



## **LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT**

### **MINUTES OF THE CABINET Tuesday 13 September 2016 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Butt (Chair), Councillor McLennan (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Farah, Hirani, Mashari, W Mitchell Murray, Pavey and Southwood

Also present: Councillors Chohan, Harrison, Hossain, Perrin and Warren

**1. Declarations of interests**

None

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 August be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

**3. Matters arising**

None

**4. Financial Position 2017/18 - 2019/20 and option to fix RSG settlements**

Councillor Margaret McLennan, Deputy Leader, introduced the report. She informed Members that the report sets out the council's medium term financial position and the major strategic considerations arising from this.

She stated that this will provide context for proposals for the budgets for 2017/18 and 2018/19, which the council will need to set over the coming months.

Councillor McLennan stated that significant savings have been delivered by the Council but that difficult choices about the levels of service provision also had been confronted to meet the financial targets. She stated that the Council was now in a sound financial position despite the substantial cuts in central government funding awarded to Brent.

With the permission of the Chair, Councillor John Warren (Brondesbury Park) said that Full Council should be given the opportunity to consider the issue of fixing RSG up until 2019/20, not solely Cabinet. He stated that Full Council should also be given the opportunity to consider the associated efficiency plan prior to its submission to DCLG. He stated that he would raise the issue at Full Council on 19 September 2016.

In response to Councillor Warren, Conrad Hall, Chief Finance Officer, stated that the majority of London Boroughs had considered the RSG settlements at Cabinet meetings and not Full Council meetings. It was clarified that the decision on the Financial Position 2017/18- 2019/20 and option to fix RSG settlement is a function exercisable by the Cabinet.

It was reiterated that the council would need to make a decision on the four year settlement option by 14 October 2016 and write formally to DCLG on this.

Councillor McLennan, Deputy Leader, stated that the Council would prepare an efficiency plan to central government based on the council's medium term financial plan.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (i) Cabinet noted the overall financial position and the risks inherent in it.
- (ii) Cabinet noted the overall arguments for and against accepting a fixed settlement of its RSG until 2019/20, and that on balance the advice is in favour of accepting it.
- (iii) Cabinet delegated to the Chief Executive and Leader authority to decide whether or not to accept the fixed RSG settlement.
- (iv) Cabinet delegated to the Chief Executive and Leader authority to submit an efficiency plan to DCLG as part of any decision to accept a fixed RSG settlement.
- (v) Cabinet noted the position in particular in respect of business rates devolution and how this might progress, and that the chief finance officer will continue to respond to technical consultations as necessary.
- (vi) Cabinet noted the progress in developing a financing programme for the investment strategy.
- (vii) Cabinet agreed to delegate procurement and appointment of specialist financial advisers to assist in the financing of the investment strategy to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Deputy Leader.

**5. Fair Debt Recovery Policy and In-House Enforcement Agents (Bailiffs) Service**

Councillor Margaret McLennan, Deputy Leader, introduced the report stating that as a result of continuing budget pressures, the recovery of Council debts has become of paramount importance, and the need to maintain and improve performance in this area will only increase going forward.

Councillor Roxanne Mashari, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills welcomed the report. She suggested using resident focus groups to get feedback from residents.

Councillor Mashari asked that the scope of the policy be amended to include parking fines. Conrad Hall, Chief Finance Officer, agreed to investigate this possibility.

Councillor Ellie Southwood, Cabinet Member for Environment, asked that mention be made of accessible communications. She is aware of written summons letters being written to residents with visual impairments.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) Cabinet approved the suggested overarching principles for a Council-Wide Fair Debt Policy;
- (ii) Cabinet approved the suggested approaches to individuals with multiple debts, vulnerable debtors, and those in financial difficulty;
- (iii) Cabinet approved the recommendation to create an in-house bailiff service as part of our approach to collecting Council debts, to be implemented as existing arrangements come to an end.
- (iv) Cabinet noted the justification for recruiting Enforcement Agents outside of the Council's standard employment terms and conditions, in order to implement performance related pay, and gives authority to recruit on this basis.

## **6. Future Use of Preston Park Annexe**

Councillor Muhammed Butt, Leader of the Council, welcomed those who had come to the meeting for this item.

Referring to previous Council policies on libraries, Cllr Butt indicated that the Council was keen to work alongside communities libraries in a non-adversarial way. He referred Members to the recent decision by the Barham Park Trust. He indicated the Council's wish to establish a way forward for the Borough's community libraries (Preston Community Library, Barham Park, Cricklewood, Kensal).

He welcomed the work carried out by these community groups. He indicated the Council's desire to establish a strategy outlining how the Council intends to work with such groups going forward.

On behalf of the Cabinet, Councillor Butt asked the Strategic Director of Resources, in conjunction with other colleagues, to draft a strategy on how the Council would work with such community groups going forward which would enable these groups to continue the vital community work that they carry out.

He indicated the Council's desire, if possible, to ensure Preston Community Library is able to continue the work it currently does. Such a strategy would enable such groups to have access to spaces owned by the Council, if appropriate.

He asked that Preston Community Library be awarded a three month license to be able to review the situation regarding school places with the Council's Children and Young People's department. In January 2017, a 6 month licence could be

considered and then potentially a 12 month license. This would avoid the uncertainty felt by Preston Community Library currently.

Finally, Councillor Butt indicated the Council's clear support for the work of such groups as well as indicating that Preston Community Library would not be expected to meet the income target of £51k.

Councillor Harrison (Preston Ward) and Councillor Hossain (Preston Ward) welcomed the intervention by the Leader of the Council. Councillor Harrison requested that the report be withdrawn. Councillor Hossain particularly welcomed the work carried out and the services being provided by Preston Community Library.

Councillor Warren (Brondesbury Park Ward) asked for clarification about the Leader's opening remarks. He asked for clarity about the rent that Preston Community Library might be asked to pay. He asked for the proposals to be totally reconsidered. He stated that he was keen to ensure that all community libraries were treated equally and particularly reference Kensal Rise Community Library.

Michael Rushe, Chair of the South Kenton & Preston Park Residents' Association welcomed the work by Preston Community Library. He questioned the feasibility of providing school places on the site.

Philip Bromberg asked for additional detail to support the Leader's opening remarks. He urged the Cabinet to keep their manifesto pledge made before May 2014 i.e. *"to offer the building at a peppercorn rent to any local community group who can provide a sustainable community library"*. He stated that a fantastic facility had been established by Preston Community Library. He spoke of the Council's decision regarding allotments in Brent which had been allocated on *peppercorn rents*. He asked for a clear steer that

Councillor Michael Pavey, Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, with responsible for Libraries, corrected the report stating that Preston Community Library is in no way a 'pop up' community library. He welcomed the redevelopment of the site, ideally including the adjacent site. He stated this should not prevent the establishment of a community library. Councillor Pavey welcomed the Leader of the Council's opening remarks. He supported the drafting of a Community Libraries Strategy. Councillor also proposed three amendments to the report recommendations: (1) during any construction period, a clear commitment should be given to Preston Community Library (2) he suggested a clear commitment be given to weight procurement processes to social value rather than financial value, (3) that the £51k rent not be cash based but could be linked to social value.

Councillor Ellie Southwood, Cabinet Member for Environment, welcomed the facilities provided by Preston Community Library. She echoed Cllr Pavey's remarks about the procurement process – suggesting that the social value of community libraries be recognised.

Councillor Roxanne Mashari, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills welcomed the development of a strategy which would provide an appropriate framework. She seconded Councillor Pavey's three amendments.

Councillor Margaret McLennan, Deputy Leader of the Council with responsibility for the voluntary sector, outlined the number of community run schemes in Brent.

Carolyn Downs, Chief Executive, clarified the amendments made to the report:

- A commitment to support through any development the Preston Community Library.
- Seek to explore social value as opposed to financial value in the procurement process.

Councillor Michael Pavey, Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, asked that his three amendments to the report be reflected in today's decision. He repeated the three amendments. It was clarified that these amendments would be fully considered in the report due back to Cabinet within three months.

Councillor Krupesh Hirani, Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing, requested clarification about school places.

Gail Tolley, Strategic Director Children and Young People, provided clarity about school places and the situation of in-year arrivals.

Councillor Butt, Leader of the Council, stated that Preston Community Library would be granted a three month license extension and said that the situation would be reviewed in January.

He thanked the various speakers including Councillors Harrison, Hossain and Warren.

**RESOLVED:**

- I. Option 2: to purchase the adjacent land to deliver 19 new homes and D1 community use space.
- II. To allow a 3 month period for the Council to negotiate with the adjacent landowner(s).
- III. To delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Resources in consultation with the Chief Legal Officer and Chief Finance Officer in respect of awarding any professional services contracts for developing Preston Park Annexe scheme proposals.
- IV. That officers, within three months, bring back the results of negotiations, and a draft community library strategy.
- V. That a further report would be presented setting out when available: detailed plans, outcomes of consultation and investment requirements.
- VI. To support the redevelopment process.
- VII. Their commitment to social value as opposed to financial value.

## **7. Brent Local Implementation Plan (LIP) Submission For 2017/18 - 2019/20**

Councillor Ellie Southwood, Cabinet Member for Environment, introduced the report stating that the primary source of funding for schemes and initiatives to improve transport infrastructure and travel behaviour in Brent is Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding, which is allocated through Transport for London (TfL). LIP set out how London boroughs will deliver better transport in their area, in the context of local and regional transport priorities and the overarching Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS).

In response to questions from Councillor Pavey, Councillor Southwood said that she would provide him with an analysis of the proposed work on Forty Lane.

### **RESOLVED:**

- I. Noted the 2017/18 total TfL provisional LIP allocation of £3,545,000.
- II. Approved the proposed 2017/18 programme of LIP Corridors, Neighbourhoods and Supporting Measures schemes, as set out in Appendix A of the report, through application of the prioritisation matrix, as described in this report and, subject to TfL approval in autumn 2016, instructs the Head of Highways and Infrastructure in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment to deliver this programme using the allocated budget and resources available.
- III. Authorised the Head of Highways and Infrastructure in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment to undertake any necessary statutory and non-statutory consultation and consider any objections or representations regarding the schemes set out in Appendix A of this report. If there are no objections or representations, or the Head of Highways and Infrastructure in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment considers the objections or representations are groundless or unsubstantiated, the Head of Highways and Infrastructure in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment is authorised to deliver the schemes set out in Appendix A of this report. Otherwise, the Head of Highways and Infrastructure in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment is authorised to refer objections or representations to the Highway Committee for further consideration.
- IV. Noted the scheme allocations are provisional and that schemes may be subject to change during development and following the consultation process.
- V. Authorised the Head of Highways and Infrastructure in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment to vire scheme allocations where necessary (e.g. pending the outcome of detailed design and consultation) within the overall LIP budget, in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment and in accordance with financial regulations.

**8. Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Task Group Report on Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements.**

Councillor Harbi Farah, Cabinet Members for Housing and Welfare Reform stated that he had chaired the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 task group prior to joining Cabinet. He stated that the task group had been requested by Scrutiny Members to ensure Brent council is achieving the best financial outcomes for the borough with its current CIL and section 106 agreements.

The task group had set out to analyse the current CIL and S106 processes with a view to ensuring that communities and councillors are engaged in the making of funding decisions.

Councillor John Warren, Brondesbury Park, welcomed the report but asked whether the process of allocating funding could be sped up.

In noting recommendation 24, Cabinet suggested an amendment to the recommendation to state that at least half of the Planning Committee members serve a minimum of two years terms at any given time.

**RESOLVED:-**

- I. Cabinet considered the contents of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 task group's report.
- II. Cabinet noted the twenty five recommendations made by the task group and support the development of an action plan across the council and partner organisations to take these forward.
- III. Cabinet agreed to receive a progress report against the recommendations in six months' time.

**9. Performance Report, Q1 (April-June) 2016/17**

Councillor Margaret McLennan, Deputy Leader, introduced the report.

Councillor John Warren, Brondesbury Park, welcomed the report stating that the format was more user friendly. He suggested that a further improvement would be to make Cabinet Members further accountable for the performance in each Directorate, especially if there is a dip in performance.

Cabinet Members agreed with Councillor Warren welcoming further lead member accountability.

**RESOLVED:-**

- I. Noted the performance information contained in the report and agreed remedial actions as necessary.
- II. Considered the current and future strategic risks associated with the information provided and agree remedial actions as appropriate.

III. Agreed to challenge progress with responsible officers as necessary.

10. **Reference of item considered by Scrutiny Committees (if any)**

None

11. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

None

12. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting ended at 8.34 pm

M BUTT  
Chair