

# KENNINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING  
on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March

**33/20 To note those present and record any apologies**

Members present Cllr Goodwin (Chair), Cllr Cooper, Cllr Dean, Cllr Varney, Cllr Ellis, Cllr Mendes, Cllr Morley, Cllr White, Cllr Martin, Cllr Seaton, Cllr Iliffe. Apologies received: Cllr Hewett, Cllr Armitage, Cllr Sylvester, Cllr Bartlett. Also present 6 members of the public and the Clerk

**34/20 To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), Other Significant Interests (OSI's) or a Voluntary Interest relating to items on the agenda.**

No interests were declared.

**35/20 COUNCIL PROGRESS, ORGANISATION AND COMMUNICATION**

Chair opened the meeting and asked those Councillors who had initially called the meeting to inform the council why the meeting had been called.

Although not previously circulated, Cllr Mendes read a statement on behalf of himself and Cllrs Dean, Martin and Seaton. A copy of the statement is attached as Appendix 1.

The Chairman stated that there were inaccuracies in the statement but not wishing to pick over them one by one at this meeting he requested that a copy of the statement be sent to him and he will reply in writing.

A debate followed during which the aforementioned Councillors restated their proposals set out in the opening statement. The Chair explained that as these proposals were not on the agenda, they could not be considered at this meeting but would be addressed at the earliest opportunity.

All councillors were given an opportunity to speak after which the meeting closed.

**36/20 Close of Meeting**

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.



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### Appendix 1:

Members of this council have embarked upon this journey to become a councillor in order to work towards improving the quality of life for our fellow residents. We are selfless beings prepared to sacrifice a little in order for others to benefit, whether the effort is recognised or not. But we must never forget that we are here at their expense rather than ours. This organisation is funded by other peoples' money.

And so there is a certain moral question to ask, not just tonight, but every single day that this council sits, and it is this - Is this council provide value for money and should the residents continue to pay for it?

Based on the evidence before us, having observed what has been observed and what has not been observed - it is an enormous struggle at this time to answer this question with a Yes, and I would challenge anybody here tonight to do so convincingly.

Why? Firstly because this council has achieved extremely little thus far, and secondly because, as it is plain to see, we lack effective internal organisation in order for this to radically change. Both are self-evident and simply not acceptable to anyone.

Meeting tonight on an emergency basis is an urgent jolt to the system that this council desperately needs, whether certain individuals like it or not.

This council's entire reason for being is not as an evening hobby club, but a local government institution capable of swift meaningful action that otherwise could not be achieved.

And it is on this subject of action, where this council unacceptably falls appallingly short. When action is agreed by this council, we have zero professional project management or formal communication processes to trigger in order to ensure the efficient implementation of agreed action.

Actions proposed by the Communications Committee, endorsed by the full council 4 months ago in November and again 1 month ago in February, remain mostly outstanding, while some have finally been addressed in very recent days and weeks. These essential actions have not only been riddled with an unacceptable lack of administrative competence, but worse, a deliberate lack of proper team communication from start to finish.

If we cannot communicate amongst ourselves as 16 councillors, what chance have we got at communicating with 6000 residents?

At February's full council meeting each proposed action was extracted into a standalone proposal document, which when you take away the front cover and annexes, were each 1 page long. They each stated What, Why, Who and When with regards to the action to be taken. This was the express wish of committee chairs, as well as the chairman of the council, about a week before the full council meeting at a cross-committee meeting.

When these proposals were debated and voted on, at no time was it reported that these actions could not be implemented in the foreseeable future, let alone before the deadline proposed.

Nothing about the bank was mentioned, the clerk's availability or anything else that formed the basis of a series of excuses that soon followed.

What is the point of proposing and endorsing action that we cannot implement? Why on earth are we not reporting serious administrative problems to the full council so they are aware of what we can and cannot do? Why is there not a closer collaborative relationship between key individuals? Why are councillors and committees having to chase for updates when weeks and months pass without any action? This unnecessary, sub-standard, administration of essential business simply creates and inflames tension and strife that severely harms the working atmosphere and the council's productivity.

The situation is unacceptable. We can accept and resolve mistakes, everybody makes them - like the wrong version of the leaflet being printed - but a deliberate lack of a courteous attitude and timely and informative communication, we can't.

In short, the situation is unacceptable. On this current trajectory and with this current velocity,



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our extremely short list of achievements so far will remain exactly that, short.

We have a lot of hard-working councillors on this council and we've seen extensive efforts from across a range of committees. Effort is not the problem. The problem is that it is channelled in different directions, producing endless strain and stress on working relations between councillors and ultimately a severely chaotic and unproductive mess - to the point now where working relations between councillors has well and truly broken down.

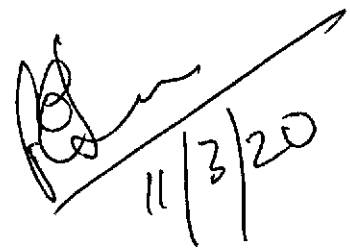
Now despite the tension and the heated exchanges in recent days and weeks, it is time to say - water under the bridge. Let's remember why we are here, agree to bury personal hurt feelings, despite any ill-treatment we might feel we have received, and let's well and truly come together as one, to fix our undeniable problems so we can better serve Kennington.

In this spirit, we will be withdrawing the proposed Communications Strategy document that has been the cause of significant friction. Too much time has been spent arguing about it and we must not waste any more.

We need to start urgently spending our time much, much more productively.

And to that end we the Communications Committee are proposing the following radical practical changes now:

- Discipline and order in meetings according to own standing orders
  - Chairman's responsibility to ensure
  - General nature of full council meetings - quick decisions, committees trusted not challenged fundamentally, debate and amendments take place before
- Delegated powers / Clerk bottleneck
  - Superwoman or human in post - impossible, far too much on her shoulders
  - Committees must be able to implement actions endorsed by the full council
- Direct communication between Councillors needs to radically improve
  - Rather than complaints / grievances / issues passed through the clerk
  - Councillors should talk to councillors directly
- Chairman's role
  - Impartial facilitator, priority is oversight, monitoring of progress, encouraging teamwork and team building
  - Not VIP councillor with extra status, forcing opinions and points of view they favour
- Payment card
  - Still no clear action plan for resolving



Handwritten signature and date: 11/3/20