

# CITY OF WESTMINSTER

## MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the Meeting of the Council of the City of Westminster held at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 6th March, 2024 at Westminster Council House, 97-113 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5PT.

### PRESENT

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Patricia McAllister

### COUNCILLORS

Concia Albert	Patrick Lilley
Barbara Arzymanow	Alan Mendoza
Geoff Barraclough	Tim Mitchell
Liza Begum	Matt Noble
David Boothroyd	Ralu Oteh-Osoka
Ruth Bush	Angela Piddock
Nafsika Butler-Thalassis	Ed Pitt Ford
Melvyn Caplan	Robert Rigby
Maggie Carman	Rachael Robathan
Md Shamsed Chowdhury	Tim Roca
Laila Cunningham	Ian Rowley
Lorraine Dean	Caroline Sargent
Tony Devenish	Karen Scarborough
Paul Dimoldenberg	Mark Shearer
Robert Eagleton	Selina Short
Paul Fisher	James Small-Edwards
Jim Glen	Judith Southern
David Harvey	Max Sullivan
Sara Hassan	Paul Swaddle OBE
Elizabeth Hitchcock	Hamza Taouzzale
Adam Hug	Jessica Toale
Louise Hyams	Aziz Toki
Ryan Jude	Jacqui Wilkinson
Aicha Less	Jason Williams
Iman Less	

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Gillian Arrindell, Amanda Langford, Ellie Ormsby and Cara Sanquest

The Lord Mayor invited the Council to join her in observing a minute's silence in memory of former Councillor, Honorary Alderman Barrie Taylor, who had sadly passed away.

## **1 APPOINTMENT OF RELIEF CHAIR**

- 1.1 Motion moved by the Lord Mayor and seconded by Councillor Nafsika Butler-Thalassis, that Councillor Max Sullivan be elected as Relief Chair.
- 1.2 Motion put, and on a show of hands, declared **CARRIED**.

## **2 MINUTES**

- 2.1 **RESOLVED:** The minutes of the proceedings at the Council meeting held on Wednesday 24 January 2024 were, with the assent of the Members present, signed by the Lord Mayor as a true record of the proceedings.

## **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

## **4 CABINET REPORT**

- 4.1 The report of the Cabinet on 19 February 2024 was submitted.
- 4.2 Following debate, to which Councillor Hug replied, the Lord Mayor then put the following amendment to the recommendations in paragraph 1 of the Cabinet report, moved by Councillor Paul Swaddle and seconded by Councillor Caroline Sargent, to a vote. A recorded vote was then taken:

### **Amendment – moved by Councillor Paul Swaddle and seconded by Councillor Caroline Sargent:**

The Conservative Group propose that this Council freeze the general element of council tax and withdraw the 2.99% increase for 2024/25. This will reduce the funding to the Council by £1.96m next year so to balance the budget we propose the following amendments:

1. Save the total costs spent on the engagement and administration of the Community Priorities Programme of £224k per year, and instead administer this in a more efficient way using existing administrative resources in the Council through ward budgets.
2. Not to set aside £450k of new resources for the ecological emergency and instead deal with the ecological emergency through existing resources and embedding in everything that Council services already do.
3. Reduce the spend on temporary and agency staff by £1.3m per year, representing a 9% saving in the total annual cost over the last couple of years (£15m) – this will be achieved without impacting on important front-line roles that deliver services to our residents.

## **Vote 1 – Amendment**

**For the amendment:** Councillors Barbara Arzymanow, Melvyn Caplan, Laila Cunningham, Loraine Dean, Anthony Devenish, Jim Glen, David Harvey, Elizabeth Hitchcock, Louise Hyams, Alan Mendoza, Tim Mitchell, Ralu Oteh-Osoka, Ed Pitt Ford, Robert Rigby, Rachael Robathan, Ian Rowley, Caroline Sargent, Karen Scarborough, Mark Shearer, Selina Short, Paul Swaddle OBE and Jacqui Wilkinson.

**Against the amendment:** Councillors Concia Albert, Geoff Barraclough, Liza Begum, David Boothroyd, Ruth Bush, Nafsika Butler-Thalassis, Maggie Carmen, Md Shamsed Chowdhury, Paul Dimoldenberg, Robert Eagleton, Paul Fisher, Sara Hassan, Adam Hug, Ryan Jude, Aicha Less, Iman Less, Patrick Lilley, Matt Noble, Angela Piddock, Tim Roca, James Small-Edwards, Judith Southern, Max Sullivan, Hamza Taouzzale, Jessica Toale, Aziz Toki and Jason Williams.

**Absent or not voting:** The Lord Mayor and Councillors Gillian Arrindell, Amanda Langford, Ellie Ormsby and Cara Sanquest.

4.3 The Lord Mayor declared the amendment to be **LOST**.

4.4 The Lord Mayor then put the recommendations in paragraph 1 of the Cabinet report as unamended to a vote. A recorded vote was then taken:

**For the recommendations:** Councillors Concia Albert, Geoff Barraclough, Liza Begum, David Boothroyd, Ruth Bush, Nafsika Butler-Thalassis, Maggie Carmen, Md Shamsed Chowdhury, Paul Dimoldenberg, Robert Eagleton, Paul Fisher, Sara Hassan, Adam Hug, Ryan Jude, Aicha Less, Iman Less, Patrick Lilley, Matt Noble, Angela Piddock, Tim Roca, James Small-Edwards, Judith Southern, Max Sullivan, Hamza Taouzzale, Jessica Toale, Aziz Toki and Jason Williams.

**Against the recommendations:** Councillors Barbara Arzymanow, Melvyn Caplan, Laila Cunningham, Loraine Dean, Anthony Devenish, Jim Glen, David Harvey, Elizabeth Hitchcock, Louise Hyams, Alan Mendoza, Tim Mitchell, Ralu Oteh-Osoka, Ed Pitt Ford, Robert Rigby, Rachael Robathan, Ian Rowley, Caroline Sargent, Karen Scarborough, Mark Shearer, Selina Short, Paul Swaddle OBE and Jacqui Wilkinson.

**Absent or not voting:** The Lord Mayor and Councillors Gillian Arrindell, Amanda Langford, Ellie Ormsby, Cara Sanquest.

4.5 The Lord Mayor declared the recommendations in paragraph 1 of the Cabinet report as **ADOPTED**.

## **RESOLVED:**

### **Council Tax**

- 1) That the Council Tax for a Band D be agreed at £501.76 for 2024/25.
- 2) That the council tax for the City of Westminster, excluding the Montpelier Square area and Queen's Park Community Council, for the year ending 31 March 2025, be as specified in the Council Tax Resolution in Appendix 1 of the Section 151 officer's report.
- 3) That the Precepts and Special Expenses be as also specified in Appendix 1 of the Section 151 officer's report for properties in Montpelier Square and the Queen's Park Community Council.
- 4) That the formal resolution for 2024/25 attached at Appendix 1 of the Section 151 officer's report including the council tax requirement of £68.889m be agreed.
- 5) That the proposed Greater London Authority precept (Band D) of £471.40, an increase of £37.26 in the adjusted Band D precept be noted.
- 6) That the Council continued the Westminster Community Contribution scheme to allow residents in the City to voluntarily contribute towards supporting discretionary services that support the three priorities of youth services, helping rough sleepers off the streets and supporting people who are lonely and isolated.

### **Revenue Budget**

- 7) That the Council noted the views of the Scrutiny Budget Task Group set out in Appendix 2 of the Section 151 officer's report.
- 8) That the proposed General Fund net budget requirement of £205.545m summarised in Appendix 3 of the Section 151 officer's report be approved.
- 9) That the savings, pressures and investments for 2024/25 to 2026/27 set out in Appendix 4, 5 and 6 of the Section 151 officer's report, be approved.
- 10) That the Equality Impact Assessments included in Appendix 7 of the Section 151 officer's report were noted to inform the consideration of the budget.
- 11) Noted the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2024/25 and 30 Year Housing Investment Plan presented concurrently to Cabinet on 19 February 2024 that recommended the HRA budget and rent levels for 2024/25.

## **Capital Programme**

- 12) Noted the Capital Strategy 2024/25 to 2028/29, forecast position for 2023/24 and future years' forecasts summarised up to 2037/38 report also presented to Cabinet on 19 February 2024 that recommended the Council's capital programme and financing.

## **Reserves, Balances and Budget Estimates**

- 13) Agreed the reserves policy as set out in section 9 of the Section 151 officer's report.
- 14) Noted the opinion of the Section 151 Officer with regards to the robustness of the budget process, the estimates underpinning the budget and the adequacy of the reserves as set out in Appendix 8 of the Section 151 officer's report as required by S25 of the Local Government Act 2003.

## **Treasury Management and Investment Framework**

- 15) Noted the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25 including the annual investment strategy, borrowing limits and prudential indicators summarised in the report and set out detail in a concurrent report on the agenda.
- 16) Noted the 2024/25 Integrated Investment Framework report also concurrently on the agenda, which sets out the policies and framework for future investment decisions for the Council.

## **Fairer Westminster Delivery Plan**

- 17) Noted the summary of the delivery actions for the Fairer Westminster Delivery Plan 2024/25 provided in Section 4 of the Section 151 Officer's report. The full approved version of the 2024/25 Delivery Plan will be published in mid-March.

- 4.6 The Lord Mayor put the recommendations in paragraph 2 of the Cabinet report, Capital Strategy 2024/25 to 2028/29, Forecast Position for 2023/24 and Future Years Forecast to 2037/38 to the vote and on a show of hands declared the recommendations **ADOPTED**.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the full Council:

- 1) Approved the capital strategy as set out in the report.
- 2) Approved the capital expenditure for the General Fund as set out in Appendix A for 2024/25 to 2028/29 and future years to 2037/38.

- 3) Approved that all development and investment projects, along with all significant projects follow the previously approved business case governance process as set out in section 8 of the Section 151 officer's report.
- 4) Approved that no financing sources, unless stipulated in regulations or necessary agreements, were ring fenced.
- 5) Approved the proposed financing of the capital programme and revenue implications as set out in section 12 of the Section 151 officer's report.
- 6) Delegated to the Executive Director of Finance and Resources the decisions surrounding financing of the capital programme to provide sufficient flexibility to allow for the most effective use of the Council's resources.

4.7 The Lord Mayor put the recommendations in paragraph 3 of the Cabinet report, Integrated Investment Framework 2024/2025, to the vote and on a show of hands declared the recommendations **ADOPTED**.

**RESOLVED:**

That the full Council:

- 1) Approved and implemented the Integrated Investment Framework set out in the report at Appendix 3.
- 2) Approved that the target for the overall return on Council investments should aspire to at least meet forecasts for inflation over the medium term.
- 3) Approved that the benefits of investing in the Pension Fund should be used as a benchmark when evaluating other investments.
- 4) Adopted the asset allocation percentage ranges set out in the framework and work towards achieving these.
- 5) Agreed that the overarching objective of this framework was to achieve an overall return on Council investments, matching CPI inflation over the medium term, and to reduce costs and liabilities, while maintaining adequate cash balances for operational purposes, and not exposing the capital value of investments to unnecessary risk.
- 6) Agreed that assets must only be acquired for strategic purposes. Such prospective acquisitions must be considered individually, with the reasons for investment limited to regeneration or development of the location, or other strategic purposes in which the asset is established. Out-of-borough acquisitions may also be considered by exception.

- 7) Agreed the Investment Executive to implement, monitor and report on the investment strategy.

4.8 The Lord Mayor put the recommendations in paragraph 4 of the Cabinet report, Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024/25 to 2028/29 to the vote and on a show of hands declared the recommendations **ADOPTED**.

**RESOLVED:**

That the full Council:

- 1) Approved the Treasury Management Strategy Statement.
- 2) Approved the borrowing strategy and borrowing limits for 2024/25 to 2028/29 set out in section 6 of the Section 151 officer's report.
- 3) Approved the Prudential Indicators set out in section 8 of the Section 151 officer's report.
- 4) Approved the Annual Investment Strategy and approved investments set out in Appendix 1 of the Section 151 officer's report.
- 5) Approved the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy set out in Appendix 2 of the Section 151 officer's report.
- 6) Approved the Delegation of authority to the Executive Director of Finance and Resources to proceed with: (a) the obtaining of a credit rating as set out in the report; and 3 (b) to appoint Link Group, a Treasury consultant, for the purposes of obtaining that rating.

4.9 The Lord Mayor put the recommendations in paragraph 5 of the Cabinet report, Housing Revenue Account 30-Year Business Plan and Housing Investment Plan 2024/25 to the vote and upon a show of hands declared the recommendations **ADOPTED**.

**RESOLVED:**

That the full Council:

- 1) Approved the HRA revenue budget for 2024/25 (Table 1 and Appendix 3 of the Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships' report).
- 2) Noted the HRA 5-year revenue budgets for 2024/25 to 2028/29 (Appendix 3 of the Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships' report) and HRA 30-year revenue budgets for 2024/25 to 2053/54 (Appendix 4a of the Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships' report).
- 3) Approved the HRA 5-year Capital Programme totalling £920.52m (Table 4 of the Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships' report).

- 4) Noted the 30-year Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2053/54 totalling £2.493bn (Appendix 5 of the Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships' report).
  - 5) Approved the inclusion of all Fairer Westminster investments, including the extension of the HRA Rent Support Fund by £1.050m for 2024/25 (to be earmarked to support tenants experiencing financial difficulty during the cost-of-living crisis).
  - 6) Approved a rent increase of 7.7% from 1st April 2024 in line with the maximum increase for social rent set by the national rent policy, whilst noting that the Council continues to exercise its discretion under the rent restructuring policy to set rents for re-lets (both new tenants and transfers) up to formula target rent.
  - 7) Approved an increase of 6.7% to the fees charged for garages, sheds and parking (in line with CPI at September 2023) from 1st April 2024.
  - 8) Approved that tenant service charges be varied in line with estimated actual costs for 2024/25 from 1st April 2023.
  - 9) Noted the HRA reserves and balances for the 5-year Business Plan (Table 5 of the Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships' report).
- 4.10 The Lord Mayor put the recommendation in paragraph 6 of the Cabinet report, Pay Policy 2024-2025 to the vote and upon a show of hands declared the recommendations **ADOPTED**.

**RESOLVED:**

That the full Council approved the Pay Policy for 2024 – 2025 as attached as Appendix 1 to the report of the Executive Director of Democracy, Law and People.

**5 REPORT OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

- 5.1 The Lord Mayor put the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee report to the vote and on a show of hands declared the recommendations **ADOPTED**.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Full Council:

- 1) Approved Option 2 of the Member Allowances 2024-2025 Scheme, a 3.88% uplift across all allowances (Basic and SRAs) as set out in the General Purposes Committee Report, with effect from 1 April 2024.



- 2) Agreed to increase the Members' Allowances (Basic and SRA) for the years 2024/25 and 2025/26 in line with any future salary increase for Council staff that may be agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services.

The Meeting ended at 9.12 pm

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

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