prioritise social care speaks volumes about this Government's misplaced priorities and lack of empathy for those who depend on these essential services.

The NHS represents so much of what is great about Britain, but like so many other elements of this country, it has struggled under 13 years of Conservative Government inattention and underfunding.

The NHS workforce is on its knees, our hospital buildings are crumbling and people in increasingly urgent need of medical care are languishing on waiting lists. The Prime Minister appears to have abandoned his pledge to cut waiting lists, which have trebled under the Conservatives, and is instead blaming NHS staff for the problem.

One million more patients are sitting on NHS waiting lists compared to this time last year. They are struggling in pain and discomfort, in many cases their lives on hold.

These numbers are huge, so it can be easy to forget the human cost of these inadequacies. I spoke to someone recently whose 25-year-old brother is going to have to undergo life-altering brain surgery a second time purely because he had to wait too long for follow-up radiotherapy.

Not only is that heartbreaking on an individual level – for himself, and for his family and friends – it is staggeringly inefficient.

And we feel the ripples of a struggling NHS in our communities. Waiting lists mean more pressure on adult social services as we try to support people living with treatable conditions. Health issues which start small, escalate through difficulty in getting a GP or physiotherapy appointment. Manageable mental health spirals through lack of access to relatively low-intervention options like talking therapy. And that's before we even get into trying to see an NHS dentist ...

Our NHS can transform lives, but its potential is being squandered thanks to a basic failure to prioritise the health and wellbeing of our residents.

Councillor Young asked Councillor Knewstub:

In the Council Plan, that we debated at our last Council meeting in September 2023, we were promised that the first meetings of the so-called 'Town Forums' would be held by December 2023. What has gone wrong?

Councillor Knewstub responded:

We are a couple of months behind our original timeline, it's true. However, this is not because anything has gone wrong, but rather because we have been actively listening and continually responding to the feedback from residents. This has meant we have been able to speak to them about how they want to engage with Town Forums and with the council more widely.

Between July and November, 32 engagement activities took place enabling participants to share their perspectives and experience on civic involvement and how they believed it could be delivered better in the future. This included local councillors, residents, educational institutions, the volunteer, community, and faith sector and council services.

Many of the participants had never taken part in ward forums, and it was their first experience talking about how they saw their role in supporting their local community and what civic participation meant to them. We have successfully collected 489 in-person responses and another 490 survey responses, which is excellent.

Ealing is one of the most diverse boroughs in London, so it was critical that the process of developing new town forum models included participation from all parts of Ealing's communities, particularly those who are often left out of public consultations.

So, we have taken a more targeted approach than originally anticipated, with greater emphasis on those groups that have not traditionally participated in civic engagement. Such as young people, parents and carers and people who do not speak English as a first language.

A broader and deeper engagement approach - including a public survey, 1-2-1 interviews, interactive workshops, and a range of targeted outreach sessions - was designed in collaboration with New Local, an independent think tank who are experts in increasing community participation.

We are really looking forward to holding workshops in each of the seven towns in the new year, when local people will be invited to hear the feedback from the process so far, and agree a town forum model that best meets their needs.

I can't emphasise enough the quality of the conversations that this approach has enabled us to have, and so while of course we always aim to meet project timelines, in this instance the slight overrun has been in the service of a vastly improved outcome.

Councillor Nijhar asked Councillor J Anand:

Can the portfolio holder provide an update on the delivery of the 'Safer Ealing for Women' programme?

Councillor J Anand responded:

Over the last year we have been delivering on the 'Safer Ealing for Women' programme. This is a vital initiative in our commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of women in our community, and I am pleased to be able to give Full Council an update on this work.

Our Male Violence Against Women and Girls strategy has four key components —prevention, stronger support, holding perpetrators to account, and developing a community-coordinated response. It was co-created with the active involvement of residents, including 3,000 women who participated in the Safer Ealing for Women listening exercise. The input of women from across the borough has been invaluable, and has shaped our actions and initiatives.

We addressed the concerns raised by the listening exercises and have taken concrete steps to enhance safety. For example, over 90% of women highlighted the importance of improved street lighting, which led to increased illumination in all residential roads and the upgrade of 3,100 street lighting columns.

We responded to the need for increased surveillance and have installed 24 new high-definition CCTV cameras across the borough and upgraded 20 existing ones.

Recognising the importance of accessible support, we launched a dedicated website serving as a one-stop-shop for advice and links to local support groups for women and girls facing misogyny or unwanted sexual behaviour.

This year, we've also delivered a Healthy Relationships education programme to secondary schools, reaching 1,500 young people, including boys. Specialist training for frontline professionals on domestic abuse and victim support has also been a priority.

In close collaboration with the Metropolitan Police Service, we've organised walk and talk events led by women police officers and awareness and engagement events about Male Violence Against Women and Girls.

As part of our ongoing commitment, we are conducting a follow-up survey to gauge the community's response to actions taken and gather insights for future steps. I encourage all women and girls to participate in this survey and share their ideas via our dedicated website.

Councillor Hamidi asked Councillor Knewstub:

In light of a brand-new cinema opening up in Ealing Broadway since our last full council meeting, can the portfolio holder share what work she is currently doing to support the cultural sector in our borough, particularly in regard to broadening access and addressing geographic disparities across our seven towns?

Councillor Knewstub responded:

I've recently led on supporting our ambitious bid for London Borough of Culture, which majored on broadening access to music and culture across our 7 towns.

At the heart of this bid is our view that all Ealing residents have something to offer, through residents co-creating and attending our cultural events and venues. The bid supports this through reducing disparity by cultural hubs in our seven towns and taking a co-creation approach.

Ealing is stuffed full of creativity and our cultural life is a spectrum, including the formal and the informal. The approach we are taking – that everyone is creative – means that all of these contributions can be valued. So, from Bhangra and Bollywood dance classes to fine art exhibitions, our cultural supports and develops these.

Regardless of the outcome of our bid, we are in the process of developing a cultural directory web resource so the sector can share information and skills, know which venues and opportunities are available and can network more easily. We hope this will launch in the Spring or Summer of next year.

Since I took on this incredible portfolio in May, I have spent a lot of time meeting and speaking with cultural organisations across the borough about how the council can support them and encourage them to grow in a way that means they can better support themselves and each other.

9 Opposition Group Motion for Debate

Councillor Hersch moved, and Councillor Steed seconded the opposition motion for debate. Councillor Blacker moved and Councillor Costigan seconded an amendment to the motion. Councillors Driscoll, Conti, Mahfouz, Knewstub, Johnson, Shaw, Mason and Donnelly responded to the motion and amendment. Councillor Blacker summed up the amendment and Councillor Hersch summed up the motion.

A vote was taken and the amendment was carried.

A vote was taken and it was

RESOLVED: That

Millions of disposable vapes are thrown away each month. Council thanks officers for the work they are doing to tackle vaping from both a public health and environmental perspective and notes that:

- Disposable vapes constitute a fire risk to households, bin lorries and recycling centres due to their lithium batteries.
- Disposable vapes cause significant litter.
- Local Government Association has called for a ban on disposable vapes on environmental and health grounds.
- Vapes are a public health risk to adults and children.
- Disposable vapes are often in brightly coloured packaging, brand names which imitate sweets and attractive flavourings, are attracting under-age teenagers.
- NHS data shows that e-cigarette usage has grown by 50 to 100% in 4 years (2018 to 2021).
- Vaping was meant to help smokers to quit smoking. However, vapes can now be the first exposure to nicotine for young people.

Research by Action on Smoking and Health finding that 40.1% of 11–18-year-olds who had tried vaping had never smoked before. There is a growing issue of vape usage in schools, with nearly 10% of under 18-year-olds having experience of vapes.

- While vaping is considered less harmful to health than smoking cigarettes, some vapes have levels of chemicals which are higher than in cigarettes and may contain heavy metals such as lead, chrome, nickel (neurotoxins, allergens which impair brain development) and other compounds such as carbonyls which are mildly carcinogenic.
- Ealing's Labour Council has recently been awarded funding for a project titled 'Trading Standards initiative to tackle underage vapes use and availability of illicit tobacco products.' This will set out to reduce the prevalence of smoking and vaping and clamp down on illicit usage and is due to be launched in 2024.
- Currently untaxed, vapes are a cheap alternative to cigarettes. The UK market is growing strongly and is valued at some £250m.
- Ealing Council Trading Standards officers have seized over 40,000 illicit vapes since 2021.

- Labour's Shadow Health Secretary has committed to action against the industry in Government.

The Council will build on the existing work it has already done to tackle disposable vape usage and calls for a total ban on disposable vapes in 2024 and notes that with France rolling out a ban this month and an EU-wide ban proposed in 2026 there is a risk that as other markets close, disposable vapes will flood the UK.

The Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State for Health in support of the Local Government Association's position on banning disposable vapes.

The Council resolves to continue the ongoing good work from officers and members to use all applicable regulatory powers to prevent harm from vapes including but not limited to mandatory age-of-sale signage combined with test purchases. The Council resolves to continue to instruct Regulatory Services and officers to clamp down on illicit tobacco products and vapes.

10 Majority Group Motion for Debate

Councillor Donnelly moved, and Councillor Mason seconded the majority group motion for debate. Councillor Malcolm moved and Councillor Ball seconded an amendment. Councillors Brett, Haili, Wesson, Young, Baaklini, Rice, J Anand and Blacker responded to the motion. Councillor Ball summed up the amendment and Councillor Donnelly summed up the motion.

A vote was taken and the amendment fell.

A vote was taken and it was

RESOLVED: That

The Council notes that:

- Ealing Council has had its budget cut by nearly 56% in real terms since 2010 by successive Conservative Governments.
- It was a Conservative Government that crashed our economy yet Ealing's residents are paying the price.
- Local services are facing significant budgetary pressures after 13 years of Tory cuts, yet Councils like Ealing are still being forced to confront ever-rising demand for costly services with shrinking budgets.
- Tory Prime Minister Rishi Sunak boasted about taking money from urban areas to fund more prosperous rural councils, so it's no surprise that areas like Wokingham have only seen 3% reductions compared to Ealing's 56% cut.

- While Ealing Council has managed to balance the budget by making the difficult decisions necessary, local authorities up and down the country are not faring so well. An ever-growing number of councils have already been forced to issue Section 114 notices due to the sustained and systematic underfunding of local government, with many more set to follow suit.

The Council believes that:

- Ealing residents deserve a fair deal, and the Government must step up to appropriately resource the Council to deliver the services residents rely on.
- Vital provisions, including housing, children's services and adult social care require urgent fiscal preservation in order to continue protecting some of the most vulnerable in our borough.
- In order to plan for the long term, local government must have adequate, sustainable and secure funding. It simply isn't tenable to continue forcing councils to cut crucial services and increase council tax after nearly 14 years of austerity.
- Ealing residents must not be forced to pay for the crisis made in Downing Street.

The Council resolves that:

- The Chancellor should reverse the damaging Tory budget cuts to local Government and commit to sustainable and sufficient funding of local services.
- The Tory Government must deliver a fair deal for Ealing and other councils or call a General Election so the country can vote for a Labour Government that will.
- It will continue to press the Chancellor to appropriately resource local government finances so that quality services can be delivered for Ealing residents.

11 Motions not for Debate

RESOLVED:

The Council notes that:

- Ealing has a rich cultural heritage, and Ealing residents have a wealth of talents and traditions.
- Our borough is a microcosm of different cultures, each with a different

array of traditions, food and entertainment.

- Ealing's Borough of Culture bid has already received the backing of thousands of residents, all three of our MPs and a number of local cultural stakeholders, with support still growing.

The Council believes that:

- The diversity of our borough deserves to be celebrated.
- The additional resources which come from becoming the Borough of Culture would enable us to build on our history, and improve cultural life across our seven towns for generations to come.
- We should be building on the excellent work contained in our cultural manifesto.

The Council resolves that it will do everything possible in support of Ealing's bid for London Borough of Culture.

12 Annual Scrutiny Report 2022-23

RESOLVED: That the 2022/23 Annual Scrutiny Report is noted.

13 Treasury Management Q2 2023-24

RESOLVED: That Council

1. Noted the Treasury Management activities and performance against targets for the period to 30 September 2023.
2. Noted the Council's investment balance of £547.235m as at 30 September 2023 of which £455.000m was invested in Debt Management Office (DMO).

14 Urgent Key Decisions Exempted from Call-in

There were no urgent key decisions exempted from Call-in.

Meeting commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting finished: 9.32 pm

Signed:

Dated: Tuesday 5 March 2024

H Tailor (Mayor)