

Cabinet

Minutes



Monday 12 October 2020

PRESENT

Councillor Stephen Cowan, Leader of the Council
Councillor Sue Fennimore, Deputy Leader
Councillor Ben Coleman, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care
Councillor Adam Connell, Cabinet Member for Public Services Reform
Councillor Larry Culhane, Cabinet Member for Children and Education
Councillor Wesley Harcourt, Cabinet Member for the Environment
Councillor Andrew Jones, Cabinet Member for the Economy
Councillor Lisa Homan, Cabinet Member for Housing
Councillor Sue Macmillan, Cabinet Member for Strategy
Councillor Max Schmid, Cabinet Member for Finance and Commercial Services

INTRODUCTION

The Leader stated that he had just attended the latest Emergency Covid-19 meeting for the London region to discuss the potential rise in cases this coming winter. They were currently in talks with the government to discuss measures to control the pandemic.

The Leader reiterated the important measures that all citizens would need to keep in place. Number one was to wear a mask in enclosed spaces, number 2 was to wash hands regularly with sanitizer and number 3 was to keep the 2 metres social distancing. Also important was for people to get tested immediately in case of symptoms, as there was now better capacity for testing around London.

The Leader stressed that the effect of the pandemic was seriously impacting the economy and businesses in the borough, particularly in the areas of hospitality and retail. He urged all businesses to ensure that all customers would wear a mask before entering their premises, to contain the spread of the virus.

The Leader expected tougher restrictions to be introduced in the London region within the next week due to the city's failure in containing the spread of the disease. It was vital that everyone – businesses, all public services and citizens - worked together in trying to control the spread during the next two weeks to avoid facing a very challenging winter.

1. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2020

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7 September 2020 be confirmed and signed as an accurate record of the proceedings, and that the outstanding actions be noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

Councillor Macmillan had intermittent connection problems but was able to re-join the meeting.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

4. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITOR & BUDGET VARIATIONS, 2020/21 (FIRST QUARTER)

Councillor Max Schmid introduced the report requesting approval for budget variations to the capital programme, which was impacted by Covid-19 on the reduction of its funding and the longer construction periods due to social distancing. He added that the programme still reinforced the Council's commitment to build genuine affordable housing.

In reply to a question from the Leader, Councillor Max Schmid stated that Covid-19 had left a hole of at least £18m in the Council's finances after the government broke its initial promise that councils would be fully funded for the financial impact of the pandemic. This figure was not taking into account the impact of a potential second wave. The effect of this debt on the Council's budget would be felt within the next 3 years, aggravated by the 10 years of continuous austerity imposed on all local authorities. He was not aware of any new funding coming from the central government.

Councillor Ben Coleman noted that the Council was calling on the government to turn NHS Test and Trace into a locally led service, which would require appropriate funding. He hoped that the government would come forward and provide this funding as many local authorities would be sceptical in offering this service in fear of not receiving the full funding.

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the proposed budget variations to the capital programme totalling £36.4m (summarised in Table 1 and detailed in Appendix 2).

2. To note the potential risks regarding the Housing Capital Programme, as summarised in paragraphs 26, 27 and 28.
3. To delegate the allocation of the HRA Asset Management and Compliance Programme unallocated budget to the Strategic Director of the Economy, in consultation with the Director of Finance.

Reason for decision:

As set out in the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As outlined in the report.

Record of any conflict of interest:

None.

Note of dispensation in respect of any declared conflict of interest:

None.

5. RESIDENT EXPERIENCE AND ACCESS PROGRAMME (REAP) - PROPOSED MANDATE TO MOVE TO THE DELIVERY PHASE OF THE PROGRAMME

Councillor Adam Connell introduced the report and stated that it was a flagship initiative for driving transformation, improved access, reliability and quality across all front-line services. The programme would resolve the low level of digital access that residents of the borough currently experienced, ensuring digital inclusion and choice. Following a significant level of preparatory work undertaken, the delivery of the programme would be led by a dedicated resident implementation group.

Councillor Connell added that this was an invest to save programme which was critical for the Council's commitment to continue to be the best value Council in the country. The programme would deliver significant savings to the Council and more efficient services to the public.

Councillor Max Schmid thanked all residents involved in getting this programme right. The dedicated resident implementation group included disabled residents to ensure that the programme would address their needs and make it easier for them to interact with the Council when requesting services, either digitally or by alternative means.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the detailed business case and delivery plan attached in Appendix 1 for the Resident Experience and Access programme to move from the planning to the delivery stage and complete all further design work required.

2. Approves the core associated principles that underpin the intended future operating model of service delivery that will be rigorously pursued on a corporate basis and through co-production with a representative range of residents.
3. Approves in principle investment of up to £3.6m plus £0.4m contingency from one-off council reserves (up to £4.0m in total), delegating the draw-down of the reserve in line with the programme tranches, to the Director of Finance and the Senior Responsible Officer for the programme, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Commercial Services and the Cabinet Member for Public Services Reform.
4. Notes the risk management arrangements put in place for this programme to provide reassurance for the effective use of the programme's resources and successful delivery of significantly improved services for all its customers at a lower ongoing cost.

Reason for decision:

As set out in the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As outlined in the report.

Record of any conflict of interest:

None.

Note of dispensation in respect of any declared conflict of interest:

None.

6. APPROVE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING SCHEME OF ALLOCATIONS

Councillor Lisa Homan stated that it was an enormous challenge to allocate enough housing for the high demand in the borough and throughout London. This report introduced seven recommendations that would improve the service allocation and make it more transparent and fairer to all.

Councillor Ben Coleman welcomed the recommendations, particularly the formalisation of local Lettings Plans to be put in place for all new social housing developments to give local residents right of first refusal.

RESOLVED:

To approve the following changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme:

1. Change the way social housing is allocated by introducing an online digital housing platform.
2. Allow qualifying households to remain or join the housing register when assisted into the Private Rented Sector via our Homelessness Service.

3. Lower the community contribution threshold for Disabled people.
4. Make an exception to the local residency qualification so that young people are not disadvantaged by time spent outside the borough to access SEN services.
-
5. Ring fence properties which have been adapted or are suitable for adaption for disabled households.
6. Give additional priority for young people ready for move-on from Care by increasing their priority award to Band 1 and increase the annual quota for Children Leaving Care from 30 to 40 housing lets.
7. That local Lettings Plans be put in place automatically to give local residents priority for all new social housing developments.

Reason for decision:

As set out in the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As outlined in the report.

Record of any conflict of interest:

None.

Note of dispensation in respect of any declared conflict of interest:

None.

7. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Key Decision List was noted.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Leader, on behalf of the whole Administration, asked Jacqui McShannon, Director of Children's Services, to pass the Administration's warmest congratulations to Manvir Hothi, DCT Principal Social Worker, who was awarded an MBE for her outstanding services to social care, particularly during the pandemic.

The Leader also thanked Jacqui McShannon and Lisa Redfern, Strategic Director of Social Care, for their invaluable services to social care. He was very proud to have them working for the Council.

Meeting started: 6.30 pm

Meeting ended: 6.53 pm

Chair