

COUNCIL Minutes

Place

**Council Chamber - Town Hall, Wellington Street,
Woolwich SE18 6PW**

Date

Wednesday 29 June 2016

Time

7.00 pm

Present

The Worshipful Mayor

Councillor Olu Babatola

Councillors:

Tonia Ashikodi

David Gardner

Clive Mardner

Barbara Barwick

Nuala Geary

Christine May

Linda Bird

Christine Grice

Sarah Merrill

Stephen Brain

Matt Hartley

Paul Morrissey

Geoffrey Brighty

John Hills

Matthew Morrow

Mandy Brinkhurst

Denise Hyland

Maureen O'Mara

Peter Brooks

Mark James

Cherry Parker

Matthew Clare

Rajinder James

Gary Parker

Angela Cornforth

Sizwe James

Harpinder Singh

Wynn Davies

Mehboob Khan

Aidan Smith

Spencer Drury

Chris Kirby

Jackie Smith

Mark Elliott

Averil Lekau

David Stanley

John Fahy

Chris Lloyd

Danny Thorpe

Bill Freeman

Allan MacCarthy

Miranda Williams

Minutes

Item No.

1 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Norman Adams, Don Austen, Mick Hayes, Clare Morris, Steve Offord, Denise Scott McDonald, and Ray Walker.

Apologies for lateness were given by Councillors Spencer Drury, Allan MacCarthy, and Harpinder Singh.

2 **Minutes**

Resolved -

That the minutes of the special meeting Council held on 23 March 2016, the minutes of the meeting of the full Council held on 30 March 2016, and the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 18 May 2016 be confirmed and signed as true and accurate records.

3 **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor congratulated those recognised in Her Majesty the Queen's Birthday Honours which included MBEs for Gill Cooney, Head of Tenancy Services and Mrs Marian, a teacher at Gordon Primary School.

The Mayor was pleased to announce that the Council's Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills Directorate had been recognised in the Royal Institute British Architect's Design Awards in relation to the Council's Local Authority New Build bungalow project for older people's housing.

The Mayor noted that the Council's client Knight Dragon had won the "best small commercial building" award at the London Building Control Awards; the Mayor invited Councillor Danny Thorpe, Deputy Leader of the Council, to present the award to Peter Connell and Marcel Hurst from the Council's Building Control Section and Vicky Hurst from Knight Dragon.

The Mayor asked that the Council join him in wishing the departing Borough Commander and the Bishop of Woolwich well in their next endeavours.

The Mayor asked the Council to join him in a minute's silence in memory of Jo Cox MP, who had recently been murdered. (A minute's silence was held)

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Babatola, Barwick, Bird, Brain, Brooks, Cornforth, Elliott, Freeman, Geary, Grice, Hartley, Hills, Hisbani, James M, James S, Khan, Lekau, MacCarthy, Mardner, Morrissey, Parker C, Smith A, Stanley and Williams declared a personal interest in item 16, Motion regarding academies as school governors.

Resolved -

That the list of Councillors' memberships as Council appointed representatives on outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies is noted.

5 Notice of Members wishing to exceed the 5 minute rule

The Council noted that there had been no requests to exceed the five minute rule.

6 Petitions

The following petitions were presented at the meeting;

Subject and Number of Signatures	Presenting Councillor	Lead Department
Parking and speed controls on Vanbrugh Hill 14 signatures	Councillor Chris Lloyd	Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills
Restore free parking behind Eltham Station Remove pay and display spaces on western Glenlea Road 47 signatures	Councillor Matt Clare	Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills

Calling on the Council to help local shops survive the building work in Eltham High Street 764 signatures	Councillor Matt Clare (on behalf of Councillor Spencer Drury)	Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills
Keep Fairy Hill Park and Southwood Park locked overnight Circa 320 signatures	Councillor Matt Hartley	Director of Community Services
Introduction of a Controlled Parking Zone on Kidbrooke Grove 70 signatures	Councillor Geoffrey Brighty	Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills
Reconsider plans to close concierges on Woolwich Common Estate	Councillor Harpinder Singh	Director of Community Services

7 Public Deputations on matters not otherwise on the agenda

The Council noted that there had been no requests for public deputations.

8 Public Questions

The Mayor advised the meeting that notice had been received of 14 written questions by members of the public. The questions and replies, together with the supplementary submissions made during the meeting were attached as Appendix A to the minutes.

9 Questions from Members

The Mayor advised the meeting that notice had been received of 24 written questions. The questions and replies, together with the supplementary questions made during the meeting, were attached as Appendix B to the minutes.

Under procedures for oral question, the Mayor invited questions to Members of the Cabinet for response.

In response to a question from Councillor Sarah Merrill as to whether the Council had any plans following the vote for Brexit to protect its residents and businesses, Councillor Danny Thorpe, Deputy Leader of the Council (Regeneration and Sustainability) explained there were three strands to the Council's post-Brexit planning which broadly was to protect the Council's financial investments; to work with partners who had invested in the Borough to understand the impact of the vote; and the impact on community relations. The Deputy Leader suggested that as a result of the campaign there been an increase in fear and hatred which had led to an increase in hate attacks. Councillor Thorpe stated that he hoped that the Leader of the Opposition, who supported Vote Leave, would disassociate himself from the UKIP poster and condemn the increase in hate crime witnessed since the vote to the leave the European Union.

In response, Councillor Matt Harley stated that he deplored any incident of racism and racially aggravated crime and that the UKIP poster was despicable. However, it was wrong to blame the racist and violent actions of a few on all those that voted to leave the EU and this included 52,000 residents of the Borough.

As a point of clarification the Deputy Leader stated that it was important for all sides to condemn the outbreak of xenophobia and violence and this included those who led locally the Leave Campaign.

In response to a question from Councillor Geoffrey Brighty, as to whether it was acceptable that a number of residents who had written to Highways Officers regarding a controlled parking zone in Kidbroke Grove had received no reply or acknowledgement after two months, Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Transport, Economy and Smart Cities, said that on the face of it that was unacceptable and that he would look into it.

10 Matters for early debate

The Mayor advised that no requests for matters to be taken early had been received.

11 Draft Report on the work of the Audit and Risk Management: Panel during 2015/16

Councillor David Stanley, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, introduced the report.

The Mayor put the matter to the vote and it was unanimously

Resolved -

That the report, setting out the issues considered by the Audit and Risk Management Panel during 2015/16 be noted.

12 Officer Employment Procedures - Constitution Part 4H

The Mayor introduced the report.

The Mayor put the matter to the vote and it was unanimously

Resolved -

That the revised Officer Employment Procedures (Part 4H of the Constitution) attached as an appendix to the report be agreed.

13 Freedom of the Royal Borough of Greenwich

The Mayor introduced the report.

Councillor Denise Hyland, Leader of the Council, thanked all Members for their support for awarding the Freedom of the Borough to Frank Zemke. It was stated that it was hoped to award the certificate in person to Mr Zemke in the near future as a number of Members were due to undertake a Town Twinning visit to Reinickendorf.

The Mayor put the matter to the vote and it was unanimously

Resolved -

That it be agreed to hold a special meeting of the Council on 11 July 2016 to consider awarding the Freedom of the Borough to Frank Zemke, the former Chief Executive of Reinickendorf Council.

14 Petition Responses

Resolved -

That the action taken in response to petitions presented at recent meetings of the Council be noted.

15 Decisions on Executive Functions taken under Urgency Procedures

Councillor Matt Hartley highlighted that it was the second time in about the last six months that a decision had been exempted from call-in and requested that decisions be scheduled earlier to avoid this. Councillor Denise Hyland, Leader of the Council, clarified the reasons for this particular exemption and noted the point made by Councillor Hartley.

Resolved -

That the decision on Executive Functions taken under Urgency Procedures be noted.

16 Motion regarding Academies signed by Councillors Miranda Williams, Linda Bird, Denise Hyland, Wynn Davies, Christine May, Sarah Merrill, Aidan Smith, Danny Thorpe

Councillors Babatola, Barwick, Bird, Brain, Brooks, Cornforth, Elliott, Freeman, Geary, Grice, Hartley, Hills, Hisbani, James M, James S, Khan, Lekau, MacCarthy, Mardner, Morrissey, Parker C, Smith A, Stanley and Williams declared a personal interest in item 16, Motion regarding academies as school governors.

The Mayor advised that an amendment to the motion had been circulated, and that he had received a request from a member of the public to address the Council on the motion to which he had agreed.

In moving the motion Councillor Miranda Williams, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People highlighted the performance of Greenwich schools and the substantial improvements that had been made over recent years to raise standards for its children. It was stated that the Council had resisted attempts for its schools to become sponsored academies and had worked hard to bring together schools to improve practice, both in teaching and leadership. She noted the work of governors, headteachers and support staff and their commitment to serving Greenwich school children and she stated Greenwich wanted to sustain and build on the excellent improvements of recent years. Greenwich's commitment to children's education was steadfast.

Councillor Williams stated that Greenwich's strategy was to increase capacity so that there were enough school places for the growing population and to put children first. The aim was to keep the local family of schools together but with budget cuts this was made more difficult. The National School's

Funding Formula was expected to have a hugely negative impact, and would surely lead to standards dropping across the country. In relation to ensuring that there was sufficient capacity all new build schools were required to be either academies or free schools and the need for consultation with parents about the conversion to academies had been removed by the Government who had also removed the need for there to be elected parent governors. Councillor Williams stated that the Government was obsessed with structures, removing any focus on the standards of children's' education, and had a dogmatic agenda on forcing all schools to become academies. It was stated that the Council shared the feelings of anger and frustration of teachers and parents and would continue to do all that it could persuade the Government to put children first.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Linda Bird noted the Council continued to challenge the intention of the government to privatise the education system. The motion dealt with the government's plan to convert all schools into academies while at the same time claiming to have executed a u-turn. However, the change in school's national funding was the mechanism for forced academisation. It was stated that Greenwich would lose £2.2 million for education through the national funding formula for schools and that Greenwich schools would have no alternative but to find alternative resources to maintain high education standards while at the same time trimming their budgets by at least 13% over the next three years. Councillor Bird commented that the government had created grave problems with state school provision. Greenwich needed to challenge that and also find ways of supporting Greenwich schools as they faced a difficult and uncertain future. The motion expressed the intent to form a not for profit company to continue school support, and challenged the government's removal of statutory consultation and parent voice, and demonstrated that Greenwich Council was joining other London councils in opposing the government's education reforms.

The Mayor invited Eileen Glover to address Council on the motion.

Ms Glover spoke in support of the motion, however, she felt grammar schools and free schools should be added to the mix. She explained that as a governor of Crown Woods she had voted for it to become an academy, but with deep reservation over the sponsorship. She noted as a result governors were removed from the new academy governing body. It was stated that that academies could be disconnected from their local community and sponsored schools would become businesses.

Councillor Matt Hartley moved the following amendment to the motion.

Delete the first five paragraphs and **replace** them with the following;

“This Council recognises that the education landscape is changing nationally, and that in the future all schools will become Academies outside of local authority control. This Council believes that it has a responsibility to support schools that choose to convert to Academy status in this transitional period, and that taking a pragmatic and non-ideological approach is in the best interests of Greenwich children.

This Council notes that school performance in the borough has significantly improved, and that in addition to the impact of central government policies such as the Pupil Premium since 2010, this has in part been achieved by schools working together to improve standards rapidly where required. This Council believes that this approach of schools working together, regardless of their status, should continue.

This Council therefore requests that the executive sets up a new Education Board to act as a collaborative strategic body to;

- *Ensure that school-to-school partnership working continues across Greenwich, regardless of schools’ legal status*
- *Allow the Council to retain an influence in broader education matters in the borough as its role in delivering education directly continues to decrease*
- *Maximise opportunities to link up school decision making with other areas of Council policy in the new education landscape*

The proposed Education Board should be based on the pro-active, forward-looking and pragmatic response to the government’s White Paper developed by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council.

The Board would incorporate the existing Schools Forum, discharging its current statutory functions, act as a stakeholder engagement body in the new education landscape, and also make policy recommendations to the Council and the Greenwich family of schools, regardless of their legal status.

“The Education Board would ensure an effective vehicle for two-way consultation with all stakeholders and the Council, and would comprise the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, along with representatives from individual schools, Federations of schools, individual academies and Multi-Academy Trusts, with a role for the Regional Schools Commissioner and other local stakeholders.”

At the beginning of the sixth paragraph, starting “This Council will continue to take positive steps...”, insert the following

“Through the Education Board,”

Delete the final two paragraphs.

Councillor Hartley stated that he did not think his view was not that different from the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. He stated that the education landscape was changing and what was needed was to design a schools policy based on what was better for children, not what was best for Labour Councillors’ pride, the Council’s asset register, or NUT officials. He suggested the original motion changed nothing about the Council’s approach to academy conversion and was just political. He praised the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People for having taken a pragmatic approach when she was appointed to that position and he referred to the Cabinet Member’s letter to governors saying that the Council was going to do what’s right for the children and help schools find an arrangement that works for them. He publicly supported her approach because pragmatism was the right approach to take. Councillor Hartley refuted the claim that the Government’s policy was ideological, noting that academies were introduced by the Labour government. The academies programme had been expanded because it devolved power to the experts, teachers and head teachers, and allowed schools to innovate and drive up standards.

Councillor Hartley stated that the Government had stepped back from requiring all schools from becoming academies by a certain date, and that as local authorities played less of a role in the school system so the level of funding for their central services were being reduced, and that the removal of parent governors was about making sure governors were chosen and appointed because of their skills. He suggested that Greenwich should be forward looking and constructive in its response to the white paper and continue with the Council’s pragmatism. He proposed, using Southend Council’s Education Board, as an example of best practice, which would act as a collaborative strategic body to ensure regardless of a school’s legal standing they worked together to improve standards on a school to school level. It would allow the Council to retain an influence in broader education matters, and would maximise opportunities to link different areas of policy. Councillor Hartley in conclusion stated that all local authority schools in Greenwich would become an academy eventually, and they all needed to work together to find ways to make this new landscape work in the best interest of the children.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Mark Elliott. He recognised that collaborative working between schools was a huge factor in the improving performance in schools; first there had been the clusters defined by geography, then the soft federations defined by purpose or shared objective. That was the future if the Council was to continue the outstanding progress and improvement across schools. Councillor Elliott stressed the importance of collaboration between schools and that they should all be innovating and looking to the future. The proposal to establish an Education Board to share best practice between a wider range of schools, was supported as was the need for the Board to look at 3 further objectives: to look beyond the Borough to draw on ideas from schools across the UK and internationally, to provide close scrutiny of the new administrative functions for schools like procurement and human resources, and to work to ensure the interaction between schools and other children's services remained robust. The Council needed to support schools and their leaders, and dampen down the politically motivated hysteria which worried parents as it should be about pragmatic, evidence-based decision making.

Councillor Miranda Williams did not accept the amendment.

Councillor Denise Hyland, Leader of the Council, spoke in opposition to the amendment. She stated this was not about structures it was about school leadership; high quality teaching and learning; and about how vitally important schools were to their local community. The Leader gave thanks to the Director of Children Services and all her work and emphasised that the Director had been singularly focused on raising achievement within the Borough. The Leader asked Council to show appreciation to Gillian Palmer, Director of Children Services, who was retiring in August 2016.

(A round of applause was given for Gillian Palmer, Director of Children Services)

The Leader of the Council noted the recent news of an academy in another borough that they had got 'inadequate' right across the board in every single category. That academy had failed, and it was sad to note that Greenwich children and the children from that borough would be going to that school. It proved the point it was all about leadership and vision, about inspiring and motivating young people to achieve, and giving children a sense of aspiration rather than structures.

Councillor Hyland stated that the Council had made clear that community schools could stay with Greenwich as long as possible, but academies and any multi-academy trusts could also be part of that Greenwich family of schools.

While they would not stand in the way of a school becoming part of a multi-academy trust or sponsoring another school the Council remained completely and utterly opposed to forced academisation. The government was condemned for taking the school community and parents out of the consultative process and off governing bodies as that was a fundamental affront to democracy.

In relation to the amendment the Leader said that an Education Board would be superfluous as they had an Executive with an able Cabinet Member, the Schools Forum, and a Headteachers forum, they did not need another tier of bureaucracy which would just detract from the impetus of what they were doing to improve schools.

Councillors Mark James, Christine Grice, David Stanley, Wynn Davies, John Fahy, Linda Bird, spoke against the amendment. It was not felt that there was any substantial or credible evidence to support academisation, rather the evidence was clear that a well-led and -run local authority, like Greenwich, working in co-operation with schools was the best way to raise standards. It was felt that structural change did not drive forward improvement, and that public money was being wasted on a top-down reorganisation. It was highlighted that lots of academies had performed badly, and reference was made to comments made by the government's own Chief Inspector, the Sutton Trust, fullfact.org and various Conservative councillors from around the country. It was highlighted that there were concerns over governance and financial mismanagement, there would be a loss of accountability in removing parents and consultation, and that removing public accountability invited abuse and fraud of public money. It was felt that forced academisation was part of a long term ideological plan to privatise education; that it sought to end national collective bargaining; end local accountability; and deny parents the right to be actively engaged with their schools at all levels. It was stressed that schools were a place of learning not a business. It was commented that the Labour Party established academies to support schools, with the aim of addressing the significant underperforming of a very small number of schools in weak local authorities that were not addressing that problem with vigour. It was recognised that Greenwich had an effective track record of supporting schools and helping them to improve, that it achieved its results through the leadership of the Director of Children's Services and her staff, and by working collectively with all schools. The extensive opposition to forced academisation was noted and it was suggested that they should use the opportunity to encourage schools to think again before they switched to academy status. The setting up of a non-profit company to work with local

schools, whether academies of community schools, and the establishment of a working party, was welcomed.

The Mayor put the amendment to the vote and the amendment was not carried.

Councillors Sarah Merrill, Stephen Brain, Mehboob Kahn, Paul Morrissey, Allan MacCarthy, Aiden Smith, and Jackie Smith spoke in support of the motion. It was commented that having all academies was not the Labour Party policy when introduced, and they were always done in consultation with the community, and of the 267 academies then created the Ofsted reports all showed marked improvement but this was a different policy, it was an ideological approach. It was highlighted that education performance had dropped across England under the Conservative Government, and if it continued, further erosion in education standards would lead to the worst performance in a generation and affect young people's opportunities. It was suggested that the problem was the government was not considering what was needed locally and was not working with everyone in the local community. It was about centralisation, and schools were no longer accountable to their local community but to Whitehall.

It was stated that the government should reinstate parent and local authority governors. Furthermore, the view was that the government was seeking a free market solution and that the policy had been a poor use public money with Ofsted reporting that academies carrying a £100million surplus, money which should be spent on education. Members contended that the government wanted to make all schools academies, and all new schools have to be free schools or academies, and that was ideological. The achievement of Greenwich's Children's Services in challenging, supporting and in bringing all schools together to do what was best for children was recognised but it was feared that all of that work could now unravel.

Councillor Matt Hartley gave thanks to Gillian Palmer, the Director of Children's Services. He contended that the motion was for show and would not change the Council's pragmatic approach. He said that forced academisation, privatisation, the end of parent governors were all things that were not happening. They all agreed that schools, whatever their legal status, should stay in the Greenwich family of schools, and the amendment suggested a way of doing that. He commented that Britain had previously been near the bottom of international league tables for education, but now Britain was rising up them. He said they should all do what is best for Greenwich and its children.

In closing the debate Councillor Miranda Williams said that the government was playing politics with children and schools and that they should leave high performing boroughs like Greenwich to get on with the job they had proven they were more than capable of doing; the government believed that structures not standards were what mattered.

The Mayor put the motion to the vote and it was

Resolved –

The Royal Borough of Greenwich opposes this Government's ideological drive to force all our schools to become academies.

This council believes that no single system of school organisation has a monopoly on success and that a one size fits all model as proposed by the White Paper would not deliver the educational outcomes that Greenwich schools have achieved.

While the Government has partially u-turned on proposals outlined in their white paper we know that the Tories' determination for an all academy system remains unchanged and the National Funding Formula is just one mechanism to achieve this. This council is appalled at the reduction of the Education Services Grant to the Local Authority and the effect it will have on Greenwich children.

The Royal Borough has demonstrated over many years that it is not structural change that raises educational standards; Royal Greenwich has proven that an effective partnership between the council, parents, teachers, governors and central government is the best way to work with schools to achieve high standards for our children.

This Council believes that the removal of statutory consultation with school communities when school governing bodies are considering academy conversion is irresponsible, which along with the removal of parent governors from governing bodies, is an affront to democracy. This council believes that these issues need to be re-addressed by the Government and that both consultation and parent governors be reinstated under statute.

This Council will continue to take positive steps to support schools in the Greenwich family of schools, with this in mind, the Council will set up a working group, consisting of governors, teachers and trade unions to consider best practice for schools that convert to academy status to recommend best practice for schools considering conversion to academy

status including consultation, governance and measures to maintain high standards and fairness in education provision.

This Council supports the setting up of a non-profit making company that can trade with our schools to continue to support school improvement.

This Council calls on the Secretary of State for Education to demonstrate how the gradual erosion of Local Authority funding and the conversion of all schools to academy status will improve the educational outcomes for all children in Royal Greenwich.

The Council re-affirms its commitment to support those schools who wish to remain as community schools for as long as they can, and to continue to work with the Greenwich family of schools whatever their organizational structure, to deliver excellence in educational provision. The Council further calls on the government to recognise that what matters is the leadership and high quality teaching and learning - not the type or structure of school.

17 Motion regarding Help Eltham High Street signed by Councillors Matt Hartley, Mark Elliott, Geoff Brighty, Mandy Brinkhurst, Matt Clare, Spencer Drury, John Hills, Nuala Geary (as amended by Councillors Thorpe and Bird)

The Mayor advised that an amendment to the motion had been circulated, and that he had received a request from a member of the public to address the Council on the motion to which he had agreed.

Councillor Matt Clare moved the motion as follows:

‘Council notes that while Eltham High Street should ultimately benefit from the current improvement project, in the shorter term, shops on the High Street have been seriously hit by a decline in footfall and trade since the improvement works started in April. In particular Council understands that sentiments expressed in an editorial in the June edition of the SE9 magazine reflect the fact that many shoppers are choosing to go elsewhere, as under a section entitled “The High Street”, Mark Wall wrote:

“Anyone been there lately?

Followed by:

I am ashamed to say I have been not visiting the High Street as often as usual for shopping....”

Council acknowledges that many businesses are struggling and this is having a devastating effect on smaller, independent traders. While the long term plan to regenerate Eltham High Street intends to bring more shoppers there, the short term effect of the reduced parking, difficulty in navigating the pavements and disruption to travel along the road means that there has been a substantial reduction in trade.

Specific examples of the impact include:

- The White Hart public house experiencing a decline of £2,500 in year on year takings for the week starting 13th June.*
- Cafe SE9 seeing the minimum take for a day drop by 40%, leading to the proprietor falling behind on her rent.*
- In common with other shops in the Eltham Arcade takings at Coffee Town have at least halved. As a result, Coffee Town have laid off one member of staff and Business Rates were not paid for June.*
- The footfall to the Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice Shop has dropped by 1,000 compared to the same quarter last year.*

Council acknowledges the risk that many independent traders will go out of business if they do not receive help during the 18-month regeneration programme and that action urgently needs to be taken to help Eltham's shops (of all sizes) survive the disruption.

To help Eltham High Street through the disruption, Council requests that the administration implements one or more of the following on an urgent basis;

- A time-limited business rate exemption for all Eltham High Street shops to be in place at least until the pavements are navigable again.*
- Introduction of free parking in Eltham while the regeneration works are going on, to be considered in the Sainsbury's and/or Orangery Road car park.*
- An advertising campaign around the High Street to remind people that the shops remain open during the works.*

Beyond these urgent interventions, Council requests that Officers produce a report to the next Cabinet meeting evaluating further options which might help Eltham High Street's shops survive the disruption.'

Councillor Clare stated that the work to the High Street was welcome but that consideration needed to be given of the impact on business. It was questioned whether the works should have been phased to minimise disruption and whether further consideration could be given to the parking

situation. Councillor Clare proposed that given the loss of income consideration should be given to introducing a time limited business rate relief.

Councillor Spencer Drury seconded the motion, stating that the traffic in Eltham High Street was dreadful and people no longer going to the High Street. Councillor Drury stated that he had met with local businesses and that as a result of the disruption shops might have to lay off staff or cut overtime. Whilst supporting the regeneration works it was felt that more needed to be done to protect the livelihood of small businesses which had seen a substantial drop in trade. The suggested exemption for business rates had been done before in other situations and would help address some of the financial concerns. Councillor Drury also advised that further work was required in relation to consultation with and involvement of the local traders in the regeneration works.

The Mayor invited Eileen Glover to address Council on the motion.

Ms Glover raised the problems caused to disabled people and those with buggies by the regeneration works. She suggested yellow banding on the barrier feet for the visually impaired, and also better signage for pedestrians. She asked that the Council work with GAVS on the matter.

Councillor Danny Thorpe, Deputy Leader of the Council (Regeneration and Sustainability) moved an amendment to the motion. He stated that the Council was proud of the scheme to redevelop Eltham High Street and the extent of the works. It was stated that the works were being undertaken to ensure completion by Christmas, which was the busiest time for the High Street, and that had meant a phased approach was not appropriate. Councillor Thorpe stated that the Council was in constant communication with the businesses on the High Street and the priority was to deliver a successful scheme.

Councillor Linda Bird seconded the amendment and stated that small businesses had visited her surgery with issues regarding access, inconvenience and noise. It was stated that the concerns were relayed to Clive Efford MP and the Cabinet Member and the issues addressed.

Councillor Clare did not accept the amendment.

The Mayor put the amendment to the vote and the amendment was carried.

Councillor Wynn Davies stated all ward councillors were in favour of the regeneration scheme and questioned the number of complaints that Councillor Drury had received; and whether they had been forwarded onto the Cabinet Member and Officers. The importance of all parties working together to bring about the regeneration of Eltham High Street was stressed.

Councillor Danny Thorpe closed the debate.

The Mayor put the motion as amended to the vote and it was

Resolved –

Council notes the on-going work taking place on Eltham High St, as part of the Council led regeneration scheme. Council is proud to acknowledge the hard work of many residents and business representatives, who have been involved in the design and creation of the scheme from the start. As well as a large number of Council led meetings, Council notes the hard work of Clive Efford MP, who has held a number of public meetings to engage and involve the community in this scheme.

Council is keen to ensure that the works to the High St are completed as quickly as possible, in particular before the very important Christmas shopping season gets underway, which is a very busy time for the High St.

In the interim, Council reaffirms its support to work with all businesses on the High Street to minimise the impact of disruption. Both the Council and its contractors continue to liaise with affected businesses on a daily basis. A drop in shop is open daily and the Regeneration Team are liaising with businesses up and down the High Street to address any issues as they happen. The Leader, Deputy Leader and Clive Efford MP will also be hosting a coffee morning on the High Street this coming weekend.

Council is also continuing to ensure that Eltham is a vibrant and attractive place to shop and socialise during this work. Council is sure that the forthcoming Eltham Music Festival and Greenwich & Docklands International Festival (with events taking place in Well Hall Pleasaunce) will generate additional opportunities for local shops and businesses.

Council will continue to monitor the situation over the coming weeks and months and will work with businesses to understand any issues of concern and ensure the project is delivered on time and on budget.

18 Motion regarding Free cash machines and financial inclusion signed by Councillors Matt Hartley, Mark Elliott, Geoff Brighty, Mandy Brinkhurst, Matt Clare, Spencer Drury, John Hills, Nuala Geary

The Mayor stated that the mover of the motion Councillor Matt Hartley, following discussions with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Anti-Poverty, Councillor Averil Lekau, had agreed to amend the wording. The Mayor stated that paragraph 7 and its bullet points should be deleted and replaced with “*Council calls upon the executive to develop a package of measures to deliver a wider network of Link machines*”. The Council agreed that the change to the motion.

The Motion, as amended, was moved by Councillor Matt Hartley who highlighted the importance to residents having access to free cash machines and the difficulties caused where charges were applied. It was stated that a range of measures, including those detailed in the original motion, needed to be pursued to ensure an increase in the availability of free to use cash machines.

Councillor Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member for Housing & Anti-Poverty, seconded the motion as amended. Councillor Lekau stated that the Council took anti-poverty seriously and acknowledged that the location of free to use cash machines exacerbated inequality in the Borough. The Council was informed that discussions were being with Link’s Head of Customer Affairs for Link on the matter.

Councillor Denise Hyland, Leader of the Council, added that Teresa Pearce MP was campaigning on this issue and to establish a wider network of free to use cash machines.

Councillor Nuala Geary welcomed the cross-party support for the motion.

Councillor Matt Hartley closed the debate.

The Mayor put the amended motion to the vote and it was

Unanimously Resolved –

Council notes the importance of cash as a budgeting tool for many residents in the borough, and particularly for those on low incomes.

Council notes that Link ATM network data shows there are 65 fee-charging cash machines in or on the edge of the Royal Borough of Greenwich – 34% of

the total. These 65 machines charge anywhere between £0.99 and £1.99 per transaction – equating to a fee of between approximately 10% and 20% for the smallest commonly available withdrawal of £10.

Research by Toynbee Hall has previously found that people on low incomes who rely on pay-to-use machines spend between £3.70 and £9.25 every week on charges just to access their cash. Not only is this money lost from often stretched household budgets, but much of it is lost to the local economy.

Council is concerned that while our high streets and town centres are currently well served by free cash machines, many smaller shopping parades and corner shops in residential areas either have no cash machine or only a fee-charging ATM, often available only at certain times.

Council further notes that there are three significantly sized areas in the borough where there is no free access to cash withdrawals – in a sizeable part of Woolwich, the whole of Shooters Hill, and in the entirety of residential Thamesmead – and further small pockets where access could be improved.

Council therefore requests that the administration develops a package of measures to increase the availability of free cash machines where needed, and to raise awareness of their availability, as part of its Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Council calls upon the executive to develop a package of measures to deliver a wider network of Link machines.

Council supports the London Fairness Commission’s recommendation that the Mayor of London should “work with banks and the Link consortium to raise awareness about the number of fee-charging cash machines in London areas”.

Council further supports the efforts of Frank Field MP to secure a commitment from the Government to introduce an effective regulatory system to monitor and improve access to free-to-use ATMs across the UK, and requests that the Leader writes to the Economic Secretary to the Treasury to support further action on a national level.

The meeting closed at 10.14 pm

Chair
