

Cabinet

Minutes



Monday 6 September 2021

PRESENT

Councillor Stephen Cowan, Leader of the Council
Councillor Wesley Harcourt, Cabinet Member for the Environment
Councillor Lisa Homan, Cabinet Member for Housing
Councillor Max Schmid, Cabinet Member for Finance and Commercial Services

IN ATTENDANCE VIRTUALLY

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 Andrew Jones, Cabinet Member for the Economy
Councillor Sharon Holder, Cabinet Member for Strategy

INTRODUCTION

Councillor Stephen Cowan, the Leader of the Council, explained that due to the pandemic and the extremely contagious Delta variant Cabinet attendance in person at the meeting would continue to be limited to a minimum. He introduced the other three Cabinet Members in attendance in person and ensured the meeting was fully quorate. All other six Cabinet Members and officers were in attendance virtually via Zoom.

With the continued spread of the Delta variant and the dangerous mutation of the virus, the Council was fully committed to the safety of its residents and to maintain the economy. He reiterated that the Council's advice was to wear masks at all times when travelling around buildings and on public transport to help contain the spread and mutation of the virus.

1. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 5 JULY 2021

That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5 July 2021 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.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

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

Councillors Max Schmid introduced the report and noted that no significant new capital projects had been proposed.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. To approve the proposed budget variations to the capital programme as summarised in Table 1 and detailed in Appendix 2.
2. To approve an adjustment of £422,317 to the budget for the construction of affordable units at Spring Vale estate funded by 30% of Greater London Authority (GLA) affordable housing grant and 70% Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing, as detailed in section 19.
3. To note the capital outturn for the year.

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. 2020/21 REVENUE OUTTURN REPORT

Councillors Max Schmid stated that the last year had been extremely difficult financially, with unexpected expenses and loss of income due to the pandemic, only partially covered by the Government grants. Despite these challenges this report showed a slight underspend which was an achievement and a tribute to all officers working across the Council. In particular to the S151 Officer and Director of Finance, Emily Hill and her team who had managed to keep tight financial control and had continued to cut waste. They had maintained a good level of Council Tax and housing rent collection while not using bailiff's

collectors but intervening early to ensure residents received the support they needed.

The Leader outlined that one of the Council's basic aspiration other than keeping people safe was to have a robust and strong public finance. He also paid tribute to officers who were totally committed to bringing services on budgets and finding savings. They were taking an innovative approach and were driving forward efficiencies and modernising the ways the Council operated.

NOTED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. To note the General Fund underspend of £0.301m and that this be added to the Council's general balance.
2. To note that the draw down from the Housing Revenue Account general balance was £0.904m less than budgeted.
3. To note the in-year reduction in the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block cumulative overspend of £3.111m.

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. 2021/22 CORPORATE REVENUE MONITOR - MONTH 2 (MAY 2021)

Councillors Max Schmid expressed the Council's concern that as the pandemic went through different phases and some parts of the economy returned to function, demand for services would increase. Therefore, this paper was recommending mitigation measures to cut down waste in case the surge in demand escalated, so the Council would not end up with an overspend.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. To note General Fund forecast underspend of £1.985m.
2. To note that the forecast draw down from the Housing Revenue Account general balance will be £0.233m less than budgeted.
3. To note the in-year Dedicated Schools Grant overspend of £0.840m.

4. To approve a General Fund virement of £0.3m and HRA virement of £0.312m as detailed in appendix 9.

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. H&F CLIMATE AND ECOLOGY STRATEGY

Councillor Wesley Harcourt noted that this was a timely report following the recent headlines on the media regarding flooding, wild fires and extreme hot weather. This strategy set out the Council's approach to delivering its target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions in the borough by 2030 as well as the benefits it would bring to its residents. It was based on the work of the resident-led Climate and Ecological Emergency Commission, reported recently at Cabinet. The Council had also set up a strategic implementation group to explore the ways to implement the climate change measures on this strategy and put them into practice.

The Leader explained that the pandemic had been a hindrance on focusing on the climate strategy. However, action was urgently needed as the world was facing a climate emergency with extreme climate changes happening globally. It was paramount to make changes and find ways to protect and improve the environment. This strategy was a road map which would be improved as it moved forward with residents involvement and review.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. To approve the strategy and action plan.
2. To note the significant investment required to achieve net zero, in excess of £2bn for the whole borough, and that delivery of the strategy is dependent on substantial external financing.
3. To note the importance of a green economic recovery to support this transition.
4. To note the complexity of delivering a major programme to decarbonise the council's buildings and other assets.

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. SCHOOLS CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021 - 2024

The Leader commended the report and noted that residents would be consulted as each project moved forward.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. To approve a schools capital budget of £10,318,807 over the three years 2021-2024 for the programme of works as set out in Appendix A.
2. To delegate the decision to commit expenditure within the schools' capital programme 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.

9. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 12 YEAR ASSET MANAGEMENT CAPITAL STRATEGY

Councillor Lisa Homan stated that this strategy recommended investing a large sum of money delivering housing assets that residents could be proud of. A large proportion of the spending would be allocated to adapt homes to become climate neutral. In addition, the strategy priority was health and safety and compliance. She drew the attention to paragraph 12 of the Procurement Strategy, in Appendix 2, as it highlighted the other main elements of the strategy.

The Leader stressed that the Council was making a financial commitment to the residents of its Council's homes to improve their homes and raise to the challenge of climate change.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. To approve the HRA 12 year Asset Management Capital Strategy detailed in this report.
2. To approve the Procurement Strategy, as described in appendix 2, for five contracts to support the delivery of the first phases of the 12 year HRA Asset Management Capital Strategy.
3. To delegate authority to the Strategic Director for The Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to amend or make changes to the proposed packaging of projects in the Procurement Strategy, as described in appendix 2, for operational reasons, where such amendments can be contained within the overall approved budget envelope and available resources.
4. To note that the Strategy be reflected in the four-year Capital Programme Budget that will be submitted for Full Council approval in February 2022. The Strategy will inform every subsequent annual revision of the Capital Programme budget for the duration of the 12 year Strategy period, subject to annual reviews of the Strategy.

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. TERMINATION OF CONTRACT FOR RESPONSIVE REPAIRS (HOUSING) AND APPOINTMENT OF NEW CONTRACTOR

Councillor Lisa Homan noted her disappointment in bringing this report to Cabinet. It requested to authorise the termination of the contract for responsive repairs for housing with United Living Property Services Limited (ULPS) by 29 October 2021 and to mobilise the reserve contract that was in place. ULPS was not working well with residents and had decided not to continue with the contract. Therefore the report recommended Morgan Sindall Property Services Limited as the backup contractor. Going out to tender for a new contract would not be advisable as the process would go beyond the winter months, when

demand for responsive housing repairs typically increases significantly. The Council wanted to ensure that the best service was delivered to its residents.

The Leader added that Brexit and Covid had had a profound detrimental effect on the building, repairs and maintenance industry, leading to a severe shortage of skilled labour. Despite that, the Council demanded high standards for its residents and the current contractor was not delivering it. He was pleased that residents had been consulted on their views about the repairs services and the recommendations on this paper had been designed to affect a major improvement in resident satisfaction.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. To note that Appendix 1 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).
2. To seek authority for an additional budget as set out in the exempt Appendix 1 for the remaining four years of the responsive repairs contracts (to 31st July 2025).
3. To authorise the termination of the contract for responsive repairs (housing) with United Living Property Services Limited (ULPS) on or before 29th October 2021 subject to the finalisation of approved terms between the parties, the negotiation of which is delegated to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Assistant Director of Legal Services.
4. To authorise the activation of the reserve contract for lot 2 (central area) through formal written instruction to Morgan Sindall Property Services Limited subject to the termination of the United Living Property Services Limited contract. That the Director of Finance be delegated authority to undertake any negotiations to finalise terms in respect of this contract award.
5. To authorise a contract variation to the lot 1 (North area) contract to include an updated property list as the definition of the reserve contract properties.
6. To authorise a contract variation to the Responsive Capital contract with Kier Services Limited to add prices for responsive works to void (empty) properties as detailed in Appendix 1.
7. To authorise a contract variation to the Morgan Sindall lot 1 (North area) contract to add prices for the completion of a programme of Work In Progress to be transferred from ULPS, as detailed in Appendix 1.
8. That the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Legal Services, be authorised to enter into agreements as necessary to bring the decisions in this report into effect.

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. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Key Decision List was noted.

12. DISCUSSION OF EXEMPT ELEMENTS (IF REQUIRED)

There was no discussion of exempt elements.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm

Meeting ended: 7.26 pm

Chair