

# Cabinet

## Minutes



**Monday 12 February 2024**

*NOTE: This meeting was held remotely. A recording of the meeting can be watched at on YouTube at: [H&F Cabinet | 12 February 2024 \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H&F_Cabinet_12_February_2024)*

### **PRESENT**

Councillor Ben Coleman, Deputy Leader  
Councillor Wesley Harcourt, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology  
Councillor Sharon Holder, Cabinet Member for Public Realm  
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 Adronie Alford  
Councillor Max Schmid

### **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

In the absence of the Leader the Deputy Leader, Councillor Ben Coleman chaired the meeting.

### **1. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2024**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 15 January 2024 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 Stephen Cowan, Councillor Andrew Jones and Councillor Rebecca Harvey.

### **3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4. STRENGTHENING EDUCATION PROVISION IN HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM**

Councillor Alex Sanderson introduced the report outlining the steps needed to support sustainable primary school provision across the borough. Its recommendations were extensively co-produced and developed by a steering group consisting of the Council and its education partners, including school leaders, local academy trusts, unions and other key stakeholders.

#### **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:**

To approve the Strengthening Education Provision in Hammersmith and Fulham attached at 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.

#### **5. REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX LEVELS 2024/25**

Councillor Ree stated that this was a particularly difficult time for local government finances with a number of councils across the country unable to meet their financial obligations. He reassured Hammersmith and Fulham residents who relied on Council services that this Council would continue to provide those services. This was a well-run Council that was able to meet all of its financial obligations and managed to set up another balanced budget for the coming year despite those difficulties.

This budget protected both the core services and also those unique services the Council provided, such as free home care, free breakfast for primary school children, the Local Law Enforcement Teams, the council tax support scheme, the ethical debt collection policy amongst others. As part of this budget they were also investing £10.7 million pounds in new services. All this was only possible because of the ruthlessly financially efficient approach taken by the Council to budgeting.

Councillor Alford stated that she wanted to ensure the budget balanced, particularly the housing revenue account, and thanked Councillor Ree's reassurance to that effect.

Councillor Coleman stressed that this had been the most difficult year for setting a budget in all his years as a Councillor. Therefore, he was extremely

proud of the work done by officers in this Council in bringing in a budget which balanced and protected services.

**AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:**

To agree for the reasons set out in this report and appendices:

1. To increase the Hammersmith & Fulham element of Council Tax by 2.99% as modelled by the government in its spending power calculations for local government.
2. To apply the Adult Social Care precept levy of 2% as modelled by the government in its spending power calculations for local government.
3. To approve a balanced budget for 2024/25 as set out in the report, including the underlying principles and assumptions.
4. To approve **£10.7m** of new investment on key services for residents.
5. To approve fees and charges, as set out in Appendix E, including freezing charges in adult social care, children's services, and General Fund housing.
6. To approve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and to note the budget projections to 2027/28 made by the Strategic Director of Finance in consultation with the Strategic Leadership Team. (Appendix B)
7. To note the statement of the Strategic Director of Finance, under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, regarding the adequacy of reserves and robustness of estimates (paragraph 56).
8. To approve the reserves strategy and forecast as set out in Appendix H.
9. To require all Directors to report on their projected financial position compared to their revenue estimates in accordance with the Corporate Revenue Monitoring Report timetable.
10. To authorise Directors to implement their service spending plans for 2024/25 in accordance with the recommendations within this report, the council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, relevant Schemes of Delegation and undertake any further consultation required regarding the Equalities Impact Assessment.
11. Set the council's element of Council Tax for 2024/25 for each category of dwelling, as outlined in the table below and in full in Appendix A and calculated in accordance with Sections 31A to 49B of the Localism Act 2011.

Category of Dwelling	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Ratio	6/9 £	7/9 £	8/9 £	1 £	11/9 £	13/9 £	15/9 £	18/9 £
H&F	610.24	711.95	813.66	915.37	1,118.78	1,322.20	1,525.61	1,830.74

12. To note, based on the Mayor of London's draft consolidated budget, the element of Council Tax to be charged by the Greater London Authority in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each of the categories of dwellings as shown in the table below.

Category of Dwelling	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Ratio	6/9 £	7/9 £	8/9 £	1 £	11/9 £	13/9 £	15/9 £	18/9 £
b) GLA	314.27	366.64	419.02	471.40	576.16	680.91	785.67	942.80

13. That the overall Council Tax to be set at £1,386.77 per Band D property as follows:

Category of Dwelling	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Ratio	6/9 £	7/9 £	8/9 £	1 £	11/9 £	13/9 £	15/9 £	18/9 £
a) H&F	610.24	711.95	813.66	915.37	1,118.78	1,322.19	1,525.61	1,830.74
b) GLA	314.27	366.64	419.02	471.40	576.16	680.91	785.67	942.80
<b>c) Total</b>	<b>924.51</b>	<b>1,078.59</b>	<b>1,232.68</b>	<b>1,386.77</b>	<b>1,694.94</b>	<b>2,003.10</b>	<b>2,311.28</b>	<b>2,773.54</b>

14. To authorise the Strategic Director of Finance to collect and recover National Non-Domestic Rate and Council Tax in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended), the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

15. To note the Council's estimated position on the Collection Fund (as set out in paragraph 51).

16. To note the performance on the management of arrears across the Council on all debts due (as set out from paragraph 60).

**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. THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET (2024/25), RENTS & SERVICE CHARGES (2024/25) & HRA 10 YEAR BUSINESS PLAN (2024/25 - 2033/34)**

Councillor Ree Rowan introduced the report setting out the Housing Revenue Account budget proposals for the financial year 2024/25 including changes to rent levels and other charges as well as an updated HRA 10-year Business Plan. This was an important plan to provide certainty and stability for tenants and it included the Council's plans to build additional new homes and invest in the housing stock.

**AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:**

That Cabinet agrees:

1. To approve the Housing Revenue Account 2024/25 budget for council homes as set out in Table 1.
2. To approve the HRA 10-year Business Plan for Council Homes (2024/25 – 2033/34) as set out in paragraphs 3 - 4 of this report and Appendices 1 - 4.
3. To approve a rent increase of 7.7% from 1 April 2024 (in line with September 2023 CPI+1%), which equates to an average weekly increase for tenants of £9.62 in 2024/25.
4. To approve an increase to shared ownership rents of 7.7% from 1 April 2024 (in line with September 2023 CPI+1%).
5. To approve changes to tenant service charges to reflect the costs of providing communal services from 1 April 2024, which equate to an average weekly increase for tenants of £3.01 in 2024/25.
6. To approve a reduction to charges for heating and hot water to reflect the costs of provision of the district heating service from 1 April 2024, which equate to an average weekly reduction for tenants and leaseholders on the scheme of £0.41 (communal heating), £1.87 (tenants' personal heating) and £2.21 (leaseholders' personal heating) in 2024/25.

7. To approve an increase to the management fee for temporary on licence properties of 6.7% (in line with September 2023 CPI) from 1 April 2024.
8. To approve an increase to the rent and service charges for hostels of 7.7% from 1 April 2024 (in line with September 2023 CPI+1%).
9. To increase garage charges for council tenants, resident leaseholders, and for other customers from April 2024 by 6.7% (in line with September 2023 CPI).
10. To note that any change to parking charges on housing estates will be considered separately with the Council's parking plans.
11. To increase car space rental charges for all customers by 6.7% from April 2024 (in line with September 2023 CPI).
12. To approve an increase in the Leasehold After Sale – Home Buy Fees by 6.7% from April 2024 from £217 to £232 (in line with September 2023 CPI).

**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. FOUR YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024-28 AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25**

The Cabinet received one valid deputation for this item and, with the Deputy Leader's permission Donald Grant, the representative, was permitted to address Cabinet for 5 minutes. The main points highlighted were:

- The deputation supported the efforts to reduce congestion in South Fulham but highlighted that the trial traffic scheme was not working for many residents, businesses and visitors. The scheme had helped some residents, but it had also created a division in the community.
- It had not been possible for groups opposing the schemes to engage with the Council as much as the scheme beneficiaries had, despite requests.
- Concerns that the information provided was selective and not representative, such as quoting vehicle and NOX reductions but not stating the corresponding increase in other areas which were predicted before the trial, including Wandsworth Bridge Road and Chelsea; the

increase in journey times or impact to public transport in those areas were also not provided.

- Concerns over the figures used to show an increase in trade in the area.
- Ongoing problems with private-hire cars, affecting Uber and also the local taxi company if their drivers were not registered in the borough.
- Journeys now often involved longer, more polluting and more expensive routes. It had also created a safety issue as residents were being asked by taxi drivers to leave their taxis late at night to avoid the risk of a fine for entering the zone. Women particularly felt unsafe, but it also affected the disabled, the elderly and other groups on a daily basis.
- Concerns that the latest Opinion survey would not show a balanced view of the trial because it focused on Clean Air and through traffic but not on residents, shoppers, business owners and bus users on more populous roads.
- The deputation called on Cabinet for the Capital Expenditure allocated for Clean Air Neighbourhoods in 2024/25 to be spend on alternative solutions that would benefit everyone. Solutions like one-way streets with speed controls, School Streets, timed operated cameras and to fully re-open Imperial, Peterborough and Hurlingham Roads to through traffic.

Councillor Ree introduced the report setting out the Council's Capital expenditure over the coming four years. The Council would be investing £576.4m on a series of measures including building new homes, maintaining the quality of the housing assets, school renewals program, becoming carbon neutral and investing in the CCTV network.

In relation to Mr Grant's deputation, Councillor Ree clarified that the reference to the Clean Air Neighbourhoods programme on Appendix 1 of the report, the £2.847m capital spend would not be additional spending on cameras. This would cover Highways spending that the Council was looking to undertake over the year, such as improving drainage, increasing the number of green spaces, planting new trees and providing additional cycle parking.

#### **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:**

1. To approve the four-year General Fund Capital Programme budget at £143.6m for the period 2024/25-2027/28 (presented in Table 2 and Appendix 1).
2. To approve the continuation of rolling programmes for 2024/25 funded from the Council's mainstream resources. For financial modelling purposes, these programmes are assumed to continue at the same level until 2027/28:

	<b>£m</b>
Corporate Planned Maintenance	2.400
Footways and Carriageways	2.030
Column Replacement	0.346
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.776</b>

3. To delegate approval of the detailed programmes for use of the rolling programmes, in recommendation 2, to the relevant SLT Director in consultation with the Strategic Director of Finance and relevant Lead Cabinet Member.
4. To approve the four-year Housing (HRA) Capital Programme at £432.9m for the period 2024/25-2027/28 as set out in Table 6 and Appendix 1.
5. To delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Finance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform to approve the potential use of up to £3.6m of capital receipts under the Government's Flexible Use of Capital Receipts provisions for funding of Invest to Save schemes in 2024/25 (as identified in Appendix 2) and potential match-funding opportunities.
6. To approve the Capital Strategy 2024/25, as set out in the report.
7. To approve the annual Minimum Revenue Provision policy statement for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix 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.

**8. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITOR & BUDGET VARIATIONS, 2023/24 (THIRD QUARTER)**

**AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:**

1. To note the net increase in forecast capital expenditure of £4.9m for 2023/24.
2. To approve the updated four-year capital programme for 2023-2027 of £706.7m as detailed in Appendix 1.
3. To approve £16.984m additional pre-financing with regards to Hammersmith Bridge stabilisation (£7.927m) and pre-restoration (£9.057m) works, funded from the General Fund borrowing. Much of this will be reclaimed from TfL and Government.
4. To approve £0.5m additional budget with regards to Mund Street refurbishment costs, funded from the General Fund borrowing.



5. To approve £0.54m additional budget for Avonmore predevelopment costs, funded from the General Fund borrowing.
6. To note the potential risks regarding the General Fund Programme, as summarised in paragraphs 25-29.
7. To note the potential risks regarding the Housing Capital Programme, as summarised in paragraphs 30-33.
8. To note prudential indicators presented in Appendix 5, as per Prudential Code requirements.

**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. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2024/25**

Councillor Ree introduced the report setting out the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for the year ahead. He thanked Phil Triggs and his team for doing a fantastic job in making sure there were funds needed to spend throughout the year, particularly in the difficult market conditions over the last couple of years. Councillor Coleman echoed the thanks to the officers in the treasury management team.

**AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:**

It is recommended that:

1. Approval be given to the future borrowing and investment strategies as outlined in this report.
2. The Strategic Director of Finance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform, be delegated authority to manage the Council's cash flow, borrowing and investments in 2024/25 in line with this report.
3. In relation to the Council's overall borrowing for the financial year, to approve the Prudential Indicators as set out in this report and the revised Annual Investment Strategy set out in Appendix E.

**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. INSURANCE TENDER 2024-2029**

**AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:**

1. To note that Appendices 2 & 3 are not for publication on the basis that they contain 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).
2. To approve the contract awards set out in paragraph 38 of the report.
3. To approve an increase to the self-insurance fund deductible limit for Combined Liability (Lot 2) from £100,000 to £350,000. The financial rationale is detailed in the report at paragraph 11 and Appendix 2.
4. To note that in summary however, the annual premium of the bid is reduced by £164K with an anticipated increase in the self-funding provision of circa £75K and therefore net additional saving on bid of £90K noting that given variances in claims experience year on year this needs to be considered over the contract period.
5. To note that Lots 1 (Property Insurance) and Lot 9 (Residential Leasehold Buildings insurance) are not to be awarded at this time and as detailed on the report are subject to a further tender process as detailed in this report at paragraphs 32 to 36.
6. To approve a delegated authority to the Strategic Director of Finance in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform to subsequently approve the award of Lots 1 and 9, noting they need to be in place prior to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

**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. URGENT DECISION - EARLY YEARS BUDGET (DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT) 2024/25**

**RESOLVED:**

Councillor Sanderson stated that this urgent decision had been brought to Cabinet in order to meet the Department of Education's revised deadline of the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024 for local authorities to confirm the funding rates for the Government's existing and new free childcare entitlements from April 2024.

**AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:**

This report seeks approval of the 2024/25 Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2024/25 which covers the existing childcare entitlements in addition to the new entitlements for working parents of two year olds and under two year olds from the 2024/25 financial year.

The DfE has extended the number of free childcare offers available to working parents in 2024/25. There will be new working parent entitlements introduced for 2-year-olds and children aged 9 months to 2 years during the year. The 2-year-olds offer will be for a maximum of 15 hours per week from 1st April 2024 and the under 2-year-olds offer for a maximum of 15 hours per week from 1st September 2024. It is intended that these offers will be extended further in 2025/26 to a maximum of 30 hours per week.

Local authorities are required to set a local formula for both the 2-year-old offers and the under 2s offer in the same way as it has for 3 and 4 year olds over the past 6 years.

**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: 7.23 pm

Chair .....