

Cabinet

Minutes



Monday 4 September 2023

PRESENT

Councillor Stephen Cowan, Leader of the Council
Councillor Ben Coleman, Deputy Leader
Councillor Wesley Harcourt, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology
Councillor Sharon Holder, Cabinet Member for Public Realm
Councillor Rebecca Harvey, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Community Safety
Councillor Bora Kwon, Cabinet Member for Civic Renewal
Councillor Rowan Ree, Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform
Councillor Alex Sanderson, Cabinet Member for Children and Education
Councillor Frances Umeh, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Jose Afonso

1. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 17 JULY 2023

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17 July 2023 be confirmed and signed as an accurate record of the proceedings, and that the outstanding actions be noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andrew Jones.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

4. SPECIAL SCHOOL ORGANISATION AND CAPITAL PLAN

Councillor Alex Sanderson introduced the report setting out an ambitious programme of investment in provision for children and young people with

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Hammersmith & Fulham over the period to 2030.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

That Cabinet approves the

1. Special School Organisation and Capital Plan at Appendix 1 of this report.
2. Publication of the documents attached at Appendix 1 of this report.
3. Approves the five-year commissioning plan detailed in the Special School Organisation and Capital Plan at Appendix 1
4. Delegates authority to the Operational Director of Education and SEND to finalise Service Level Agreements with schools to give effect to point 3.

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. THE REFURBISHMENT OF LENA GARDENS SCHOOL SITE FOR ONGOING EDUCATION USE

Councillor Alex Sanderson introduced the report recommending award of the contract for refurbishing the Lena Gardens Primary school site to provide high quality educational facilities for future use to Arc Group Ltd. This investment would support options for the long-term educational use of the Lena Gardens site.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

To approve the award of the contract to refurbish Lena Gardens to Arc Group London Ltd. for £823,867.80 plus 10% contingency of £82,387 (total of £906,254.80) funded from School Condition Allocation.

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. COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME DECANT WORKS AND MOBILISATION

Councillor Alex Sanderson introduced the report, which was part of the Community Schools Programme, requesting funds for the refurbishment of Mund Street so that it could be used for pupils decanted from Avonmore Primary School.

Councillor Sanderson expressed her deep concern for the thousands of children around the country unsure whether they would have a school to go to over the next few weeks, due to the lack of investment from the Government in school buildings. She was proud that Hammersmith & Fulham Council was investing in schools as part of the Community Schools programme.

The Leader added that cancelling the Building Schools for the Future Programme initiated this problem.

Councillor Sanderson added that her report entitled Youth Justice Plan would be going shortly to Full Council.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

1. To approve the setting up and draw down of a budget of £807,070 (including £30,000 from S106 and £777,070 from general fund borrowing) to refurbish the Mund Street site and specific costs directly related to the decant process for Avonmore.
2. To approve the allocation of £55,660 of School Condition Allocation (SCA) capital grant to support works associated with the specific educational requirements of Avonmore Primary school.
3. To delegate the decision to commit this additional expenditure for the former Fulham Boys Mund Street site to the Director of Education, in consultation with the Director of Children's Services, the Director of Finance and with the Cabinet Member for Children and Education

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. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2022/23

Councillor Rowan thanked Phil Triggs, the Director of Treasury & Pensions, and the Treasure Management Team for their excellent work. Despite the significant external financial challenges, the Council met all of its Prudential Indicators, and undertook no new borrowing on the previous year.

The Leader agreed that their tight Treasure Management was part of the Council's Ruthlessly Financially Efficient programme. He thanked the Finance Team as well as the Senior Management Team for investing wisely.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

That the Committee note the annual Treasury Management Outturn Report for 2022/23.

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.

8. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITOR & BUDGET VARIATIONS, 2022/23 (OUTTURN)

Councillor Rowan stated that this report provided details of the capital programme outturn for the financial year 2022/23. It included £65.8m investment in the existing council homes to ensure compliance and building affordable new homes for residents, £14m in ensuring the safety and the stabilisation of Hammersmith Bridge, and investing £3.2m in the rollout of electric vehicle charging points as part of the Council's Climate and Ecology Strategy.

The Leader added that one of their priorities was investing in social housing and bringing them up to standards. He stressed that the works on Hammersmith Bridge were ongoing, and the bridge was no longer in danger of collapsing. Due to the scale of the task the opening of the bridge would take time and money.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

1. To note the capital outturn for the year of £140.1m.
2. To approve the proposed budget variations to the capital programme (2022/23 to 2025/26) as summarised in Table 1 and detailed in Appendix 1.

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.

9. PROVISIONAL REVENUE OUTTURN REPORT 2022/23

Councillor Rowan stated that the council was legally required to balance their budget yearly. Despite the fact that the Government grant had been drastically cut and the downturn in the economy the Council not only managed to balance its budget but also created a budget surplus over the last year without any cuts to frontline services. He thanked everyone in the Finance Team and the Senior Management Team.

The Leader reiterated that the Council had maintained over the years the delivery of key services to residents, visitors, and businesses, while introducing new ones, such as free adult social care, the Law Enforcement Team, free breakfast for primary school children. This was a consequence of being Ruthlessly Financially Efficient.

In relation to Appendix 8, the Housing Revenue Account, Councillor Jose Afonso asked whether leaseholders were being penalised with increases in charges to make up for the lost rent in housing income.

The Leader replied that the service charges for leaseholders since 2014 had been increase at a low rate. Rather than punishing leaseholders the Council was delivering better value for service charges. Value for money was a key issue, particularly now with the cost-of-living crisis.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

1. To note the General Fund underspend of £0.340m (0.02% of budget).
2. To note that the draw down from the Housing Revenue Account general balance of £5.543m which was lower than the projected £6,329m.
3. To note the significant reduction of the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block deficit and the remaining cumulative deficit of £4.748m.

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.

10. REVENUE BUDGET REVIEW 2023/24 - MONTH 2

Councillor Rowan Ree introduced the report for the first financial review of 2023/24 (further reports would follow at months 4, 6 and 9) to monitor spending to ensure money was being spent in the most cost-effective way.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

1. To note the General Fund financial forecast at Month 2.
2. To note that the position on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) as set out in paragraphs 12 and 13.
3. To note the in-year Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block forecasted surplus of £0.401m (thereby reducing the cumulative deficit).
4. To approve General Fund budget changes totalling £1.138m as detailed in Appendix 10. This is being funded using on-going and one-off contingencies (£0.958m) and one-off use of earmarked reserves (£0.180m).

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.

11. KINGS CORONATION YOUTH FUND AWARD REPORT 2023

Councillor Sharon Holder stated that the King's Coronation Youth Fund launched this year would allow the Council to award 26 organisations funding to support approximately 48,130 young people across the borough. Youth activities included sport, culture, arts, music, and socialising in positive activities. These opportunities would enrich the lives of young people and keep them safe from anti-social behaviour, crime, and gangs. The costs would be funded by S.106 contributions.

Councillor Jose Afonso welcomed this new Fund which he believed was created by the campaign run by Greg Hands, MP. As this would be funded for two years he asked whether it would be reinstated at the end on this period.

The Leader replied that His Majesty King Charles III was the reason this Fund had been created. As Prince Charles he was already supporting young people as part of the Prince of Wales Trust before becoming king. It was a credit to Kevin McGrath, the Representative Deputy Lieutenant for Hammersmith and Fulham, who worked with the Council to find a project to celebrate His Majesty's coronation and to capture the spirit of his monarchy.

In relation to future funding beyond the two-year period, the Leader added that a legal procurement process would need to be carried out to authorise future spending.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

5. To note that Appendix 2 is not for publication on the basis that it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as set out in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).
6. To provide funding of £706,940 to 26 organisations as outlined in Appendix 1, for 2023/24.
3. That the uncommitted balance of £293,060 be made available for a second round of applications in 2024/25.

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.

12. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Key Decision List was noted.

13. DISCUSSION OF EXEMPT ELEMENTS (ONLY IF REQUIRED)

There was no discussion of exempt elements.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm

Meeting ended: 7.26 pm

Chair