

COUNCIL Minutes

Place Held Remotely

Date Wednesday 27 January 2021

Time 7.09 pm

Present The Worshipful Mayor

Linda Bird

Councillors:

Olu Babatola	Patricia Greenwell	Christine May
Stephen Brain	Matt Hartley	Dominic Mbang
Geoffrey Brighty	Mick Hayes	Sarah Merrill
Peter Brooks	Ian Hawking	Matthew Morrow
Matthew Clare	John Hills	Anthony Okereke
Angela Cornforth	Denise Hyland	Maureen O'Mara
Ann-Marie Cousins	Sizwe James	Gary Parker
Charlie Davis	Adel Khaireh	Linda Perks
Gary Dillon	Mehboob Khan	Denise Scott-McDonald
Spencer Drury	Chris Kirby	Aidan Smith
Leo Fletcher	Averil Lekau	David Stanley
Nigel Fletcher	Chris Lloyd	Roger Tester
Bill Freeman	Mariam Lolavar	Danny Thorpe
David Gardner	Clive Mardner	Miranda Williams

A webcast of the meeting of the Council is displayed on the Council's [YouTube Channel](#) for a period of twelve months subsequent to the meeting.

Minutes

Item No.

1 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Norman Adams, Mark James, Rajinder James and Jackie Smith

Apologies for leaving early were given by Councillors Bill Freeman and Aidan Smith

2 **Minutes**

Resolved –

That the minutes of the Meeting held on 25 November 2020, with a clerical amendment to Item 6 submission of petitions and the Councillors' names, be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

3 **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor reminded Members that it had been Holocaust Memorial Day that day, the theme of which was 'Be the light in the darkness'. A recording of the online ceremony was available on the Council's [Youtube Channel](#).

The Mayor noted with sadness the death of Len Newland. Newland had been Chair and otherwise active with the Shrewsbury Park Residents Association for many years, and had been Chair of Shooters Hill Safer Neighbourhood Panel. Newland was for many years associated with Shooters Hill Golf Club. He had received a Civic Award in 2015

The Mayor also noted the deaths of Mohant Sekhon, who was the Mayor Consort of Dr Jagir Sekhon OBE while she was mayor, and was her husband for 52 years, and also the death of Sean, son of Councillor John Fahy.

The Mayor regretfully announced that her partner, Tom Backelin, had passed away that week at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The Mayor thanked all the wonderful team there who taken care of him.

The Mayor stated that her thoughts were with those across the Council and borough who had also lost their loved ones. The Mayor acknowledged the

sadness many families were currently experiencing. COVID had made a huge impact on the community. The Mayor recognised how heartbreaking it was for families who could not visit relatives in hospitals. The Mayor noted the work of front line hospital workers and care teams, and commented on the Project Hope initiative

The Mayor was proud that the Royal Borough of Greenwich has been so proactive in addressing the pandemic, for example with the work on test and trace centres. It was noted that the Communities Secretary announced that Greenwich would receive money to support the Community Champion scheme and further Greenwich's work with at risk groups and to help promote vaccination locally. The Mayor urged all the citizens of the Royal Borough of Greenwich to take the vaccination when the opportunity arose.

The Mayor called on Council to give a minute's reflection as a sign of respect and support for the families, doctors, nurses care workers and volunteers in their community, and for those near to them who had passed away.

Council held a minute silence

The leaders of the two parties, Councillor Danny Thorpe and Councillor Nigel Fletcher, offered their condolences to the Mayor, expressed their sympathies for the families mentioned who had suffered a loss, and commented on the affect on the community of the pandemic.

4 Declarations of Interest

Resolved –

1. That the list of Councillors' memberships as Council appointed representatives on outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies is noted.
2. That the following declarations be noted:

Councillors Matt Clare, Denise Hyland, Sizwe James, Clive Mardner, and Dominic Mbang declared a financial interest in agenda item 8, as owners or partners of owners of a second property in the Borough.

Councillor Sizwe James declared a personal interest in Item 9 in that he was the partner of Councillor Rajinder James.

5 Notice of Members wishing to exceed the 5 minute rule

Notice had been received that Councillor Anthony Okereke wished to exceed the 5 minute rule for Item 12

6 Submission of Petitions

The following petitions were presented at the meeting:

Subject and Number of Signatures	Presenting Councillor	Lead Department
Petition Greenwich Council for the removal of speed bumps in Halfway Street 39 signatures	Councillor Pat Greenwell	Directorate of Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills
Support For West Greenwich Traffic Reduction Modal Filters 48 signatures	Councillor Mehboob Khan	Directorate of Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills
Support For West Greenwich Traffic Reduction Modal Filters 59 signatures	Councillor Mehboob Khan	Directorate of Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills
Support For West Greenwich Traffic Reduction Modal Filters 73 signatures	Councillor Mehboob Khan	Directorate of Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills
Support For West Greenwich Traffic Reduction Modal Filters 97 signatures	Councillor Mehboob Khan	Directorate of Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills
Support For West Greenwich Traffic Reduction Modal Filters 136 signatures	Councillor Mehboob Khan	Directorate of Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills

Petition the Royal Borough of Greenwich to reconsider the West Greenwich Traffic Management Scheme
176 signatures

Councillor
Mehboob Khan

Directorate of
Regeneration,
Enterprise and
Skills

Barrier in Lemmon Road
18 signatures

Councillor
Chris Lloyd

Directorate of
Housing and
Safer
Communities

7 Oral Questions by Councillors to Cabinet Members or Committee Chairs

The Mayor invited questions to Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs for response.

Councillor Geoffrey Brighty asked the Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport what recent contact had there been with Lewisham Council on whether the South Row closure was to be reintroduced and whether Lewisham would be undertaking consultation with residents about the matter, and what their view was on the recent ruling by the high court against TfL. Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport, replied that there had been a conversation with Lewisham's Head of Highways on the previous Tuesday and it had been confirmed that they were not planning to reintroduce the South Row modal filter in the foreseeable future; there was an Officer liaison meeting the next week and he might get a more definitive answer then. With regard to the High Court decision the Cabinet Member advised that they might get more information next week but he thought it would impact Lewisham more than Greenwich because they had introduced their schemes with temporary orders rather than experimental orders. It was not for Greenwich to form a view on Lewisham's situation yet. If he found out more information he would let him know.

Councillor Charlie Davis sought confirmation from the Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport that residents in Horn Park would be consulted about the implementation of modal filters there and that any changes would be implemented with the support of a majority of all residents. Councillor Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Transport indicated that a view as to the kind of consultation would be taken after speaking to Ward Councillors in the coming weeks.

Councillor Nigel Fletcher asked the Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills for an update on the setting up of a buy local scheme and could she commit to cancel any steep rises in Council rents for local businesses. Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills, highlighted that they had run a local campaign but it had been deeply impacted by the pandemic; it was accepted that a lot of it was directed towards the tourism aspect and that was being looked at. They were considering again things like the Greenwich Card, but it was recognised that many people had switched from cards to apps and so they were looking at how technology could be used moving forward. They were looking at both main high streets and secondary smaller shopping areas and how to appeal to people in those areas, particularly in light of the pandemic where lots of people wanted to stay close to their homes. The Cabinet Member advised that business rates did not fall under her portfolio.

Councillor Matt Clare asked the Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills what could be done to attract retailers to the borough's town centres, and what could be done to encourage any businesses which still refused to take card payments to also accept electronic payments. Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills, replied that they were working with partners in Local London on how to make their high streets more effective and on how they were going to look in the future. The Council's business team were in constant conversation with high street businesses. They were also involved with the Chamber of Commerce and there was also talks with neighbouring boroughs about what there were doing with their high streets. The Cabinet Member said they wanted to enable shoppers to pay however they wanted, they understood some preferred cash especially the elderly. They had been working with South East Enterprise, for example, who helped local business with the digital side of things, which included a lot of small businesses and small shops.

Councillor Mehboob Khan raised with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth the cladding issue on the New Haddo estate and what could be done to help residents resolve outstanding issues with the freeholder, and asked about the amount of affordable housing on the Ravensbourne Wharf development which residents felt should have been higher. Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth, replied that that they were in touch with the managing agents for estate. She understood New Haddo residents through their resident associations were holding calls with the managing agents, and she would like to meet with residents. The Cabinet Member noted that the London Fire Brigade was the lead body and it was up to them what actions needed to be taken with regard to safety compliance. She understood that fire alarms were going to be installed in the blocks and

she would find out if the cost of that would impact on residents. She was aware that the building managers had applied to the Building Safety Fund but that they were still awaiting confirmation of getting funding. The Cabinet Member replied that with regard to the Ravensbourne Wharf development while she had not been happy with the affordable housing offer the proposal that went to Planning Board had been compliant under the national policy framework, the London Plan, and with the GLA.

Councillor Spencer Drury sought confirmation from the Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities that the bowling clubs in Eltham, Blackheath and Bostall Heath had closed and if so would he review the Cabinet's funding scheme. Councillor Adel Khaireh, Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities, stated that the Blackheath club was to move to Well Hall, but that he had not heard that the Bostall Heath club was closing. Officers had been working with the clubs to help them secure funding and increase their membership

Councillor Mariam Lolavar sought clarification from the Leader of the Council about the timescales of the decision to close schools and the Department of Education intervention. Councillor Danny Thorpe, Leader of the Council, explained that on the 13 December it was clear that the virus was spreading exponentially in Greenwich and London and the decision was taken to ask schools to move to a more mixed mode but not to close, indeed schools had never closed throughout the duration of the pandemic. Astonishingly they received a threat of legal action from the Secretary of State for Education, just after the Secretary of State for Health had warned Parliament about the new variant of Covid. The Leader stated he was keen to get children back into schools but the Prime Minister himself had described schools as "vectors of transmission". He said the government needed to explain the actions they were to take to prevent transmission in schools and to build confidence amongst teachers so that they could get children back into school.

8 Council Tax Base 2021/22

Having declared an interest Councillors Matt Clare, Denise Hyland, Sizwe James, Clive Mardner and Dominic Mbang were not present in the virtual meeting for the duration of the item. As internet connection was disrupted for Councillor Maureen O'Mara she was not included in the recorded vote.

The Mayor advised that the report had been considered by Cabinet and that Cabinet had agreed to recommend that Council agrees the recommendations.

Councillor Chris Kirby, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources moved the recommendations in the report, highlighting the issues around empty properties, the increase in people applying for local council tax support, and that they had seen the lowest number of new homes on stream

In accordance with The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, the Chief Executive called a recorded vote for the proposed amendment and decisions required.

In respect of the decisions required.

Councillors O. Babatola, L. Bird, S. Brain, G. Brighty, P. Brooks, A. Cornforth, A. Cousins, C. Davis, G. Dillon, S. Drury, L. Fletcher, N. Fletcher, B. Freeman, D. Gardner, P. Greenwell, M. Hartley, M. Hayes, I. Hawking, J. Hills, A. Khaireh, M. Khan, C. Kirby, A. Lekau, C. Lloyd, M.Lolavar, C. May, S. Merrill, M. Morrow, A. Okereke, G. Parker, L. Perks, D. Scott-McDonald, A. Smith, D. Stanley, R. Tester, D. Thorpe, and M. Williams voted for the recommendations.

No Members voted against the recommendations. No Members abstained from voting on the recommendations.

Resolved -

1. That a council tax base for the whole authority area for 2021/22 of 82,858.74 in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 be agreed.
2. That an additional council tax base for the Gloucester Circus Garden Square area of the authority for 2021/22 of 97.76 be agreed.
3. That a continuance in 2021/22 of the Council Tax discount of 0% on Class A & Class B dwellings (second homes) and Class C & D dwellings (empty homes) be agreed.
4. That a continuance of a Council Tax premium of 100% in 2021/22 in respect of Long Term Empty dwellings for dwellings empty for up to 5 years be agreed.

5. That a continuance of a Council Tax premium of 200% in 2021/22 in respect of Long Term empty dwellings, for dwellings empty between 5 and 10 years be agreed.
6. That a Council Tax premium of 300% in 2021/22 in respect of Long Term empty dwellings, for dwellings empty longer than 10 years be agreed.
7. That a continuance in 2021/22 of the Council Tax discount of 100% in respect of Royal Borough of Greenwich resident care leavers, aged under 25, in line with the decision of Council in March 2017 be agreed.
8. That no changes will be made to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme adopted by the Council on 29 January 2020 and the Scheme will be continued for 2021/22 be agreed.
9. That the council tax base relevant to the Southern Region of the Environment Agency for flood defence levy apportionment purposes in 2021/22 is 8,287.71 be noted.
10. That that the council tax base relevant to the Thames Region of the Environment Agency for flood defence levy apportionment purposes in 2021/22 is 74,571.03 be noted.

9 Dispensation From The Six Month Rule: Councillor Rajinder James

Having declared an interest, Councillor Sizwe James, was not present in the virtual meeting for the duration of the item.

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

Resolved -

That a dispensation for Councillor Rajinder James from the six month rule up to and including 27 January 2021 be agreed.

10 Decisions On Executive Functions Taken Under Urgency Procedures

The Mayor moved the report.

Councillor Nigel Fletcher drew attention to the government funding which some of the decisions related to, and he called for continuing the support to the Royal Heritage Trust.

Councillor Danny Thorpe, Leader of the Council, commented that although funding streams had been made available during the pandemic this followed on from the Council having to fund feeding of children and families in the borough as a result of government austerity. He hoped the current government funding was a recognition that well-funded public services were needed and that more government funding would be forthcoming.

Resolved -

That the decisions taken under urgency procedures be noted

11 Changes To The Executive Functions Scheme Of Delegation

The Mayor moved the report.

Resolved -

That the change made to the executive functions scheme of delegation be noted

12 Motion - “Housing And Homelessness”

The motion was moved by Councillor Spencer Drury. He emphasised that it was important for the Council to have a homelessness strategy and a housing strategy to ensure the borough had a clear vision that every resident had a safe secure and affordable home. He was unaware of any other London borough without a housing strategy. He noted that they were legally required to have a homelessness strategy, and that the Council’s last one had expired. He said it was important for the Council to have a clear vision to protect vulnerable families and to indicate how it will provide effective services to people who were homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. Without a strategy they were letting down their residents. He suggested Enfield and Bexley as examples to consider in developing a strategy.

In seconding the motion Councillor Nigel Fletcher highlighted that homelessness needed to be a priority for both local and national government. He noted the money had the government had provided funding to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, and drew attention to the Homelessness

Reduction Act. He applauded the work the Council had already done, particularly during the pandemic.

Councillor Anthony Okereke, Cabinet Member for Housing, advised Council that there had been a delay in the publication of the new strategy, as time had to be given to allow a reassessment of policy initiatives in light of the pandemic. He indicated the intention was to start a consultation in spring. The Cabinet Member felt that the motion failed to acknowledge the impact of the pandemic on the authority's ability to deliver and cope with their housing frontline, and the work that they had been doing during this time. He explained that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government had requested councils to prioritise frontline services, and he commented on the work that the Council had undertaken. The Cabinet Member said most of the numbered points in the motion were covered by the strategy, and he commented on how they were being addressed. With regard to point six he stated that he was happy to look at it but he highlighted that Greenwich unlike Bexley had council homes and therefore could borrow from the Public Works Loan Board. He emphasised that additional government financial support was needed on universal credit as it was not currently covering housing costs and that was making an impact; he commented that the motion failed to acknowledge that the government could do more to help. The Cabinet Member asked the minority party to join with the majority party in lobbying the government on the matter, and he recommended that the motion be voted down.

Councillor Sarah Merrill, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth noted that a factor in homelessness was overcrowding in family homes which led to family members leaving and often becoming homeless; social housing could alleviate this but she advised Council that the government's planning white paper if agreed would have a disastrous effect on the efforts of the Council to deliver affordable and social rent housing.

Councillors Olu Babatola, David Gardner and Chris Kirby spoke against the motion. It was not felt that a comparison with Bexley was appropriate because Greenwich built council homes. It was highlighted that initiatives were already in place to help tackle homelessness, such as No Second Night Out and Thames Reach Greenwich, and community groups provided help, such as Greenwich Winter Night Shelter and Woolwich Service User Project. The Council's own temporary accommodation team worked well to help people towards permanent housing. It was indicated that the Council's property acquisition policy had been the result of the failure of government to tackle the housing crisis. As some families could find themselves in insecure accommodation far away while still having their children educated in

the borough, the Council had sought to find them accommodation within a half an hour journey time into Woolwich. It was commented that if there were large tracts of land in the borough where temporary accommodation could be placed then the Council would endeavour to do so, but none were available. It was suggested that what was needed was change in government policy in terms of right to buy and in terms of the financial support to provide more council accommodation.

Councillor Charlie Davis spoke in support of the motion. He welcomed that the Cabinet Member of Housing would look at some of the points, and he acknowledged the concerns raised by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth. He felt the issue was the failure to deliver a housing strategy or a homelessness strategy. The current work to address homelessness was appreciated, but there were still other things that could be done. He suggested that residents deserved an apology for the failure to have either strategy in place.

Councillor Danny Thorpe, Leader of the Council, in relation to the suggestion made by Councillor Davis, offered an apology to the thousands of people that had to live their lives on the street, or who were in arrears, or stuck in temporary accommodation outside of London, because of the austerity decisions taken by the Conservative government. The Leader indicated that the central aim of the housing strategy was to build.

In closing the debate, Councillor Spencer Drury said they had heard that it was hard to develop a homelessness and a housing strategy during a pandemic but he noted that other boroughs, such as Bexley, Newham and Lewisham, had done so. Greenwich had developed the Digital Strategy and the Health and Adults Vision during this same time but not a homelessness or housing strategy. It was a legal requirement to have a homelessness strategy. It was not the government's fault that the Council did not have a housing strategy the blame lay with the Cabinet.

The Mayor put the Motion to the vote, and with the majority group against and the minority group in favour, the motion was not carried

13 Motion - "Call To Immediately Abandon Plans To Cut The Level Of Universal Credit In Greenwich"

Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald moved the motion. She detailed the difference the uplift to Universal Credit made to many of the poorest residents. She noted that charities had called on the government to continue the uplift, as they recognised the impact its removal would have on those on

low income, and children, and on the disabled. Even a conservative think tank, Bright Blue, had called for the extension of the uplift. Councillor Scott-McDonald said it was the wrong time for its removal as they were still in the midst of the pandemic, and it was not clear what the true impact of it would be on the economy and jobs; unemployment was estimated to peak in the same quarter as universal credit was to be cut. Councillor Scott-McDonald concluded that the removal of the uplift would have a detrimental impact upon the most vulnerable residents of the borough.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Danny Thorpe, who reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Matt Hartley proposed the amendment to the motion, as published on the Council's website. Councillor Hartley said the proposed motion was deficient in that it neglected to mention where the uplift came from nor place it in the wider context of what the government was doing to support household finances at a time of economic crisis, as detailed in the amendment. It was accepted that they all had to consider what happened after April, and he said that the proposed amendment addressed that, including what the Council could do.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Nigel Fletcher, who reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald indicated she did not accept the amendment.

Councillor Danny Thorpe said that while the amendment referred to measures implemented by the government it did not refer to the cuts to local government budgets, or cuts to hospital beds, or to the rising child poverty levels. He said Covid and austerity had a significant relationship. The money spent in managing the pandemic was not the same as providing proper decent public services, and was not comparable to the amounts taken from local authority budgets over the last ten years. The amendment's call on the government to confirm plans did nothing to assist the people who had had to apply for the additional support. Councillor Thorpe commented on the issue of free school meals and that the pandemic would result in more children placed into poverty. He said that the amendment failed to recognise that the financial support currently on offer was in no way capable of arresting the devastation that was unfolding in their communities; they needed a debate about the links between austerity and Covid, and how the latter exacerbated the poverty and inequality in their communities. Councillor Thorpe commented on the issue with masks and PPE, and the disproportionate

effects on their black and minority ethnic residents. He said they had to ensure their residents got the money they needed.

Councillor Nigel Fletcher said the amendment specifically addressed the issue of the uplift and what happened about that in the future whereas the motion, and Councillor Thorpe's comments, did not.

Councillor Adel Khaireh said that the Council leadership and every councillor had been working hard for their residents during the pandemic. Their residents were suffering; Councillors had done everything they could to reassure them and were going to support them through this pandemic. But the government had been giving mixed messages which was confusing people. Residents were coming to them with serious concerns and they were going to support them; it was not right to suggest that the Council was not doing anything

In closing the debate on the amendment, Councillor Matt Hartley said that there was no suggestion that Councillors were not doing anything, but that the motion was party politically motivated with no focus on what Greenwich Council could actually do. The amendment was Greenwich focused and improving the uptake of Local Council Tax Support was something the Council could do

Councillor Matt Hartley claimed that Councillor Danny Thorpe was tweeting during the meeting. Councillor Danny Thorpe stated that was not the case, the last tweet that that he had made was at the start of the meeting to tell everyone that a new testing centre had opened in Thamesmead, and he asked that the claim be withdrawn. Councillor Hartley withdrew the claim. The Mayor informed Council that she would not want anyone tweeting during a meeting of Council.

The Mayor put the amendment to the vote, and with the majority group against and the minority group in favour, the amendment was not carried

Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald closed the debate on the motion.

The Mayor put the Motion to the vote, and with the majority group for and the minority group abstaining, it was

Resolved –

Council is appalled and horrified with the Conservative Government's attack on the most vulnerable residents in Greenwich, with their plans to cut the

£20 a week uplift to the 31,534 residents of the Royal Borough of Greenwich in receipt of Universal Credit.

It is our most vulnerable residents who are suffering the most because of this brutal virus. Many have lost their jobs, are struggling to pay the bills and falling further and further into poverty. On 30th April last year, the Prime Minister told the nation that austerity was “certainly not part” of the Government’s economic response. Yet, almost a year later, it now seems to be central pillar of his strategy.

This pandemic is far from over, and the full consequences of it will be felt for many years to come.

Council therefore calls on the Government to immediately abandon plans to cut the level of Universal Credit in Greenwich and maintain the current level offered.

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The Mayor thanked Councillors for their help with the meeting. The Mayor said that they should be proud that by their motions and discussion the Council showed that they were always considering their residents during this dreadful time.

The Mayor called on Council to join with her in clapping for the nurses and doctors and workers in the Queen Elizabeth hospital to show appreciation for the work they were doing.

Council clapped for the nurses and doctors and workers in the Queen Elizabeth hospital.

The meeting closed at 9.29pm

Mayor