



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Cabinet

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on **Thursday 17th February, 2022**, Rooms 18.01 - 18.03 - 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillor Tim Mitchell (Chairman), Timothy Barnes, Matthew Green, David Harvey (virtually), Tim Mitchell, James Spencer, Paul Swaddle, OBE

Also Present: Councillor Gotz Mohindra, Bernie Flaherty, Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health, Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Rachael Robathan and Councillor Heather Acton

1 WELCOME

- 1.1 Councillor Mitchell assumed the role of Chairman due to Councillor Robathan giving apologies.
- 1.2 Councillor David Harvey attended virtually owing to COVID isolation. Councillor Harvey was present for the discussion but did not participate in voting on any items.
- 1.3 Bernie Flaherty, Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health attended in place of Stuart Love, Chief Executive

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 MINUTES

3.1 Fees and Charges – amendment to report of 13 December

- 3.2 Councillor Mitchell explained that an error had been identified in a Fees and Charges report presented to Cabinet in December 2021. An appendix to the report set out the detail of each fee and charge, by service, showing the current charge

and proposed new charge to be agreed. An error affecting the calculation of a group of charges have since been identified.

3.3 A schedule of corrections to the relevant fees and charges has been sent to the Cabinet Member for City Management and Environment for approval so that the intended changes can be correctly implemented.

3.4 [A copy of the corrected appendix is available here.](#)

3.5 [A copy of the Cabinet Member Report can be accessed here.](#)

RESOLVED: Councillor Mitchell, with the consent of the Members present, signed the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2021 as a true and correct record of the proceedings

4 PAY POLICY

4.1 Councillor Mitchell introduced the report and explained that the City Council is required to publish its pay policy annually by the 31st of March.

RESOLVED: That they Pay Policy for 2022/23 be recommended for approval at Full Council.

5 BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2022/23 TO 2024/25

5.1 Councillor Tim Mitchell invited the Chairman of the Budget Task Group (BTG), Councillor Gotz Mohindra, to give an update on the work of the BTG in scrutinising the proposed budget.

5.2 Councillor Mohindra asked that his thanks, and thanks of the wider BTG be put on record to officers for their rigour and commitment in preparing the budget papers for this series of task groups and engaging with members and their questions.

5.3 Overall Councillor Mohindra commented that the draft budget appears robust and that officers have provided assurances on several points raised by members, including managing the impact of changing service demand priorities, the deliverability of a number of projects, and how external economic factors will continue to put pressure on the Council's finances.

5.4 Councillor Paul Swaddle introduced the report and gave his thanks to officers and the BTG. The budget report sets out a balanced 2022/23 budget alongside a medium-term financial plan to 2024/25, all of which is underpinned by our City for All strategy. The net 2022/23 budget requirement of £185m is supported by Council Tax and Business Rates retention.

5.5 Cabinet heard that in response to the cost-of-living pressures that residents are experiencing the general element of Council Tax will be frozen for the forthcoming

year. The Adult Social Care precept will increase by 1% to support service delivery. This translates to an increase of 9p per week for a Band D property. The Council is also maintaining its Council Tax Support scheme so that people on low incomes will receive 100% support in respect of their council tax bills.

5.6 Councillor Swaddle explained that the budget includes £16.7 million of savings for next year (2022/23) and that these savings have been made either through income generation or from efficiencies, with no cuts in services.

5.7 Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director of Finance and Resources addressed the Committee. He confirmed that as s151 officer he considered that the budget setting process had been robust, including the scrutiny budget task group meetings.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations set out in the report be recommended for approval at Full Council.

6 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2022/23 TO 2026/27

6.1 Councillor Paul Swaddle introduced the report and explained that the Capital Strategy plays an important part in the Council achieving its overall City for All strategy, whether that's delivering a significant number of affordable homes in the borough; rolling out more electric vehicle charging points; investing in our public realm to support the economy; or improving our Smart and Digital offer.

6.2 The Capital Strategy sets out the Council's overall plans for capital investment with a gross spend of £2.7 billion over the next 15 years.

6.3 Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director of Finance and Resources addressed the committee, explaining that the programme is funded from a variety of sources, grants and external funding including £1.1 billion of capital receipts generated through development schemes.

6.4 Cabinet also heard that the report sets out the important governance arrangements we have in place, in particular the Capital Review Group, and the business case process that we follow for significant investments.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations set out in the report be recommended for approval at Full Council.

7 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 2022/23

7.1 Councillor David Harvey introduced the report and explained that the HRA helps to maintain and renew our housing stock (20,000 homes across Westminster).

7.2 Cabinet heard that the HRA will support a programme of investment totalling £2.215 billion over the next 30 years. This includes £850m to deliver new affordable homes in Westminster. The remaining funding (£1.359 billion) is earmarked to ensure that the Council's existing housing stock is maintained to a high standard and continues

to provide residents with good quality homes that are both safe and energy efficient in line with the Council's carbon reduction targets.

- 7.3 Councillor Harvey explained that the business plan assumes that rents will continue to rise in line with the limits prescribed by the regulator, which provides a fair basis for rents across the whole country. Westminster rents will remain, on average, £170 per annum lower than the national target rent set for our homes which demonstrates that they continue to offer value for money.
- 7.4 Councillor Harvey assured Cabinet that the HRA business plan includes provision to support those tenants that need it, including a £575k Hardship Fund for any tenants that experience financial difficulty over the next 12-24 months.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations set out in the report be recommended for approval at Full Council.

8 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT FOR 2022/23 TO 2026/27

- 8.1 Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources introduced the report. The annual Treasury Management Strategy sets out the important plans and limits for borrowing, cash investments and prudential indicators for the Council.
- 8.2 Cabinet heard that the foundation of the strategy is to provide security, stability and prudence in the Council's need for borrowing as well as how surplus cash is managed. This strategy will support the capital investment plans whilst maximising affordability within the revenue budget plans.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations set out in the report be recommended for approval at Full Council.

9 INTEGRATED INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK 2022/23

- 9.1 Councillor Paul Swaddle introduced the report, explaining that the Council holds a significant value of investments in different forms and that the report sets out the risk and return parameters.
- 9.2 Cabinet heard that the annual Integrated Investment Framework sets out the council's broad investments portfolio. The framework also sets out Council's strategic objectives from investments; its approach to risk and other parameters such as medium-term target returns and limiting direct property investment to strategic in-borough only acquisitions.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations set out in the report be recommended for approval at Full Council.

10 RESPONSIBLE PROCUREMENT AND COMMISSIONING STRATEGY

- 10.1 Councillor Paul Swaddle introduced the report and explained that the strategy will inform how we spend the money we have. The Council spends a significant amount of money through third party services and contracts and therefore we have the

potential to drive positive action on important issues aligned to the City for All objectives such as tackling the climate emergency through our supply chain.

- 10.2 This strategy provides a flexible framework to support the delivery of having greater social impacts through our contracts and will provide incentives for greater benefits for our small and medium sized businesses in Westminster as well as our residents and communities.
- 10.3 Cabinet heard that over time responsible procurement and commissioning will just become business as usual but for the next few years it needs a real focus.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet

- Approves the Responsible Procurement & Commissioning Strategy and the 16 commitments contained in phase 1 of the strategy.
- Approves all other recommendations contained within the report.

Reasons for Decision

The council spends over £500million each year on third party services and contracts. We have the potential to drive positive action on increasingly important issues such as tackling the climate emergency, contributing to local and national recovery, ensuring human and labour rights and greater diversity and inclusion in our supply chain. It is imperative that we update this strategy now to work with our supply chain to address the climate emergency, improve worker rights and have diverse and inclusive services for Westminster's residents.

The Meeting ended at 5.34PM

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____