

## **PRESENT**

### **Members of the Council**

THE MAYOR, CLLR PREETY HUDD

THE DEPUTY MAYOR, CLLR DORI SCHMETTERLING

CLLR MONA ADAM	CLLR LUCY KNIGHT
CLLR SARAH ADDENBROOKE	CLLR WILL LANE
CLLR HAMISH ADOURIAN	CLLR SINA LARI
CLLR DR MONA AHMED	CLLR DAVID LINDSAY
CLLR KASIM ALI	CLLR SAM MACKOVER
CLLR AARIEN ARETI	CLLR QUENTIN MARSHALL
CLLR TOM BENNETT	CLLR SOF MCVEIGH
CLLR TOBY BENTON	CLLR LLOYD NORTH
CLLR LAURA BURNS	CLLR ABDULLAHI NUR
CLLR ANNE CYRON	CLLR WILL PASCALL
CLLR EMMA DENT COAD	CLLR JOSH RENDALL
CLLR MARWAN ELNAGHI	CLLR MARIE-THERESE ROSSI
CLLR JANET EVANS	CLLR CLAIRE SIMMONS
CLLR CATHERINE FAULKS	CLLR KIM TAYLOR-SMITH
CLLR JOANNA GARDNER	CLLR JOHNNY THALASSITES
CLLR GREGORY HAMMOND	CLLR PORTIA THAXTER
CLLR GERARD HARGREAVES	CLLR TIM VERBOVEN
CLLR JAMES HUSBAND	CLLR LINDA WADE
CLLR WALAA IDRIS	CLLR MARY WEALE
CLLR EVA JEDUT	CLLR ROBERTO WEEDEN-SANZ
CLLR CEM KEMAHLI	CLLR EMMA WILL

### **72 Seconds' Silence**

The Mayor invited those present to stand in silence for 72 seconds to remember all those who lost their lives in the Grenfell tragedy.

### **1 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 31 January 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

With the meeting's consent, all those Members present were deemed to have made a personal declaration of interest regarding Agenda Item 15 – report of Council Side Committees – Members' Scheme of Allowances 2024/25.

No declarations of interest were made under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, which relates to Members' Council Tax payments.

### **3 SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE MAYOR**

The Mayor had no special announcements.

### **4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S COMMUNICATIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Elizabeth Campbell, Stuart Graham, Dahabo Isse, Sidney Yankson and Sonia Zvedeniuk.

### **5 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

#### **(i) Antisocial behaviour in Earls Court**

Kieran Terry, an Earl's Court resident, complimented the Council on its good bin collections, street cleansing, schools, and low council tax but expressed concern over antisocial behaviour in Earl's Court, including open drug and drink use and aggressive begging. He stated that even in Kempsford Gardens and Earl's Court Square, which have good cycle lanes, residents faced problems from cyclists using the pavements. He noted how the 'Look Ahead hostel' operated had contributed significantly to these issues, but he did not blame the residents. Mr Terry had given his support through the consultation for the proposed Public Space Protection Order and asked for confirmation of the next steps from the Council. He asked for reassurance that Liberal Democrats' proposals for drug injection 'safe rooms' would not be taken further.

Councillor Sarah Addenbrooke, Lead Member for Communities and Community Safety, thanked Mr Terry and noted that many of his concerns were covered in the consultation. She added that the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) consultation, which ended on February 20th, had received many responses, with over 90% of the respondents supporting the proposed PSPO. Officers were analysing the survey results, and once all the processes were completed and the final draft was cleared by legal services, the consultation report would be issued around mid-March. She expected that the Council would implement the PSPO in mid-April. Councillor Addenbrooke stated that current evidence or policy does not support the use of 'safe' injection rooms, and there were no plans to implement them.

Councillor Linda Wade, Earl's Court ward councillor, repudiated the assertion that the Liberal Democrats had called for 'safe' injection rooms. She noted that residents in Earl's Court had complained about antisocial behaviour and drug activity for years, leading to a 'call for action' from the three ward councillors in 2022. She said that the Council had taken some time to respond, but meetings with hostel wardens and police had restarted, while further meetings with housing association officers were needed. She welcomed the proposed PSPO but had concerns about its implementation, evaluation, and whether the resources allocated would be sufficient. She added that mental health and substance abuse were primary triggers of street population problems, and it is unclear how the police's revised approach would affect this.

**(ii) Mental health support for those affected by events in the Middle East**

Leearna Oliffe stated that there had been a lack of mental health support for those affected by the ongoing conflict in Gaza, even though the borough had the second-largest Arab population in London. She pointed out how this contrasted with the wide-ranging assistance provided to those affected by the Grenfell Fire, COVID-19, the invasion of Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis. This gave the impression that the Council did not care about the community. Ms Oliffe criticised the comments made by Councillor Campbell in November 2023 and spoke about the lack of presence by the Council outside Al-Manaar Mosque. She gave details of the personal suffering experienced by one resident who had lost his entire family in the conflict. She also criticised the Council for scheduling a diplomatic reception to which the Israeli Ambassador had been invited and attributed the event's cancellation to the actions of a campaign group.

Councillor Josh Rendall, Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, thanked Ms Oliffe for her question and said that Councillor Campbell was attending a meeting with Grenfell relatives and survivors. He understood how the events were distressing for residents, especially those with family ties to the region. He stated that the Council worked closely with the NHS to ensure that all residents have access to mental health services. The Council gathered feedback from residents to hold the NHS accountable and make improvements. He referred to the Public Health page on the Council's website, which had information on the Talking Therapies service, CNWL's talking therapy options and the NHS's support services. He stated that the Council condemns Islamophobia and antisemitism.

Councillor Portia Thaxter also thanked Ms Oliffe and, referring to the personal account given to Ms Oliffe by a North Kensington resident, said she was saddened to hear of the loss that person had suffered. Councillor Thaxter stated that the Council had provided services during previous crises such as Grenfell, COVID, and the Ukraine war; however, similar services for those affected by violence and loss of life in Palestine were not being provided. She stated that there was an urgent need to set up services for residents and work with partners to show care for those in the borough, as failing to address trauma could lead to severe problems. Councillor Thaxter emphasised that the Council needed to take immediate action.

**(iii) Dialogue with and understanding of the Borough's Palestinian Community.**

The Mayor read Mohammed Aboukhachab's question: 'Time after time, we have heard you speak about Palestinians in a homogenous nature, so I would like to ask what efforts will the Council's executive take to resolve the current lack of dialogue, understanding, intricacies and acknowledgement of the Palestinian community in the borough?'

Councillor Kim Taylor-Smith, Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Employment, Culture & Economy, thanked Ms Oliffe, the previous speaker, and Mr Aboukhachab for his question regarding the ongoing conflict between Israel and Gaza. He stated that it was the Council's responsibility to acknowledge the devastating impact on both Israeli and Palestinian communities, including extensive physical damage and significant human suffering. The Council aimed to foster a safe and inclusive environment for residents by promoting open

dialogue and understanding through collaborations with local faith groups and community organisations. There was an advisory group made up of Faith and Community Youth and Women's Group with RBKC that was working to raise awareness of the impact of the conflict on local communities, including a request for a meeting with the Home Office.

Councillor Kasim Ali also thanked Mr Aboukhachab, whom he had met at Al-Manaar, and he said that he appreciated Mr Aboukhachab's support for the local community. Councillor Ali stated that the issue was important and that he had addressed it in the last two Full Council meetings and would continue to speak about it at that meeting. Councillor Ali said he understood the Council Leader's expression of sorrow for the loss of life in Israel, but he also hoped for similar condolences for the nearly 30,000 people affected in this conflict. He said it would benefit the Council Leader to meet with the local Palestinian community, which includes Muslims, Christians, and different faiths. He said that all should pray for peace and hoped that one day all communities in the region would enjoy peace and security.

## **6 PETITIONS**

No petitions were presented.

## **7 STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND RESPONSE BY THE LEADER OF THE MINORITY PARTY (STANDING ITEM)**

The Mayor invited the Deputy Leader of the Council to address the meeting. The Deputy Leader then rose to speak:

Madam Mayor, it is a pleasure to be standing in for Elizabeth tonight, but I have to say, it is a very difficult act to follow. I think we can all agree that hearing her reflections on Grenfell Testimony Week in our last meeting right here in this Chamber was an important and poignant moment. It was a candid and open synopsis of where we are as an organisation, where we want to be and should be, and the recognition that we still have some way to go. I can say tonight that the story hasn't stopped there, either.

Since then, the Council has held important sessions with staff, notably all managers in the organisation – to relay what we heard at Testimony Week back to the organisation and have honest conversations about moving forward with more pace, more focus and completing a change of culture which started back in June 2017.

Madam Mayor. Elizabeth cannot make it tonight despite this being an evening for setting a budget. The reason is that she is with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and meeting bereaved families and survivors to continue the discussion on Grenfell Recovery, the work of the memorial commission, and important matters as the seventh anniversary and final inquiry report come into view.

You see, the effort to recover never stops—and neither should it—and neither will it. The former Bishop of Liverpool, the Right Reverend Bishop James Jones, puts it well: 'In the aftermath of the disaster, there is tragedy. In the long term, there is tragedy and trauma.' This Council is here for the long term.

Madam Mayor. Tonight is budget night. I know colleagues and Johnny are keen to talk through our proposals and outline yet another sensible, balanced budget. This is something we can be proud of; it is something we do every year. Despite costs increasing, shifts in demand, tougher times, and the cost-of-living challenges, we still balance the books. I know colleagues will work hard again next year to look at how we can keep taxes low, make services work better for less, and focus on putting money back in the pockets of people who live in this borough. You see, here on these benches, we are very much focused on local issues, solving problems with people and tackling issues we have control over.

We have seen over many weeks protests in our borough, and on our streets, and I just want to reiterate what Elizabeth has said numerous times, here, and on visits to mosques, synagogues, and churches. We stand for community cohesion wherever possible, bringing people together. So, we can discuss the impact of world politics on our communities and find solutions and unity together.

Yes, we are a Council—therefore, our role is to fix the potholes and collect the bins. But we also want to work in partnership with our communities, bring cohesion, and keep working at it every day.

We value free speech in this borough and this Chamber, and it is one of the reasons we maintain time for questions from the public to be brought here and answered. I hope that continues and goes some way to making sure important views are heard in public.

With that, I will give time back to the meeting – so we can discuss the important matters at hand. Thank you.

The Mayor invited the Leader of the Opposition to address the meeting. Cllr Ali then rose to speak:

Madam Mayor, the war between Israel and Hamas continues with the increasing civilian death toll of nearly 30,000, mainly of innocent men, women, and children. Our residents have been contacting us to raise this issue at the Council for the past five months. They held protests outside and inside of the Council chamber and they spoke at the Council meetings several times, including tonight's speaker to call for an everlasting ceasefire in Gaza and in Palestine in general.

We, the Kensington, and Chelsea Labour Group of Councillors, welcome the immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the releasing of the hostages called by the Labour Party MPs in Parliament under the leadership of Sir Keir Starmer MP, who has shown a real leadership on this issue compared to the current Prime Minister and hopeful Sir Keir will be our next Prime Minister at the end of this year.

Madam Mayor, tackling inequality in Kensington and Chelsea is a real issue. Inequality in our borough is getting worse year after year and I'm afraid it is not going to get better due to a lack of leadership from the Council and from the government. RBKC residents want to know what the Council leadership is doing about the deepening inequality in our borough, which will continue to affect both young and old residents.

As a Global Prosperity researcher, I have been researching about the intensifying inequality in the borough. On that note, I want to thank all researchers in our borough and to mention researchers from University of Manchester, University College London, UCL Citizen Science Academy, Imperial College London, and Trust for London, and a special thanks to Kensington and Chelsea Foundation Charity for its extensive 2021 report - which is now updated and covers the last 18 months.

Madam Mayor, our borough is a highly unequal borough, as some residents are suffering from severe deprivation, which is a damaging lack of material considered to be basic necessities in society, such as food, housing, health, local economy and income worth living life in the borough.

The inequality reports cover four main areas including Education, Health, Economy, and Housing.

Education Inequalities. The disparities in achievement and outcomes for children from different ethnic and economic backgrounds are amongst the highest in the country. Our local state schools have the highest school exclusion rate in London, which means a significant number of children in the borough do not have access to mainstream education and are often on a pathway from school exclusion to unemployment, youth violence and ultimately increasing the prison population.

Madam Mayor, two days ago, I and Cllr Claire Simmons and Joe Powell, the Labour Party Parliamentary candidate for Kensington and Bayswater constituency, attended a Youth Council meeting. I can confirm that Joe was not canvassing there because none of the attendees can vote for him the upcoming general election, but he was there to hear young people's views and act on them if and when he is elected as local our MP.

The majority of the Youth Council meeting attendees want the Council to deliver a good service for the young people in the borough. Their main concerns were, learning more about employment skill while they are in school, mental health issues, safety, and security of young people in the borough, enhanced summer programmes and sports activities and the issue came up the most was free school meals for all young people.

The question is what happened the government's Levelling up project that we were promised four years ago and why RBCK leadership is ignoring this ongoing inequality crisis in our beloved borough.

Health inequality - Life expectancy. There are also huge disparities of up to 15-17 years in the life expectancy of residents, depending on which wards they live in. For example, these gaps are even larger when adopting a geographical perspective; females in Notting Dale Ward live on average 15 years less than their neighbours in Holland Ward (0.3 miles away), and for males the difference between living in Notting Dale and Courtfield Wards is a life expectancy gap of 17 years. This is not certainly a fairer and prosperous council for all.

Housing Inequality. According to the office Trust of London report, housing affordability - the median rent as a percentage of median pay - is now 73%, worse compared to all London Boroughs. For housing delivery – the average net affordable, social and discounted housing completions – was 30, worse compared to all London Boroughs.

Economic Inequality. More than 1 in 5 (23%) Kensington and Chelsea neighbourhoods are among the 20% most income-deprived in England and Wales. The unemployment rate in the borough is higher than the London average. According to the Office of Financial Statistics (ONS) February 2024 report, the borough had a higher unemployment rate of 4.9% than London (4.4%) and the rest of England rate of 3.5%. In the last 4 years, the number of people claiming in-work benefits, reflecting in-work poverty has significantly increased.

Madam Mayor, sadly, the most deprived area in London is in Kensington & Chelsea. Deprivation in Kensington and Chelsea is not a new phenomenon, but the Grenfell Tower fire and the Covid-19 pandemic have highlighted and intensified the deprivation in the borough and the Council leadership is, so far, not doing anything about. Perhaps they are waiting a Labour leadership to deal with the ongoing inequality crisis in our borough. Thank you.

## **8 ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Mayor confirmed that the order of business would be as printed on the agenda.

## **9 ADOPTION OF MUNICIPAL TIMETABLE MAY 2024 TO DECEMBER 2025**

Councillor Taylor-Smith moved and Councillor Thalassites seconded the report's reception.

RESOLVED: That Council agreed to adopt the Municipal Timetable for June 2024 to December 2025.

## **10 REVIEW OF REPRESENTATION ON COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

Councillors Lari, Wade, and Dent Coad moved the appointments standing their names.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the political balance be noted.
- (ii) That the ratios for committees set out in Appendix A to the report be adopted.
- (iii) That the appointments to committees table by the Independent, Labour and Liberal Democrat Groups be adopted.

## **11 REPORTS FROM THE LEADERSHIP TEAM**

Councillor Thalassites moved and Councillor Lari seconded, then Council RESOLVED that in accordance with Standing Order 42, Standing Order 30 be suspended to allow Councillors Thalassites and Ali up to 10 minutes each for their speeches.

Councillor Taylor-Smith moved and Councillor Thalassites seconded the report's reception.

## **12 REVENUE BUDGET, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND COUNCIL TAX 2024/25**

Councillor Thalassites began by setting out the following points:

- (i) That this was a balanced and robust budget proposal.

- (ii) How the Council had already delivered: improvements to Kensington Memorial Park, 'blitzes' in all wards to tackle graffiti and litter, and award-winning new homes at Kelso Cochrane Court and Hewer Street.
- (iii) That the Council was determined to be the best.
- (iv) How the impact of rising construction, social care costs, and bills was putting tremendous pressure on residents' finances, whom the Council was supporting through £14m Council Tax relief schemes and £100 cost-of-living payment.
- (v) That the proposed 2.99% Council Tax increase and 2% Adult Social Care precept, would protect core services.
- (vi) The new Kensington Queensmill School reduced spending on SEN transport, and there had been a reduction in agency costs for Adult Social Care.
- (vii) That the budget responded to the needs of the Grenfell bereaved and survivors and prioritised children.
- (viii) That the Council was focusing on critical projects and changes for communities, including at Lots Road, Kingsbridge Road and Maxilla.

Councillor Ali made the following comments:

- (i) He drew Members' attention to the Labour Group's budget amendments, which responded to the communities' needs.
- (ii) He noted that free school meals were omitted because the Mayor of London was funding them.
- (iii) That in Notting Dale ward, women's life expectancy was 15 years lower and men's 17 years lower than in wealthier wards in the Borough.
- (iv) That the proposed £300,000 housing cuts would not address the worst housing inequalities in London.
- (v) That the budget did not address economic inequality, with neighbourhoods in the borough being among the 20 most deprived in England with higher-than-average unemployment rates.
- (vi) That the amendment would support local communities to help those who wished to start their own businesses.
- (vii) How the amendment sought to address the whole borough' needs.

### **Labour amendment to the Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax**

The Labour Group's amendment was then formally moved by Councillor Ali and seconded by Councillor Lari.

A debate among Councillors on the revenue budget, capital programme, and Council Tax then ensued, with contributions from Councillors Adourian, Ahmed, Areti, Bennett, Benton, Burns, Dent Coad, Evans, Faulks, Hammond, Hargreaves, Idris, Kemahli, Lane, McVeigh, Pascall, Rendall, Thaxter, Verboven, Wade, Weale, and Will.

Councillor Lari then summed up the debate on the Labour amendments, and Councillor Thalassites summed up the budget debate and spoke in favour of adopting the recommendations in the Leadership Team's report.

The Mayor then advised the Council that the vote on the Labour amendment and the budget and Council Tax needed to be recorded in the minutes.



### **Vote on the Labour amendment to the revenue and capital budgets and Council Tax.**

The Labour Group amendment was then put to the vote by the Mayor, and the voting was as follows:

For: 9

Councillors Ahmed, Ali, Benton, Dent Coad, Elnaghi, Lari, Nur, Simmons, Thaxter

Against: 30

Councillors Addenbrooke, Adourian, Areti, Bennett, Burns, Cyron, Evans, Faulks, Gardner, Hammond, Hargreaves, Husband, Idris, Kemahli, Knight, Lane, Lindsay, Mackover, McVeigh, North, Pascall, Rendall, Rossi, Taylor-Smith, Thalassites, Verboven, Weale, Weeden-Sanz, Wade, and Will

Not voting: 4

Councillors Adam, Hudd (Mayor), Jedut, and Schmetterling (Deputy Mayor)

The Mayor declared the amendment lost.

**Vote on the Revenue Budget, Capital Budget and Council Tax 2024/25** The recommendations set out in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 of the covering report from the Leadership Team were then put to the vote by the Mayor, and the voting was as follows:

For: 28

Councillors Addenbrooke, Adourian, Areti, Bennett, Burns, Cyron, Evans, Faulks, Gardner, Hammond, Hargreaves, Husband, Idris, Kemahli, Knight, Lane, Lindsay, Mackover, McVeigh, North, Pascall, Rendall, Rossi, Taylor-Smith, Thalassites, Weale, Weeden-Sanz, and Will

Against: 11

Councillors Ahmed, Ali, Benton, Dent Coad, Elnaghi, Lari, Nur, Simmons, Thaxter, Verboven and Wade,

Not voting: 4

Councillors Adam, Hudd (Mayor), Jedut, and Schmetterling (Deputy Mayor)

**RESOLVED**—That the Revenue Budget, Capital Budget, and Council Tax 2024/25, as set out in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 of the covering report from the Leadership Team, be adopted.

### **13 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLAN**

Councillor McVeigh moved and Councillor Taylor-Smith seconded the report's reception.

There were also contributions from Councillors Simmons, Taylor-Smith and Wade, and Councillor McVeigh summed up the debate.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations in paragraph 3.2 of the covering report from the Leadership Team be adopted.

#### **14 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2024/25**

Councillor Thalassites moved and Councillor Taylor-Smith seconded the report's reception.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations in paragraph 4.2 of the covering report from the Leadership Team be adopted.

#### **15 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL-SIDE COMMITTEES**

Councillor Taylor-Smith moved the reception of the Members' Allowances Scheme 2024/25 and its appendices, and Councillor Thalassites seconded it.

RESOLVED - That Council adopt the Members' Allowances scheme 2024/25.

#### **16 MATTERS REFERRED TO FULL COUNCIL FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OR SELECT COMMITTEES**

There were no matters referred by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee or Select Committees.

#### **17 QUESTIONS ASKED OF LEAD MEMBERS**

Given the late hour, the Mayor stated that the questions to Lead Members would be answered in writing.

#### **18 MATTERS OF LOCAL CONCERN RAISED UNDER STANDING ORDER 11**

Councillor Eva Jedut listed a range of activities in Dalgarno Ward that she stated had been refused funding, including, but not limited to, pantomimes in 2022 and 2023, coronation celebrations at Coronation and Hampton Courts, mental health provision, Christmas celebration and CCTV provision. She also sought an apology to residents for the cancellation of a City Living, Local Life funding request and the diversion of £1800 without consulting Dalgarno Ward groups.

Councillor Lucy Knight informed Council about changes in primary care by the North West London Integrated Care Board that would require patients to be referred to same-day access hubs rather than their GPs from 1 April. She noted that there had been no consultation with GPs and was concerned that patients would no longer have access to the better quality of care they might receive from their usual GPs.

Councillor Hamish Adourian spoke about the poor pavement maintenance on Earl's Court Road, the repair of which was the responsibility of Transport for London. He welcomed the Council's increased investment in pavement cleaning. He requested that the Leadership Team raise the need for repairs with TfL and, if possible, for those works to coincide with the Council's planned transformation of Hogarth Road in Earl's Court Ward.

Councillor David Lindsay informed Council about the erratic level of service at Holland Park tube station. He added that the short-notice closures and inadequate warnings to passengers to take alternative routes were causing inconvenience to residents in Norland Ward. He noted TfL's proposed cycling scheme across Shepherd's Bush roundabout, which would displace more vehicles on RBKC roads without mitigation and after only minimal consultation.

Councillor Abdullahi Nur drew Council's attention to the crime and drug problem in Golborne Ward, and the detrimental effect this was having on the whole community, especially children. He spoke about both bullets hitting a resident's car and a fatal stabbing in October 2023 and thanked the Leader and other Lead Members for their responses. He asked the Leadership Team to work with councillors and the community to help residents.

## **19 MOTIONS FOR MAIN DEBATE**

Motion: Antisocial behaviour by some delivery drivers

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

Motion: Bring parking services in-house

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

Motion: Producing an AI Framework

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

Motion: Call for Council to support a ceasefire in Gaza

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

## **20 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

Council agreed the following appointment: that Councillor Marwan Elnaghi be appointed to Al-Manaar (Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre) to replace Councillor Kasim Ali.

## **21 ANY OTHER ORAL OR WRITTEN ITEMS WHICH THE MAYOR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There were no items that the Mayor considered urgent.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

Mayor