

Cabinet

Minutes



Monday 13 January 2025

NOTE: A recording of the meeting can be watched at on YouTube at:
<https://www.youtube.com/live/ZrR0sRMOhTM>

PRESENT

Councillor Stephen Cowan, Leader of the Council
Councillor Wesley Harcourt, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology
Councillor Sharon Holder, Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Lead Member for Inclusive Community Engagement and Co-production
Councillor Rebecca Harvey, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Community Safety
Councillor Rowan Ree, Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform
Councillor Alex Sanderson, Deputy Leader (with responsibility for Children and Education)
Councillor Frances Umeh, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness
Councillor Zarar Qayyum, Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Skills

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Adronie Alford

1. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2024

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16 December 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 Andrew Jones and Councillor Bora Kwon.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

4. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2025/26

Councillor Rowan Ree, Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform, introduced the report noting that LBHF had the third lowest Council Tax in the country and one of the most comprehensive Council Tax Support Scheme. Four in ten households across the borough were receiving some sort of discount on their Council Tax. The Council had decided to exempt care leavers and foster carers from Council Tax and was one in just three London councils offering a full 100% level of support for the most vulnerable residents. Even though funding from central government had been cut by 54% in real terms since 2010.

The Leader thanked Councillor Ree's leadership on this scheme and the level of support provided despite the funding cut since 2010. He noted that this was thanks to the ruthless financial efficiency approach taken by the Council, stripping out wasteful Council spending and finding new ways of keeping cost low, while providing services for residents.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

It is recommended that Cabinet agrees the following recommendations to be approved by Full Council:

1. That the Council Tax Support Scheme in operation in 2024/2025 (included at Appendix 1) shall continue in 2025/2026.
2. That the Council shall apply the annual uprating of allowances, applicable amounts and income, set out in the DWP Housing Benefit circular, to the Council Tax Support scheme for 2025/2026.

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. COUNCIL TAX BASE AND COLLECTION RATE 2025/26 AND DELEGATION OF THE BUSINESS RATE ESTIMATE

Councillor Rowan Ree introduced the report noting an increase of 2,191 households on the previous year and setting an estimated Council Tax collection rate of 97%.

Councillor Adronie Alford stated that the Council was changing the collection from two years to one year on empty properties. She knew a family going

through a lengthy probate process that would be affected by this change. She asked whether people on such circumstances would be automatically penalised if they had not managed to get probate within one year and therefore not able to avoid having an empty property.

Councillor Ree replied that he was aware that the probate process could be lengthy and asked Councillor Alford to write to him with the details of the family concerned so he could pass them to the relevant officer. He added that there would be flexibility in such tragic circumstances.

The Leader stated that the scheme was not to penalise any resident in difficult personal circumstances but to target properties left empty by investors and a measure to try to reduce them. Those properties should be offered to people trying to get into the property ladder in the brought. However, if there were any genuine human stories then the Council would make sure that there were no injustices committed.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

That Cabinet agrees to refer this report to Full Council and recommend approval by Full Council for the financial year 2025/26 of:

- a. - The estimated numbers of properties for each Valuation Band as set out in this report.
- b. - An estimated collection rate of 97.0%.
- c. - The Council Tax Base of 88,304 Band "D" equivalent properties.
- d. - The delegation of authority to the Executive Director for Finance & Corporate Services to determine the business rates tax base for 2025/26.

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. PERSONAL BUDGET POLICY FOR EDUCATION PROVISION WITHIN AN EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE (EHC) PLAN

Councillor Alex Sanderson, Deputy Leader (responsible for Children and Education), introduced the report, setting out the Council's person-centred approach intended to give parents, carers and young people more flexibility, choice and control over the support they use and to enable them to make their own decisions as a family about what works best for them in relation to the Education provision specified in the child or young person's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan).

This policy was extensively co-produced with Parentsactive and formalised the eligibility purpose and usage of personal budgets regarding the education provision set out in the EHC Plan.

The Leader formally thanked Parentsactive for cooperating and working very closely with the Council over the last decade, including collaborating on the SEN transport service.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

That Cabinet approves the publication of the EHC Personal Budgets Policy 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.

7. JOINT WASTE STRATEGY

Councillor Sharon Holder, Cabinet Member for Public Realm, introduced the report setting out a Joint Waste Strategy – a statutory requirement for the Waste Disposal Authority and Waste Collection Authorities. The strategy was subject to formal consultation and developed with the involvement of officers and Members from LBHF alongside the other constituent authorities.

The Leader congratulated on the successful roll out of the new refuse service, including the new food recycling, and impressively increasing the recycling rates. The Council was working with residents to contribute on tackling climate change by reducing incineration and landfill and by increasing recycling. This scheme would reduce injuries to staff as well as saving public money and increased residents' satisfaction.

Councillor Wesley Harcourt, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology and a board member of the Western Riverside Waste Authority, stated that the amount of work that the board members (including himself) and Councillor Holder had given in preparing this report had been quite amazing. The key point on this strategy was to increase recycling and to achieve net carbon zero in the borough. This strategy would need to be approved by the other three boroughs as well.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

1. It is recommended that Cabinet approves the adoption of the Joint Waste Management Strategy as set out in the Final Draft version appended to this report.
2. It is recommended that, if any further changes are requested to the draft document (for example by another borough or the Greater London Authority), the decision as to whether to accept these should be delegated to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Realm.

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. TREE STRATEGY ADOPTION

Councillor Sharon Holder introduced the report outlining the first tree strategy for Hammersmith and Fulham following extensive consultation. The strategy provided a roadmap to improve the Council's tree management, increase canopy cover, and improve the service for residents, achieving shared targets and improving the quality of life. In addition, it raised environmental awareness supporting the Council's ambition to become the greenest borough. The report and 40 action plans were supported by the relevant Parks and Housing Teams, the Climate Change Team, the Planning Team and a range of external partners.

The Leader added that the tree strategy was of great interest to local residents and the Council had significantly increased the tree canopy over the last decade and would continue to do so. This was important not just for the environment but also for biodiversity.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

To agree the formal adoption of the H&F Tree Strategy and associated action plan.

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. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Key Decision List was noted.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 7.21 pm

Chair