



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

# MINUTES

## Cabinet

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on **Monday 10th July, 2017**, Room 3.1, 3rd Floor, 5 Strand, London, WC2 5HR.

**Members Present:** Councillors Nickie Aiken (Chairman), Heather Acton, Daniel Astaire, Danny Chalkley, Robert Davis, MBE, DL, David Harvey, Richard Holloway, Tim Mitchell and Rachael Robathan.

**Also Present:** Councillors Richard Beddoe, Angela Harvey and Gotz Mohindra.

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Antonia Cox

#### 1 WELCOME

1.1 The Leader welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 Councillor Tim Mitchell, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, declared that in relation to item 4, Leicester Square Development Review – Huguenot House, and item 6, Westminster Chinese Library: Response to Petition that these were in his Ward. However, he did not regard these as a prejudicial interest and remained present to consider these items.

#### 3 MINUTES - 5 JUNE 2017

3.1 The Leader, with the consent of the Members present, signed the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2017 as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

#### 4 LEICESTER SQUARE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW - HUGUENOT HOUSE

4.1 The Leader introduced the item and advised that whatever decision was taken at the meeting, any redevelopment would require approval by a Planning Applications Sub-Committee, following extensive consultation. The concerns raised by Huguenot House Residents' Associations were taken seriously and residents would be engaged extensively during consultation.

- 4.2 Guy Slocombe, Director of Property Investments and Estates, then presented the report and stated that Huguenot House was an important Council owned asset located in a prominent location in Central London. The building was mixed use and the Council owned a number of the flats. There was an opportunity to redevelop the building in order to improve the area in social, economic and environmental terms and the report sought to seek a way forward on this.
- 4.3 Guy Slocombe drew Members' attention to the various options outlined on page 13 of the report and stated that all options were examined in detail against the strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management cases for the project. He referred to the representation made by Huguenot House Residents' Association and emphasised that any redevelopment proposals would be subject to open and transparent consultation.
- 4.4 Councillor Daniel Astaire, Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Realm, emphasised that it was important that any decision taken reflected the goals of City for All, particularly in respect of growth and providing more affordable housing. A number of keynote speeches had been made by the Leader and himself on this matter and it was important that the City Council took a lead in providing more affordable housing. Councillor Astaire therefore felt that Option 4A\* , which proposed a mixed use of a cinema, retail, office and residential (65% private housing and 35% affordable housing) was the only option that could fully realise these objectives and that it would demonstrate a commitment to delivering more housing and in particular affordable housing.
- 4.5 Councillor Tim Mitchell, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Corporate Services, stated that as Ward Councillor he acknowledged the residents of Huguenot House's preference for Option 2. However, in terms of the options proposing redevelopment, in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Corporate Services, he felt that Option 4A\* was the best option, as although it would generate less capital receipts than Option 4A, this would be outweighed by the social and economic benefits it would bring. Councillor Mitchell stated that Officers could consider if a partner could be identified to help fund Option 4A\* , or whether funds could be identified from the Council's overall budget.
- 4.6 Councillor Rachael Robathan, Cabinet Member for Housing, supported the comments made by Councillor Daniel Astaire and reaffirmed her commitment to providing more affordable housing.
- 4.7 Councillor Heather Acton, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services and Public Health, referred to comments made in the Huguenot House Residents' Association representation in respect of faulty lifts for both the residents' lift on the Oxendon Street side and the office lift at the Whitcomb Street entrance, fire extinguishers being removed, the feeling that the building had been purposefully neglected and claims that the car park survey had been undertaken when access to it was difficult and she sought officers' responses to these.

- 4.8 Councillor David Harvey, Cabinet Member for Environment, Sports and Community, expressed concern about the effectiveness of the managing agents for Huguenot House in general and he felt that this needed to be addressed swiftly. He referred to the table in 3.6 of the report that had given Option 4A\* a weight score of 0.04 for contributing to placemaking and asked how this had been calculated.
- 4.9 In reply to issues raised, Guy Slocombe acknowledged that the problems with the lifts were regrettable, however they were now obsolete and some of the parts were no longer manufactured. Efforts were being made to make the lifts operational again and Guy Slocombe advised that if the site was not redeveloped, then the lifts would be replaced. He informed Members that the Council was aware that the managing agents had not been up to the required standard in managing Huguenot House and a new managing agent had been appointed. However, the new managing agent had also failed to demonstrate effectiveness to date and a meeting was due to take place with them and Council officers to address this issue.
- 4.10 Guy Slocombe advised that a fire risk assessment undertaken in March 2017 had determined that fire extinguishers were not necessary, so these had been removed. However, fire safety measures were being considered for all of the City Council's buildings, including Huguenot House. In respect of the car park, there had since been a further survey with results indicating that the car park is on average 25% full, with the busiest times on Saturday evening with an average peak of 50%. Guy Slocombe advised that he had met with the Managing Director of Q-Park, the company operating the car park, who had advised that the car park was not viable financially and that Q-Park would not be interested in extending its lease. Guy Slocombe advised that the contributing to placemaking score for Option 4A\* in the table in 3.6 of the report was incorrect and that he would undertake to obtain the correct score which on subsequent inspection was found that it should read 1.2.
- 4.11 The Leader emphasised the importance of addressing issues where managing agents were failing to manage properties properly and she requested that this matter be resolved swiftly for Huguenot House. She expressed surprise at the property specialists' comments in respect of affordable housing and emphasised the importance of using opportunities to increase affordable housing.
- 4.12 **RESOLVED:**
1. That Appendix E to this report be exempt from disclosure by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, paragraph 3 (as amended) in that these documents contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
  2. That the Cabinet noted the content of the report and considered the early analysis of all the options so far in relation to this property.
  3. That the Cabinet noted and considered the feedback on all commercial and residential engagement and informal consultation undertaken so

far in relation to the options and noted the opposition to redevelopment from the Huguenot House Resident's Association.

4. That the Cabinet having considered the recommendations above, agreed that Option 4A\* as set out in paragraph 6.3 of the report be the preferred option that best meets the Council's aspirations for the property, subject to further formal consultation with all residents and occupiers.
5. That the Cabinet confirmed that Option 4A\* be progressed by the development team, and subject to providing a report back to Cabinet with a full analysis of the feedback from a formal consultation with residents, commercial occupiers and local stakeholders, Option 4A\* be compared to the current 4 options as noted in 6.3 of this report.
6. That the Cabinet approved expenditure from the General Fund capital budget to enable the team to progress the design and cost certainty of the preferred option by procuring a multidisciplinary design team, surveys and professional services to advance the preferred option to RIBA Stage 2 and instructed Officers to develop the final business case in parallel with the design process, working with the City Treasurer to seek a recommendation to proceed with that option from the Capital Review Group.

Councillor Mitchell requested that his vote for Option 2 as the preferred option be recorded.

#### **4.13 Reasons for Decision**

A revised City for All programme has been launched with three new key priorities. These were to put civic leadership and responsibility at the heart of all we do, to promote opportunity and fairness across the city and to set the standards for a world class city. The development proposals for the Property will enable the Council to best meet its 'City for All' aspirations as follows:

- Civic leadership and responsibility; the options include proposals which will provide an enhanced rental income from the asset in support of the Council's fiscal demands and asset retention. The Council's objective to create new business space, homes and Page 7 entertainment space will be met through redevelopment and an increase in the density and quality of the final product above the current provision.
- Promote opportunity; the options include proposals to create new jobs and employment opportunities in the office, retail and leisure market as a result of an improved office space, cinema and public parking provision. The number of estimated operational jobs range from between 327 to 598 depending on the option. In addition to this, if a redevelopment option is selected; further jobs will be created during the construction phase, creating further economic prosperity within Westminster.

- A world class city; the options for the Property will add to the built environment and revitalise an uninviting area of the West End through the enhancement of the public realm, encouraging further regeneration and footfall in the vicinity and making it a safer, attractive and more vibrant location.

## **5 EBURY BRIDGE ESTATE RENEWAL**

- 5.1 Barbara Brownlee, Director of Housing and Regeneration, presented the report and advised that the City Council had been working with residents of Ebury Bridge since 2010 to redevelop the site. Residents had voted on proposals in 2013 and a planning application had been duly prepared and approved. However, by 2015 it had become clear that the scheme was not commercially viable for developers and a subsequent review of the scheme determined that it was not deliverable.
- 5.2 Barbara Brownlee advised that it was proposed to explore in detail an entirely new scheme and the City Council was commissioning a team to undertake a comprehensive Estate Renewal Options Study, ranging from a refurbishment of the existing buildings to an entire estate redevelopment, in full consultation with residents. The Study would be underpinned by three main themes, these being desirability, viability and feasibility. Members noted the delivery timeline as set out in the table in section 7.8 of the report. Barbara Brownlee added that residents who still wanted to be re-housed following the 2013 vote would have this commitment honoured.
- 5.3 Councillor Robathan commented that although the delay in the redevelopment was regrettable, the proposals demonstrated the City Council's commitment to redeveloping the Ebury Bridge Estate and there would be comprehensive and constructive engagement with residents to obtain their views. It was hoped that a viable option would be identified by the end of the financial year.
- 5.4 Councillor Acton welcomed the proposals, including the intention to improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

### **5.5 RESOLVED:**

That Cabinet:

1. Authorised spend to explore and work-up renewal options with the community which are both commercially viable and meet the aspirations of the residents.
2. Agreed the assessment criteria for testing options as set out in Section 5 of the report.
3. Agreed that officers work with residents to reach a preferred option.
4. Agreed that the Council continue to honour the rehousing commitments made to both tenants and leaseholders within the existing scheme.

5. Agreed to bring a Cabinet report forward outlining a preferred option following the comprehensive period of engagement.

## 5.6 Reasons for Decision

1. The Estate is one of five priority housing estates identified in the City Council's Housing Renewal Strategy 2010, noted as requiring improvement and significant investment over the next five years.
2. The aim of regenerating the Ebury Bridge Estate is to bring about long term physical, economic and social sustainability of the area, and to create a high quality, mixed use urban neighbourhood that is attractive to residents and visitors alike, integrates successfully with the surrounding area and delivers a significant number of new homes in line with the Leader's City for All 2017/18 priorities.
3. An entirely new scheme is required to meet the aspirations of residents by providing innovative affordable tenure solutions, attracting the market through commercial viability, balance demand on the Housing Revenue Account, and deliver a development of exceptional quality driven by scale, value, quality and underpinned by design principles that ensure the optimum outcome for housing numbers, financial returns and regeneration benefits.

## 6 WESTMINSTER CHINESE LIBRARY: RESPONSE TO PETITION

- 6.1 Mike Clarke, Tri-borough Director of Libraries and Archives, presented the report and advised that the library service was being remodelled as part of proposals to save £750,000 in revenue costs and ensure the service is sustainable in the future. The Chinese library service had a strong focus on community partnership, including through hosting events. In referring to the petition, Mike Clarke confirmed that there were no plans to close the Chinese library service at Charing Cross Hospital, as had erroneously been claimed on social media. Efforts would be made to communicate plans for the Chinese library service more clearly and engagement would continue with the Chinese community groups and also with Friends of Charing Cross Library who had organised and submitted the petition.
- 6.2 Councillor David Harvey advised that the City Council remained nationally the highest spender in library services according to statistics that were available. He had met with the Political Secretary of the Chinese Embassy who was aware that there were no plans to make cuts to the Chinese library service and that there had been erroneous claims in social media in respect of this. Councillor Harvey stated that there would be further engagement with the Chinese community in taking forward the future of the Chinese library service.
- 6.3 Councillor Mitchell, in noting that Charing Cross Library was in his Ward, welcomed future engagement with Chinese community groups and Friends of Charing Cross Library on the Chinese library service.
- 6.4 **RESOLVED:**

6.5 That Cabinet:

1. Noted the receipt of a petition relating to the Chinese library service at Charing Cross library.
2. Endorsed the actions set out in the report as the response to the petition and the petitioners be advised accordingly.

6.6 **Reasons for Decision**

The report seeks confirmation that the Cabinet is confident in the decision making process that was in place in relation to the changes to the library service and that officers should continue to engage with a wide range of Chinese community groups in relation to the library service.

**7 FEES AND CHARGES**

7.1 Steven Mair, City Treasurer, presented the report and began by stating that fees and charges were a major part of the City Council's overall budget and he advised that there were no proposals to change policy. He advised that the confidential appendix set out where there were proposed changes to fees and charges.

7.2 Councillor Mitchell emphasised the importance of undertaking a rigorous examination of fees and charges on an annual basis in order to ensure that these were up to date and comparable with other local authorities. He added that fees and charges also played an important role in helping to achieve costs and savings targets.

7.3 Councillor Davis MBE, DL, confirmed that he was content with the proposed fees and charges that related to his portfolio.

7.4 **RESOLVED:**

1. That Cabinet:
  - a) Approved changes to fees and charges as outlined in Appendix 3 of the report.
  - b) Noted changes already approved by other committees/members for 2017/18 highlighted in section 6 of this report and in Appendix 2.
  - c) Noted fees for which no increase is proposed for 2017/18, with details of such fees included in Appendix 2 of this report.
  - d) Noted overall proposed contribution from fees and charges to the Medium Term Plan (MTP) for 2017/18 and 2018/19 as highlighted in table 2 of section 7 of this report.

- e) Agreed that all areas of fees and charges work towards alignment of date of approval and that this is coordinated on an annual basis as part of an annual Fees and Charges report.
  - f) Noted the fees and charges policy as set out at Appendix 1 of the report.
- 2. That Appendix 2 and 3 be exempt from public disclosure by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended – information relating to the financial and business affairs of the authority; and
  - 3. That the information set out in Appendix 2 of the report be noted.

**7.5 Reasons for Decision**

To agree the Council's fees and charges policy and position.

**8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

8.1 There was no other business.

The Meeting ended at 7.41 pm.

**CHAIRMAN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_