

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY, 31ST
JANUARY, 2019, 7.00pm**

PRESENT:

Councillors: Gina Adamou (Mayor), Charles Adje, Amin, Dawn Barnes, Patrick Berryman, John Bevan, Barbara Blake, Mark Blake, Zena Brabazon, Gideon Bull, Dana Carlin, Vincent Carroll, Luke Cawley-Harrison, Sakina Chenot, James Chiriyankandath, Pippa Connor, Eldridge Culverwell, Mahir Demir, Paul Dennison, Isidoros Diakides, Josh Dixon, Erdal Dogan, Joseph Ejiofor, Scott Emery, Ruth Gordon, Makbule Gunes, Mike Hakata, Bob Hare, Emine Ibrahim, Adam Jogee, Peter Mitchell, Liz Morris, Khaled Moyeed, Julia Ogiehor, Felicia Opoku, Tammy Palmer, Sheila Peacock, Reg Rice, Viv Ross, Alessandra Rossetti, Anne Stennett, Daniel Stone, Preston Tabois, Elin Weston, Noah Tucker, Sarah Williams, Matt White and Chandwani

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Mayor drew attendees' attention to the notice on the summons regarding filming at meetings.

2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were noted from:

- Cllr Basu
- Cllr da costa
- Cllr Hinchcliffe
- Ahmet
- Davies
- Des Neves
- Tabois
- Say
- Chiriyankandath
- James

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Berryman declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect agenda items 5 and 6 by virtue of his voting membership of the North London Waste Authority. He subsequently left the room when these items were being discussed.

4. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Full Council considered a report setting out changes to committee memberships and outside bodies for the municipal year 2018/19 following the changes to Cabinet membership reported to the Chief Executive on the 31st of December 2018. The Council was required to ensure that appointments to which the political balance rules apply were made in accordance with those rules. This report also provided the membership of the Cabinet for the Council to note at appendix 2.

A schedule of Committees was attached at Appendix 1 to the report and included the proposed changes to memberships of committees. This report also detailed the number of seats available on each Committee and the proportional split between the parties in accordance with the political balance of the authority.

The changes to outside body appointments were included at appendix 3. The appointments to the LGA Leaders Committee, a section 101 joint committee, and the London Councils Grants Committee require councillors to be members of the Cabinet.

The Council were also requested to approve a change in membership to a community body, Jacksons Lane, Management Committee set out in appendix 3.

RESOLVED

1. To agree the updated membership of Committees detailed at Appendix 1.
2. To agree the changes to outside bodies outlined at Appendix 3.
3. To note the membership of the Cabinet as detailed at Appendix 2.

5. TO CONSIDER REQUESTS TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS AND/OR PETITIONS AND, IF APPROVED, TO RECEIVE THEM

The Mayor had accepted one deputation for this evening's meeting from Pinkham Way Alliance who were making representations in relation to item 6 on the agenda, Pre Planning submission for the North London Waste Plan. The Mayor invited Stephen Brice to make his deputation and he was supported by Evelyn Ryan and Jeffery Lever.

Mr Brice, Chair of Pinkham Waste Alliance, opened his deputation by stating that waste management was not a party political issue and highlighted the support of Councillors and MP's for not including Pinkham Way in the list of potential sites to be used for waste management in the North London Waste Plan.

Mr Brice provided some background to the reasons behind local opposition to the inclusion of Pinkham Way in the North London Waste Plan, highlighting the mistrust created between the local community, the local authority and North London Waste Authority on their plans for the site. He referred to an assessment in 2008 that considered the suitability of Pinkham Way site for inclusion in the original North

London Waste plan. In this period, Pinkham Way fell into the bottom 20% of sites considered.

Mr Brice continued to provide further background by describing the subsequent North London Waste Authority actions, which were embarking on a PFI funded waste procurement to secure funding and purchasing most of the Pinkham Way site from Barnet Council, noting that, at this time, the site did not have planning permission and presently still does not have this. In the deputation's view, after the North London Waste Authority's financial issues became clear, Pinkham Way was expediently added to the list of waste management preferred sites. However, local community concerns were allayed when the project, which the site was brought for, was abandoned. The procurement stopped and the original waste plan was also halted. The North London Waste Authority, then adopted a different waste management strategy and advised the local community that there were no plans to develop a site for the next ten years.

The deputation felt that, critically, the imprudent purchase of the Pinkham Way in 2009 to keep this site in the plan went against this commitment and the subsequent change in course of action, with the inclusion of the site in the North London Waste Plan, had caused a high community reaction and was the subsequent reason for this deputation at Council.

The deputation drew attention to the Regulatory Committee's recommendation to withdraw the Pinkham Way site from inclusion in the North London Waste Plan and reflected that this resolution had been reached without the political whip and demonstrated that the Committee was fulfilling its duty to examine the complex planning issues, related to this decision. In Mr Brice's view, recommendations from this Committee were normally followed and he questioned what new information had come to light to induce Cabinet to reach a different position of including the Pinkham Way site in the North London Waste Plan.

The deputation referred to the Cabinet meeting proceedings on the 22nd of January 2019 and the Leader's view that a recycling site on Pinkham Way was suitable because it was contaminated and questioning why sites in Tottenham were not disputed. In respect of this claim, the deputation referred to paragraph 4.13 of the North London Waste plan, page 55, which identified the need for recycling reuse centres in Barnet and Enfield and disputed this incorrect assertion.

In relation to the issues of contaminated land and the cost of remediation, the deputation claimed that this would be considerable and up to £15m given the depth of soil to be addressed and likely need to be transported to a separate land fill site. In addition, Arup, the North London Waste Authority's consulting engineers had explained in 2011 that any remediation on this site would destroy that area's conservation value.

The deputation continued to refer to the information shared at Cabinet, including that the other 6 North London local authorities had agreed the waste plan, and the Council would need to do the same. The deputation disputed this claim and referred to the Council's role as the Local Planning authority for the Pinkham Way site which, unlike the other local authorities, had an additional responsibility to consider the evidence,

including its own planning policies, before a decision about inclusion of the site in the plan.

The deputation claimed that the Cabinet was out of step with the Labour party policy on biodiversity, referring to the paper on 'Green Transformation' which set out concerns about the UK being one of the most nature depleted countries in the world and concludes on the need to take the issue of biodiversity decline seriously.

The previous administration handling of this situation was referred to and the public mistrust created. The deputation highlighted the opportunity available, to remedy this by listening to the electors on this issue.

The Mayor invited Councillors to put forward questions to the deputation party and the following information was noted:

- The deputation contended that the objective of the North London Waste Plan could still be met without inclusion of the Pinkham Way site. Furthermore, in the deputation's view, the inclusion of the site in the North London Waste Plan made it unsound. The deputation spoke of the London Plan directing local authorities to look to industrial sites for waste use and Pinkham Way was designated a SINC site for 40 years and has had a second designation as an employment site for the last 20 years. Although, the site had not been used for employment purposes, in the deputations view, it had no place in the North London Waste Plan.
- There were photographs displayed indicating greenery on the Pinkham Way site and 2 acres of hard standing. Councillors noted that the site was covered in vegetation, there were 3.5 hectares of semi woodland which has grown up in the 50 years that the site has not been used. The North London Waste Authority survey identified 1500 trees and over 100 varieties of plant. The deputation advised that in the summer, when standing near the site, it was hard to hear the North Circular. The description of the site as derelict land was felt by the deputation to be a gross misnomer. Although it was abandoned land, it had been recolonised by nature and was now home to endangered creatures.
- Surveys completed by the Pinkham Way Alliance by reputable surveyors and entomologist and passed to Natural England, recognised it as site of metropolitan importance, requiring the highest order for protection, according to the London Plan.
- The nearest homes were a 150 metres from the site. When talking to local people they were concerned at the original plans to house a waste incinerator and there had been outrage that these issues had been kept secret. The route in and out of the site would pass by about 20 to 30 residential homes.
- The deputation reiterated that Pinkham Way was a nature conservation site that had took 50 years to develop and people were conscious that it may look

like empty land when considering this superficially. However, it was home to 1500 trees which was 4% of the trees in Haringey and they played a vital role in extracting pollution in the air, at the point of the North circular road which was the third most contaminated part of London. Therefore, the site fulfilled a key environmental service.

- The deputation further argued that the land was active for an environmental purpose and urged that environmental issues were not deprioritised when being presented with the cost, location, materials and facilities for waste disposal.
- In the view of the deputation, the prospect of the Pinkham Way site being used as an employment site was nil. They felt that this view had been supported by reviews of this site by Atkins in 2015. It had a PTL of 1a which meant lack of access for public transport, making it undesirable as a place of employment. The deputation outlined the practicalities of the site and how it was not conducive for access for employment. There was no employment difficulties registered in the North London Waste plan for residents living in the west part of the borough and there was no policy for it to be in active development. The site was not accessible for residents living in the east of the borough who did have employment difficulties. The site had not been used as employment land for 19 years when there had also been applications for making use of it for these purposes. Therefore, in the deputations view, the site was unlikely to ever be used for employment purposes.
- In the original plans for the site when a larger waste management site had been considered, it was noted that that such a facility would include between 25 to 30 employees. When the Council had considered proposals for the waste transfer station to be relocated from Cricklewood to Pinkham Way, this would have involved 11 employees. Employment in a waste processing site was minimal and would be low paid.
- There were suite of assessments completed by Arup's for the North London Waste Authority in 2011 which combined the list of birds seen at the Pinkham Site. There were 16 birds, 1 red data book and 1 amber and breeding colony of slow worms, which were protected under the habitat directive. The safest way to find the value of a nature conservation site was by assessment of the invertebrates present. Expert advice commissioned found several spiders and beetles which were rare in London. These had mainly remained in existence due to the site being undisturbed.
- The London Mayor's strategy on sites of metropolitan importance emphasised that public access was not the most important factor. These invertebrates were located at the entrance for the site. Ecological appraisal was referred to which demonstrated this was a rich site.

The Mayor invited the Leader of the Council to respond to the deputation.

The Leader acknowledged the commitment of the Pinkham Way Alliance to this campaign and respected their knowledge and expertise as a campaigning force. The Leader provided a reminder of the original plans considered for the site which involved building one of the largest waste incinerators in Western Europe but the current North London Waste Plan made clear that this was no longer the case.

The Leader emphasised that the North London Waste Plan asks for sites to be considered and nothing more than that. It was not guaranteed that the types of facilities identified would be developed but there was a need to find space in North London to reprocess waste and these sites listed would be considered. The Leader reiterated that this evening's decision was not the final decision in respect of the waste plan. This was being agreed for consultation. The Leader advised that the place to challenge these views was when the North London Waste Plan was examined in public by the Planning inspectorate rather than taking a view, at this time, that the site was not suitable to be even considered as a waste management site. The scarcity of land available in Haringey was extreme and the Leader was aware, that the questions put to the deputation by members had not offered alternative land options to be included in the Waste Plan. The reality was there were not a lot of options on the sites in the borough that could be used to transfer and compost waste. The Leader emphasised that there would be no waste incinerator on the site. The Leader had visited the Pinkham Way site and this was not a safe accessible public space.

The Cabinet needed to consider all potential sites and potential evidence. The Cabinet had listened to the Regulatory Committee, campaigners and opposition members and having considered all this information, they agreed that the Pinkham Way site should be considered in the North London Waste Plan. The Leader outlined that other boroughs also believed this site to be suitable and to be included for consultation.

The Leader stressed that sites with employment designation were clearly acceptable as sites for use to process waste. There was no change to this policy.

The Leader concluded his response, by reiterating that the public still had an opportunity to respond with their concerns when the North London Waste Plan was examined in public by the Planning inspectorate .

6. PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION ON THE NORTH LONDON WASTE PLAN.

The Mayor invited the Leader to introduce the report.

The Leader advised that every local authority had a statutory duty to have a plan that makes them self-sufficient in waste disposal. Haringey Council had decided to achieve this through a partnership with its 6 neighbouring boroughs.

The Council were at an important stage in the production of the North London Waste Plan - Pre-submission publication. Since consultation on the Preferred Option draft was undertaken, borough officers and members from all seven authorities have been working collaboratively to resolve the complexities of planning for the management of north London's waste alongside meeting our pressing need for additional housing and the regeneration of redundant or surplus industrial land.

The Leader outlined that a revised NLWP had properly engaged the county authorities that currently receive some of north London's waste, fulfilling the Duty to Cooperate. It

identified sufficient designated employment areas suitable for the future provision of the waste facilities we need to manage the waste we generate in north London. The areas selected were the result of robust assessment and an acknowledgement that new facilities should not be concentrated in only one or two boroughs. It also safeguards all existing waste facilities, ensuring that these continue to contribute towards managing north London's waste arising.

The Leader acknowledged that waste and recycling were issues that can raise passions. People were rarely keen to have their own waste processed or incinerated on their own doorsteps. This Council, along its neighbouring boroughs, have had to take a big picture view of how best to manage and dispose of the waste of just over 2 million Londoners.

The inclusion of the Pinkham Way site had been the subject of much debate however the site was deemed suitable for waste use and this use can be compatible with the site's designation as a site of importance for nature conservation if dealt with sensitively. The Leader expressed that removing the site at this stage was neither justified nor possible, as it would render the plan unsound.

The Leader affirmed that the administration was comfortable that it was proposing a balanced plan that took on board conflicting agendas and priorities. As a result, the North London Waste Plan was a justified and robust waste policy document that Haringey Council should welcome and endorse. The Leader formally moved the recommendations of the report for agreement

The following information was provided in response to points of clarification.

- There were two other identified sites in the North London Waste Plan located in Tottenham. It was noted that any future proposals to use any site in Haringey for waste use, would need consideration by the Planning Committee. Therefore, no site in the borough could be taken forward for waste use based solely on the North London Waste plan. The North London Waste Authority would still need to put forward a justification for use of the Pinkham Way site.
- With regards to the potential use of Pinkham Way, if taken forward for waste facility use, this would involve no more than 0.5 hectare for recycling, composting facility 2 Hectare with no maturation. Maturation would unlikely be able to be accommodated on site and Waste Transfer station would involve 1.5 Hectares of land.
- There was no plan at present to use the site for any of the three potential waste usages of waste transfers, composting and recycling.
- As the Council was working with a number of local authority colleagues it would need to contribute to the overall 7-borough plan. It was recognised that all seven local authorities had contributed and believed this to be a fair waste plan.

The Mayor announced that she had received a proposed amendment to the recommendations contained in the report, which was in accordance with the Council procedure rules. The Mayor invited Cllr Chenot to present her amendment, which was tabled for Councillors to consider.

Cllr Chenot began her proposed amendment by underlining that Pinkham Way had been designated as a nature conservation site for over 40 years. It had not been used as employment or industrial land for a considerable number of years. The Councillor had visited the site, which had been taken by nature with significant results.

The site was now home to endangered species such as greenwood peckers and slow worms and helped prevent flooding on the A406 by providing surface water a route.

Councillor Chenot outlined that the 1500 trees on the site help absorb vehicle pollution from road traffic and acted as a vital buffer between the busy A406 road and residents. Cllr Chenot emphasised that building any waste facility on Pinkham Way takes away this vital barrier from homes, some of which were 80 metres from the site. Adding a waste facility would result in busier surrounding roads, with likely increase in traffic as waste vehicles would go back and forth from the site. If the site was built upon, the majority of the North London waste site would be covered in concrete and it would not be possible to mitigate the loss of 1500 trees.

Cllr Chenot contended that destroying this valuable green space was not something the Council should consider. Cllr Chenot highlighted that the Council's Local Plan, London Plan and National Planning policy give conservation sites like Pinkham Way protected status. The Council had already marked this as green space on its own green wood map and Natural England considered it of metropolitan importance. The Mayor's environmental strategy specifically referred to the site's metropolitan importance as including urban habitats colonised by nature.

Cllr Chenot called on councillors to uphold these policies and continue the stance taken up by Councillors on the Regulatory committee, including several labour members. Although Cabinet had not took forward this Committee's advice, the full Council could still consider this. Cllr Chenot contended that none of the other North London boroughs was offering up nature conservations sites for waste development and neither should the Council.

Cllr Chenot argued that the site of Pinkham way should not be included in the Waste Plan as surplus to requirements. The North London Waste Authority had confirmed that they had no plans to use it. The redevelopment of the Edmonton ECO Park for residual waste would likely take up all the North London Waste Authority's attention for the near future.

Cllr Chenot referred to the attached report, which estimated that only nine additional hectares was needed for future waste management. By taking out Pinkham Way, there would still be 93 hectares of land identified for waste usage. In this context, Cllr Chenot believed that if the Council asked them, the other north London boroughs would take out Pinkham Way and move forward, minus this one site.

Cllr Chenot objected the assertion that fellow North London Councils would make the Council find another site or eject the Council from the agreement. She referred to the

Enfield Cabinet meeting in November, in which the Cabinet Member for Housing advised that if one of the other boroughs wanted to drop a site, then Enfield Council was willing to re-approve the site listed, providing Enfield was not required to provide another site.

Cllr Chenot challenged the view that if Pinkham Way were removed from the list of sites, this would have the impact of needing to find another site in the Tottenham area.

Cllr Chenot called on Councillors to consider that the future of Pinkham Way was at stake, and defending this nature conservation site for future generations was critical. Keeping these issues in mind, she called on all Councillors to support her amendment.

Cllr Dixon seconded the amendment.

The Leader responded to the amendment by emphasising that the Pinkham Way site is a SINC and this did not mean that a waste use could not come forward on part of the site. The Leader continued to outline that the remediation of the site to facilitate the waste use could actually improve biodiversity, and not all of the site would be needed for development. Any proposal would have to satisfy the requirements for development on SINC land as set out in Strategy Policy SP13, and include appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures. Any proposal coming forward would be likely to use less than half the site.

The Leader stressed that it was not possible to simply remove Pinkham Way from the NLWP without implications for the soundness of the plan as a whole.

Officer's initial research indicated that there were no alternative sites within Haringey and officers would be putting forward the same sites as currently proposed if Haringey had to produce its own waste plan.

The Leader underlined that it is a requirement under the NPPF and London Plan for boroughs to plan for waste management uses, not to produce a plan was not an option. If the Pinkham Way site were removed, all authorities would have to consider how to proceed. It had taken 6 years to get to this point with the current waste plan since the process restarted in 2013 and there are another 2 years on the current timetable. Stopping the Plan at this point was likely to add another 1-2 years onto this timetable.

The Leader outlined that while Pinkham Way might be small (5 hectares) compared to the total area available (c100ha). It was large in terms of significance because the major waste operator in North London who is most likely to invest in new waste facilities owns it and the site does not contain existing businesses.

If the NLWP was delayed, the main worry expressed by the other six boroughs was around how much of the plan would need to be renegotiated.

The Leader continued to outline that there were a number of Local Plan reviews under way and at least four boroughs were actively moving towards Reg 18, Reg 19 or submission. The local plan waste policies were premised on the fact that the boroughs are working together to plan for waste through the NLWP. Therefore, the soundness of each of the Local Plans depended on whether those boroughs can point to continuing progress on the NLWP. There could therefore be significant problems with

the Council's relationship with these Councils should the Council agree to withdraw the Pinkham Way site from the plan and force a significant delay.

The Leader expressed that if there was a delay to the NLWP because of reconsideration of Pinkham Way, there would need to be evidence that the partnership was still in existence and that work was still ongoing. If the partnership collapsed under the delay, this would raise soundness issues. There were also likely to be credibility and reputational issues, if boroughs again delayed the NLWP, having failed to resolve the issue of new land. As well as the uncertainty in the wider waste and planning worlds, officers would need to justify to their members going back again for approval for a revised plan.

Should the site be removed and additional sites have to be found, this would put additional pressure on the other sites identified in Haringey to accommodate a waste use (Brentwood Road and North East Tottenham Strategic Industrial Locations). Both these sites were much closer to existing residential properties and contain uses that employ a number of people.

The Leader advised full Council that if Haringey were to go forward and produce a waste plan on its own the same sites as currently in the NLWP would be the ones put forward as there are no alternatives in the Borough.

It should also be noted that, should the Plan not be approved, the employment designation would remain extant, and it would still be owned by NLWA.

The Leader emphasised that the NLWP had now been approved by 6 Cabinets and 6 full Councils of the member authorities and Haringey would be the last of the NLWA members to determine the recommendation on the NLWP.

The Leader reiterated that the appropriate route to debate the appropriateness of the designation of the site was through the Examination in Public into the Plan.

The Leader concluded that seeking to change the plan at this stage would have significant implications for the progress and soundness of the NLWP. It was not appropriate to seek to make an ad hoc deletion of just one site in isolation. Therefore, members were asked to vote against the amendment proposals and vote in favour of the original recommendations.

Following a request made by eight Members standing in their place, the Mayor agreed that a named vote be held on the amendment.

The Mayor then called a vote on the amendment. There being:

[33 against] Gina Adamou (Mayor), Charles Adje, Kaushika Amin, Patrick Berryman, John Bevan, Barbara Blake, Mark Blake, Zena Brabazon, Gideon Bull, Dana Carlin, Vincent Carroll, Eldridge Culverwell, Mahir Demir, Isidoros Diakides, Erdal Dogan, Joseph Ejiofor, Ruth Gordon, Makbule Gunes, Mike Hakata, Emine Ibrahim, Adam Jogee, Peter Mitchell, Khaled Moyeed, Felicia Opoku, Sheila Peacock, Reg Rice, Anne Stennett, Daniel Stone, Elin Weston, Noah Tucker, Sarah Williams, Matt White and Seema Chandwani.

[13 in favour] Dawn Barnes, Luke Cawley-Harrison, Sakina Chenot, Pippa Connor, , Paul Dennison, Josh Dixon, Josh Emery, Liz Morris, Julia Ogiehor, Tammy Palmer, Alessandra Rossetti, Viv Ross, Bob Hare.

The amendment was lost

There was a vote on the original recommendations contained in the report. There being 33 in favour, 13 against and no abstentions the original recommendations were agreed.

RESOLVED

To approve the draft NLWP (set out in Annex 1) for publication, consultation and subsequent submission to the Secretary of State as being ready for examination; and

To agree that the Director of Housing Regeneration and Planning in consultation when appropriate with the Cabinet Member responsible for Planning, and in conjunction with the other north London boroughs, are authorised to submit appropriate changes to the NLWP in the run up to, and during, the public examination into the document, in response to objectors' submissions, requests from the Planning Inspector and any emerging evidence, guidance or legal advice.

Reasons for decision

To enable the NLWP to progress to adoption, and to ensure the North London Boroughs have an adopted plan to manage waste arising in the area and to deal with planning applications for waste facilities.

Alternative options considered

The Council could decide not to progress with the North London Plan. However, as a Waste Authority the Council would still be obliged to produce a Waste Local Plan. This is a requirement stemming from Article 28 of the European Union (EU) Waste Framework Directive, which states that all member states must prepare a Waste Management Plan. The National Waste Management Plan for England, supported by the National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW), identify that each WPA's Waste Local Plan will support the National Waste Management Plan and as such it is a statutory requirement to prepare this document.

Any Waste Plan must be prepared in line with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Given the advanced stage of preparation of the NLWP, which has been a robust and sound process, and the delay in putting in place up to date waste management policies, a decision not to proceed with the NLWP would result in the Council needing to commence a Haringey only Waste Local Plan. Officers as not being a reasonable alternative have rejected this option.

7. CHANGES TO 2019/20 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and thanked Haringey tax payers for their contributions, assuring them that he would endeavour to ensure that that the Council spend the revenue received wisely. Residents were thanked for taking part in the Council Tax consultation, most of which were in favour of the recommendations put forward. The Cabinet Member reflected that managing a budget required priorities and the administration's manifesto was clear that fairness was the cornerstone of the priorities to be taken forward.

The Cabinet Member provided the background to the compilation of the Council Tax reduction proposals, describing the previous collation government's policy to assign the Council tax benefit scheme to local authorities, at the same time as significantly reducing funding. The resultant local government choices made in Haringey on the Council Tax Benefit scheme, in hindsight, had not achieved a fair outcome for low income families.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the inequality of central government's taxation policies with the top rate of tax payers benefiting and families in the lowest tax band seeing an disproportionate rise in their Council tax bills, against their income. This had inevitably resulted in significantly higher bills, causing debt and visits by bailiffs. These proposals would seek to address this imbalance and help ensure that the burden of Council Tax lay on those with the broadest financial shoulders.

The Cabinet Member described how this key issue of a fairer Council Tax reduction scheme had been discussed in local meetings during and prior to the local election and this was considered a key inequality that needed to be tackled. The Cabinet Member for Finance was proud to make these proposals which would benefit over 6000 low income families immediately in the new financial year.

The Cabinet Member thanked local campaigners and finance officers, whose hard work had made these proposals possible.

In response to a clarification point, the Cabinet Member for Finance advised:

6000 families would benefit in the borough from the reformed Council tax scheme, 4000 of those had children under 11, and third of these families were single parent families led by women. Low income families and single parent families were key groups affected by austerity measures and located in the east of the borough. Therefore, these changes to the Council tax scheme would help to, in part, address this inequality.

It was unanimously RESOLVED

To note that, since the public consultation concluded, a Consultation Report had been published, and its findings incorporated in the Equality Impact Assessment and this report.

To agree the preferred option. This was a combination of:

- a) Increasing the maximum level of Council Tax Reduction from 80.2% to 100% for working age claimants with children; and

b) Updating the CTRS to align with some national welfare changes.

The maximum level of Council Tax Reduction would continue to be 100% for pensioners and working age claimants in receipt of disability related benefits, as it is under the existing CTRS.

Reasons for decision

The stated ambition of the current administration is to:

Extend Council Tax relief to 100% for our least well-off residents; and

Ensure the greatest weight is placed on the broadest shoulders by consulting on options that make Council tax and our policies for charging for Council services fairer.

Councils have limited powers to effect change to Council Tax without primary legislation. However, the CTRS offers a vehicle through which the Council can redistribute the burden on Council Tax payers and provide additional financial support to those in receipt of Council Tax Reduction.

Since 2013, the existing CTRS has capped the maximum amount of Council Tax Reduction at 80.2% for working age claimants who were not in receipt of disability related benefits. It is recognised that some residents have increasingly struggled to pay contributions towards their Council Tax. Therefore, there is a desire to provide additional financial support to residents who are the least well-off.

The proposal to increase the maximum level of Council Tax Reduction for working age claimants who have children is thought better to balance affordability with the need to provide more financial assistance to a group in particular need.

It is also proposed to update the scheme to bring it in line with some national welfare changes that have taken place since 2013. For pensioners, the CTRS automatically updates each year to align with national welfare changes. For working age claimants, the CTRS has not been updated since 2013. Therefore, it is proposed to update the scheme to ensure it is up to date, easier to understand and reflects inflationary changes. As a result of these changes, most working age claimants would have an increased level of Council Tax Reduction (i.e. would be financially better off) whether or not they have children.

The proposal to align with some national welfare changes is considered to balance the benefit of making the CTRS up to date and easier to understand by reflecting the national welfare scheme, reflecting inflationary changes since 2013, and the desire to provide additional financial support to a group who are in particular need. It is not proposed to align the CTRS with all national welfare changes. For example, it is not proposed to align with the two child limit for child allowances. This is because it would decrease the level of Council Tax Reduction a claimant would be entitled to (i.e. make them financially worse off). It is considered that aligning the CTRS with all national welfare changes would worsen the financial position of groups who are in particular need.

The Council is obliged to consider whether to revise or replace its CTRS each year. However, it is not obliged actually to revise or replace it. If any revision or replacement is to be made, the Council must follow the consultation process set out in the legislation and changes must be made by 11 March, to take effect from 1 April. The decision has to be made by Full Council. In order to give the Council sufficient time to implement any changes, Full Council should formally agree the proposals in January.

Therefore, the proposal was made now to ensure that any additional financial support for residents can take effect as soon as possible, from 1 April 2019.

8. CHANGES TO COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS FOR UNOCCUPIED AND UNFURNISHED PROPERTIES AND VACANT PROPERTIES REQUIRING OR UNDERGOING MAJOR REPAIR OR STRUCTURAL ALTERATION

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which proposed the cessation of two of the Council's discretionary Council Tax discounts related to: unoccupied and unfurnished properties, and vacant properties requiring or undergoing major repair or structural alteration

This was a further step in making the Council Tax scheme fairer for residents. This decision would result in an additional income of around £500k for the Council's budget.

It was unanimously RESOLVED

To agree the recommendation from Cabinet, on 14 August 2018, to cease two of the Council's discretionary Council Tax discounts from 1 April 2019, namely for:

- Unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties; and
- Vacant properties that either require or are undergoing major repair work to render them habitable; that have undergone such work in the past six months; or that are undergoing structural alteration.

Reasons for decision

The two Council Tax discounts are at the Council's discretion. The administration has indicated a desire to appraise the existing fleet of discretionary powers given the continuing need to make savings to the wider budget.

Abolishing the two Council Tax discounts would generate an estimated saving of £462,800 per year, which would support the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and help mitigate its funding pressures.

Under the current arrangements, an unoccupied and furnished property receives no Council Tax discount, while an unoccupied and unfurnished property receives the discount. The Council seeks to address the imbalance and bring the arrangements in line with those for unoccupied and furnished properties.

Some of the Council's neighbouring boroughs, such as LB Enfield, LB Islington and LB Barnet have abolished both Council Tax discounts. Therefore, the proposal would bring Haringey in line with its neighbouring boroughs.

It is recognised that Council Tax payers who currently claim these discounts are unlikely to be making full use of Council services whilst the property is unoccupied. However, Council Tax is not charged on the basis that every payer will use every service and Council services do not stop or reduce in cost when a property becomes empty.

There are a number of means of reducing or eliminating Council Tax liability available and that would not be affected by the recommendation. For example, the exemption following the death of the occupant, the single person discount and disregards for students or those detained in hospital.

Alternative options considered

No Change

The Council could choose not to abolish its Council Tax discount for either (i) unoccupied and unfurnished properties, or (ii) vacant properties requiring or undergoing major repair or structural alteration.

This is not proposed because the Council is under significant financial pressure to deliver a sustainable Medium Term Financial Strategy. Abolishing the Council Tax discounts would generate substantial savings to the Council.

Remove only one of the discounts

Removing only the discount for unoccupied and unfurnished properties would generate an estimated saving of £341,300 per year. Removing only the discount for vacant properties requiring or undergoing major repair or structural alteration would generate an estimated saving of £121,500 per year.

This is not proposed because the Council is under significant financial pressure to deliver a sustainable Medium Term Financial Strategy. Abolishing both Council Tax discounts would generate substantial savings to the Council.

Extend the scope of the Discounts

This is not proposed as it would increase the level of funding pressures already upon the Council and would not be consistent with its policy objectives.

9. CHANGES TO COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM FOR LONG-TERM EMPTY DWELLINGS

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which proposed an increase to the Council Tax premium, currently charged on long-term empty dwellings, from 50% to 100%, from the 1st of April 2019.

It was noted that central government had introduced the 50% premium on empty properties to encourage their owners to bring back them into use for housing purposes rather than be left empty for future financial security. However, given there was an opportunity to increase this premium further and to enable a fairer distribution of Council Tax benefit, the report proposed to increase this premium to 100% as allowed by government? It was also understood that this course of action was gaining recognition as a necessary policy change to increase income, amongst neighbouring boroughs.

In response to a clarification points:

- The Cabinet Member for Finance commended the work and dedication by officers to bring forward revised Council Tax policies amongst other considerable priorities.
- The Cabinet Member further offered to provide Councillors with further detail of groups exempt from Council tax payments.

It was unanimously RESOLVED

To increase the premium charged on long-term empty dwellings from 50% to 100% from 1 April 2019.

Reasons for Decision

Since 2013, Councils have been given the discretionary power to charge a premium on dwellings deemed to be 'long-term empty', i.e. properties which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least two years. At present, the amount of Council Tax payable for such properties can be increased by 50%, so that the payer is liable to pay a total of 150% Council Tax.

The legislation has recently been changed to give Councils the power to increase the premium from 50% to 100% from 01 April 2019. This means that the total amount of Council Tax payable for such properties could be increased from 150% to 200%.

Increasing the premium to 100% has the potential to bring in additional income which would support the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and help mitigate its funding pressures.

Some of the Council's neighbouring boroughs, such as LB Enfield, LB Islington and LB Barnet currently charge the maximum existing premium of 50% and are also considering increasing this to a 100% premium following the change in legislation. Therefore, the proposal is likely to mean Haringey is acting in line with its neighbouring boroughs.

It is recognised that Council Tax payers who are liable to pay the premium are unlikely to be making full use of Council services whilst the property is long-term empty. However, Council Tax is not charged on the basis that every payer will use every service and Council services do not stop or reduce in cost when a property becomes long-term empty.

In addition, an increased premium may encourage residents to bring long-term empty properties back into use. There is shortage of housing in the area and so there is potential for long-term empty dwellings to be put to better use if used to increase the available housing. This would in turn reduce the pressure on housing stock.

Some properties are exempt from the premium by statute and this will not change:

- A property which would be the sole/main residence of a person but which is empty while that person resides in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence by reason of their employment (e.g. service personnel posted away from home).
- A dwelling forming part of a single property, where other parts of the property are used as a sole or main residence.

The Council will continue to have the means to reduce or eliminate Council Tax liability, for example to cater for cases of exceptional hardship.

Alternative Options Considered

No change or increasing the premium to less than 100%

The Council could choose not to extend the premium and leave it at 50%, or to increase the premium to more than 50% but less than 100%.

This is not proposed because the Council is under significant financial pressure to deliver a sustainable Medium Term Financial Strategy. Increasing the Council Tax premium to 100% would generate additional income for the Council.

In addition, increasing the premium to the maximum 100% may encourage residents to bring long-term empty properties back into use which could in turn lead to an increase in available housing.

Removing or reducing the existing premium

The Council could choose to remove or reduce the existing premium.

This is not proposed because the Council is under significant financial pressure to deliver a sustainable Medium Term Financial Strategy. Removing or reducing the Council Tax premium would reduce the Council's income.

In addition, removing or reducing the premium may reduce the incentive for residents to bring long-term empty properties back into use.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date