

WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL STATEMENT OF DECISION

Notice is hereby given that Cabinet have made the following executive decisions for the reasons set out below.

SUBJECT: Safeguarding Adults Executive Board Annual Report

Cabinet notes the findings and recommendations of the Annual Safeguarding Adults Executive Board.

SUBJECT: Universal Free Lunch offer for primary pupils in Westminster

Recommendations

1. Due to the Cost-of-Living Crisis, it is recommended that Cabinet approves (subject to approval of the Fairer Westminster investment proposal) a total of £2,781,784, for January 2023 to July 2024 to enable schools to develop a universal meal offer to primary pupils. This will be funded from earmarked reserves.
2. The provision of a universal meal offer for all primary pupils will be reviewed in 2024 and any continuation of the provision from September 2024 will be embedded in the Children's Services base budget as part of the medium-term financial planning process.

RESOLVED: Cabinet approved the above recommendations

Reasons for Decision

The UK inflation rate reached 10.1% in September. Real wages have fallen at the fastest rate in the UK since records began. The price of food rose by 9.8% in the year to June and the poorest tenth of households are effectively experiencing an inflation rate of 10.6% because they spend a greater proportion of their income on food and fuel. With food inflation rising faster than the Consumer Price Index (CPI), London's child poverty rate and food insecurity is expected to increase.

The Cost-of-Living crisis is one of the greatest challenges currently facing the city council and other Local Authorities. In Westminster, around a quarter of households across the city (approximately 32,000 households) are particularly vulnerable

to rises in living costs, with some people facing extreme hardship. At a meeting of Full Council on 21st September, Westminster City Councillors approved a motion to declare a Cost-of-Living Emergency, stating that the scale of the challenge needs “urgent and substantial action” from the Council, Government and others with the ability to help.

The impact on children and young people is a real concern, and we have growing evidence of families in Westminster finding themselves unable to cover the costs of basic necessities. Schools tell us that they are seeing a lot more families struggling, including those not eligible for FSM, which is manifesting in what they can afford to put into a child’s lunchbox, for example. Schools feedback indicates that a scheme to expand FSM, whether just at KS2 or across secondary as well, would be beneficial.

FSM play a crucial role in ensuring that all eligible children can eat a healthy and nutritious meal, which in turn supports their ability to learn and improves their mental health.

A large number of people currently find themselves just above the existing threshold for FSM and yet struggling to manage, and that in the current economic climate that situation is becoming more urgent. 19% of UK households with children have experienced food insecurity in the past month.

Publication Date: 12th December

Implementation Date: 19th December

SUBJECT: COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the decision taken by the Leader of the Council on 30 November 2022 to invest a further £1m of council resources to support at least. 3,350 of the most vulnerable households over the Winter.
2. Notes the worsening economic outlook for 2023/24.

3. Agrees to a further investment of £1m for 2023/24 to support households hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis, bringing the total package of support available across the city to £10m.
4. Delegates to the Executive Director of Innovation and Change and Executive Director of Finance & Resources authority to agree in consultation with the Leader of the Council the scope of future projects based on need, value for money and evidence of what works.

RESOLVED: Cabinet approved the above recommendations

Reasons for Decision

Modelling and intelligence shows that rising living costs will continue into next year, making further interventions necessary to help households most at risk.

Publication Date: 12th December

Implementation Date: 19th December

SUBJECT: Council Tax Discounts (including Council Tax Local Reduction Scheme) and Council Tax Base report

Recommendations

That the Cabinet recommend that the Council approve the following recommendations for the financial year 2023/24: -

1. that the Council Tax discount for second homes remains at 0% unless the government brings forward legislation to enable a Second Home Premium to be charged for the 2023/24 financial year. If this is the case, the premium should be set at the highest level allowed for by the legislation.
2. the Council Tax discounts for empty properties, including the discounts that replaced the previous Class A and C Council Tax exemptions, remain at 0%.

3. that a Long-Term Empty Property Premium continues at the maximum percentage allowed for by the current legislation for the 2023/24 financial year. and to charge the said premium a year after a property has been empty if the government brings forward legislation to allow this.
4. that the Director of Revenues & Benefits be given delegated authority to determine any individual local discount applications received from Council Taxpayers during the 2023/24 financial year under section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
5. That the Cabinet recommends that the Council approves the same Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023/24 which has operated successfully since 2013/14. The scheme is based on the Default Scheme Regulations, updated to reflect changes made via the Prescribed Requirements Amendment Regulations and with War Disabled Pensions, War Widow, Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation scheme payments disregarded in full when calculating a claimant's income. The same disregards should also apply to Housing Benefit and claims for Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP).
6. That the Cabinet recommends to the Council to resolve that the Council Tax Base for 2023/24 for the Whole City is. 135,955.46 equivalent Band D properties, for Montpelier Square alone 91.68 equivalent Band D properties and for Queen's Park 3,637.83 equivalent Band D properties.
7. That the Cabinet recommends to the Council to resolve that the figures set out in paragraph above ((6)) for the Council Tax Base for 2023/24 be used by the Council to make a determination pursuant to the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

RESOLVED: Cabinet approved the above recommendations

Publication Date: 12th December

Implementation Date: 12th December

N.B. These recommendations will be put to Full Council on the 25th January 2022.

SUBJECT: Fees and Charges Review

Recommendations

That Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the changes to fees and charges as outlined in **Appendix 2** of this report.
2. Approve that authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Finance and Resources, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, to approve any changes required in light of consultation feedback.
3. Note the fees for which no increase is proposed for 2023/24. Details of these fees are included in **Appendix 2** of this report.
4. Approve the Fees and Charges Policy at **Appendix 1**.

Reasons for Decision

To agree the Council's fees and charges position and changes from 1 January 2023 at the earliest.

Publication Date: 12th December

Implementation Date: 12th December

SUBJECT: Responsible Commissioning and Procurement Strategy

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the Responsible Procurement & Commissioning Strategy, with the following amendment and the 12 objectives it seeks to achieve: -

AMENDMENT: This year, we increased our minimum RPC weighting from 5% to between 10-20%, depending on the nature of the contract. We will review progress and continue to evaluate and strengthen our approach in the medium term with the intention of working towards an increase of a minimum 20-30% by 2025/26.

2. Approves the Modern Slavery Statement and the 6-month action plan it sets out.
3. Approves the Supplier Charter and its use as selection criteria within new procurement procedures and voluntary requirements for existing contractors.
4. Approves the Ethical Procurement Policy and its use as a policy referred to in the council's terms and conditions.

Reasons for Decision

The council spends over £550million each year on third party services and contracts. We have potential to drive positive action on increasingly important issues such as tackling the climate emergency, contributing to local and national recovery, community wealth building, ensuring human and labour rights and greater diversity and inclusion in our supply chain.

This is a cross-council strategy designed to provide a framework to support the delivery of the Fairer Westminster Strategy and the some of the specific outcomes it sets out including; meeting our net zero carbon targets, reducing poverty and inequality in Westminster and procuring responsibly and ensuring the ethical treatment of people involved in our supply chains.

Publication Date: 12th December

Implementation Date: 12th December

SUBJECT: Capital Budget Re-Profiling & Budget Changes 2022/23

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Approves net changes of £96.513m for individual projects as part of the 2022/23 general fund capital budget.
2. Approves re-profiling of £8.025m for individual projects as part of the 2022/23 HRA capital budget

Publication Date: 12th December

Implementation Date: 12th December

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