

Cabinet

Minutes



Monday 9 January 2023

NOTE: This meeting was held remotely. A recording of the meeting can be watched at on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/fiXpxamZjLc>

PRESENT

Councillor Stephen Cowan, Leader of the Council
Councillor Ben Coleman, Deputy Leader
Councillor Wesley Harcourt, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology
Councillor Andrew Jones, Cabinet Member for The Economy
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 Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler

ALSO PRESENT VIRTUALLY

Councillor Patricia Quigley

1. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5 December 2022 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. COST OF LIVING CRISIS AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE - CHANGES TO PARKING CHARGES

Councillor Sharon holder introduced the report proposing to implement new emissions-based parking charge bands and improve the offer for residents visiting friends and family or shopping across the borough. The policy would decrease charges on 80% of vehicles and support the Council's net carbon zero 2030 target and clean air neighbourhood strategy while helping residents tackle the cost-of-living crisis. It also supports businesses in the face of a potential recession.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler welcomed the decrease in parking charges for residents but asked the reason for favouring electric cars as only around 3% of residents owned an electric car due to its high cost. She believed that the decrease should apply to all vehicles as the majority of people were still affected by higher parking charges.

Councillor Holder replied that in the near future most people would own an electric car and at that point the new charges would favour everyone in the borough.

Cllr Brocklebank-Fowler acknowledged that this was a forward-looking policy, but it would take a long time for the majority of people to be able to afford buying an electric car.

Cllr Brocklebank-Fowler noted that the higher cost of parking charges had affected business since it had been implemented and asked what steps the Council was taking to help businesses during this period.

Councillor Holder stated that the Council had an extensive programme to support residents and businesses through the cost-of-living crisis, led by Councillor Harvey. She added that she had not been contacted by any business requesting help related to the cost of parking.

Cllr Brocklebank-Fowler added that there was no mention on this report about opening up of the borough to free zonal parking outside rush hour and school run traffic.

Councillor Holder replied that she was currently reviewing this issue and would bring a paper forward for consideration and approval by Cabinet in the near future.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked for the reason for the high increase in parking charges during the pandemic.

Councillor Ben Coleman stated that the higher parking charges were introduced to stop non-residents using the borough as a parking lot. However, the situation

had changed, and many residents had made representations to the Council that they were being affected by the higher cost of parking outside their residential zone. In addition, the Council had a commitment to reach net carbon zero by 2030. He reiterated that 80% of all vehicles would see a decrease in parking charges. The proposed tariffs would be divided into four bands depending on their CO2 emissions, with diesel being the most expensive.

Cllr Brocklebank-Fowler added that she would like to see a table with figures for non-residents parking in the borough to check whether there had been an increase in numbers during the pandemic to justify the consequent increase in parking charges.

Kainth Bram, Strategic Director of Environment, assured he would send her the information required.

The Leader acknowledged that over the last 12 years the economy and local government funding had been a real challenge, exacerbated by the significant increase in inflation. Therefore, considering inflation, in real terms the new proposed parking charges were lower than before they were increased during the pandemic. The big challenge to consider was to effectively tackle climate change by limiting the number of vehicles on the streets and encouraging people to use cleaner forms of transport, including cycling and other active travel means. Consequently, this would also help businesses as it would be easier for people to stop and shop. North End Road was an example where business turnover significantly increased on the days the road closed to traffic.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

1. To approve the new short stay parking tariffs as set out in the Table 4 below.
2. To delegate the implementation of recommendation above to the Strategic Director of Environment.

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. MEMBERSHIP OF PAN LONDON VEHICLE (PLV) FOR COMMISSIONING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE PLACEMENTS

Councillor Alex Sanderson introduced the report seeking approval for the Council to become a member of the Pan London Vehicle (PLV), a not-for-profit commissioning organisation for a five-year period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2028. Joining the PLV would ensure that the Council would be able to access specialist placements as and when needed, at a competitive rate, and ensuring the best outcomes for the children.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler stated that it was important that other London local authorities were involved to decrease the costings. She asked for the number of London councils that had signed up to for this project so far. She noted that fortunately there was only a very low number of children in the borough who might have to be placed in a secure children's home.

Councillor Sanderson replied that this project had wide support across London and councils were currently taking the proposal through their approval process. The Council had a statutory duty to ensure there were places available for a child in a secure children's home when needed. However, currently there was no secure provision in London which meant children would have to be sent far away, which had negative outcomes and was very expensive. Therefore, it made sense to become a member of the PLV, which would be funded by the Department for Education.

The Leader stated that the Council's approach was to focus on the children's needs and not just the money. Value for money was important but only mattered if services worked. Hopefully, no child would need to be placed in a secure home, but this was a good step forward which would be constantly monitored.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

1. That LBHF becomes a member of a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee, provisionally to be known as the Pan London Vehicle (PLV), to:
 - Develop and then oversee the running of London's secure children's home provision for a five-year period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2028 (with a break-point after three years), at a fixed annual cost of £20,000 payable only once the provision has launched (subject to inflation adjustment), unless an alternative model for funding is agreed by members during the development phase.
 - Collaborate with other PLV members on future joint commissioning programmes.
2. That LBHF commits in principle to joint oversight and risk/benefit sharing, through the PLV, of the secure children's home provision, for a five-year period to 31st March 2028, including the build, service development and service commissioning phases, subject to ratification after the revision of the SCH business case, and renewable on a ten yearly cycle thereafter (break-point after five years).

3. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Strategic Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Director of Finance, Monitoring Officer, and Cabinet Member for Children and Education to:
 - finalise the legal documents required to set up, join and run the PLV, and
 - make the final determination on the Council's membership of the PLV, following completion of the revised SCH business case and, if appropriate, enter into all the legal agreements, contracts and other documents on behalf of the Council required to implement and run any aspect of the PLV arrangements, and
 - exercise the break clause if it is not considered appropriate to proceed with membership of the PLV

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. WEST LONDON ALLIANCE FIBRE FUND ALLOCATION TO HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Councillor Andrew Jones introduced the report seeking approval for the Council to receive £1.13m of funding from the West London Alliance (WLA) Digital Fibre Programme to improve digital connectivity for residents and businesses in the borough.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the transfer of £1.13m from the WLA Fibre West Digital Programme to H&F in compliance with the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement between LB Ealing as the Accountable Body for SIP 1 Funding and H&F dated 4 March 2019.
2. Delegates authority to the Strategic Director for the Economy to negotiate and enter into such agreements as required between WLA and H&F following consultation with Assistant Director of Legal Services and 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.

7. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2023/24

Councillor Rowan Ree stated that LBHF had the third lowest Council Tax in the country and one of the most generous Council Tax Support Schemes. Only 53% of residents paid the full Council Tax amount. This Council was also one of only 34 Councils out of 326 across England that charged nothing for the most vulnerable residents. Most other councils had introduced a “minimum payment”.

Councillor Ree praised officers for this great achievement, in light of the cuts in Government grant funding over the recent years (55% in real terms).

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler congratulated Councillor Ree for the continuation of the Council Tax Support Scheme, particularly now that residents were facing the most challenging of times.

The Leader noted that LBHF had opted to keep the Council Tax Support Scheme but over the last few years it had become increasingly difficult to maintain it, whilst many other councils were in financial difficulties or bankrupt. However, due to a tight financial administration, reforming public services and saving a record amount of Council’s spending it allowed the Council to invest in front-line services and in schemes such as this one.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

That Cabinet agrees the following recommendations to be approved by full Council:

1. That the Council Tax Support Scheme in operation in 2022/2023 (included at Appendix 1) shall continue in 2023/2024.
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 2023/2024.

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.

8. COUNCIL TAX BASE AND COLLECTION RATE 2023/24 AND DELEGATION OF THE BUSINESS RATE ESTIMATE

Councillor Rowan Ree stated that this report was a statutory requirement setting out the Council Tax Base for the purposes of the 2023/24 revenue budget. There had been an increase of 1,673 properties over the previous year.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

1. That Cabinet agrees to refer this report to full council and recommend approval by full council for the financial year 2023/24 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 83,936 Band "D" equivalent properties.
 - d. - The delegation of authority to the Director of Finance to determine the business rates tax base for 2023/24.

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. 2022 CORPORATE REVENUE MONITOR - MONTH 6 (SEPTEMBER 2022)

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

1. To note the General Fund forecast overspend of £5.023m.
2. To note that the forecast drawdown from the Housing Revenue Account general balance will be £5.366m. This is £1.316m more than budgeted
3. To note the in-year Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block forecasted surplus of (£0.700m), reducing the cumulative deficit.
4. To approve General Fund virements totalling £0.230m as detailed in appendix 10.

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. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITOR & BUDGET VARIATIONS, 2022/23 (SECOND QUARTER)

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

1. To note the net forecast decrease in forecast 2022/23 capital expenditure of £17m. The variations are detailed in Appendix 2.
2. To approve the updated four-year capital programme 2022-2026 of £695.6m as detailed in Appendix 1.
3. To approve an additional budget of £0.300m for the Farm Lane predevelopment costs (as described in Appendix 6) funded from General Fund borrowing.
4. To approve an additional budget of £1.435m for asset management and compliance programme costs related to pre-agreed and void works funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing as described in paragraph 14.
5. To note the potential risks regarding the Housing Capital Programme, as summarised in paragraphs 16-19.

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. HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS

Councillor Frances Umeh stated that in 2013 the Housing Management service was split in two and the service in the south of the borough was outsourced. As this contract was coming to an end, this report recommended the service to be brought in-house to ensure the continuation of high-level housing services and a holistic approach to be taken across the borough.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

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 approve the insourcing of the Housing Management South service, to be directly delivered by LBHF, to start on 14th June 2023, at an anticipated cost of up to £8.3m across the first 5 years of delivery, which represents a comparable cost to the current outsourced contract.
3. To authorise and delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Economy to put in place a project development and mobilisation plan for the insourced Housing Management Service and any other appropriate agreements necessary to give effect to the decision in recommendation 1 above, including TUPE and any other termination provisions and also any required changes to structure and model within budget envelopes.

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. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR THE HOUSING CARETAKING SERVICE

Councillor Frances Umeh introduced the report seeking approval to re-procure the Housing Caretaking service, via a competitive procedure with negotiation for a period of 5 years, with the option of up to 2 years extension.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CABINET MEMBERS:

- 4. 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).
- 5. To approve the reprocurement of the Housing Caretaking service, via a competitive procedure with negotiation, to start on 31st March 2024, for a period of 5 years with the option of up to 2 years extension, for an anticipated cost of up to £32,000,000.

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.

13. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Key Decision List was noted.

14. DISCUSSION OF EXEMPT ELEMENTS (IF REQUIRED)

There was no discussion of exempt elements.

Meeting started: 7.03 pm
Meeting ended: 7.34 pm

Chair