



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 17 October 2022 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor M Patel (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Donnelly-Jackson, Farah, Grahl, Knight, Nerva, Krupa Sheth, Southwood and Tatler.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Cabinet noted that Arnold Meagher (Head of Litigation & Dispute Resolution) was attending to represent Debra Norman (Corporate Director Governance) and Tom Cattermole (Director of Customer Access) to represent Peter Gadsdon (Corporate Director Resident Services).

An apology for absence was received from Phil Porter (Corporate Director Adult Social Care & Health).

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 12 September 2022 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. **Matters Arising (if any)**

None.

5. **Petitions (if any)**

There were no petitions submitted for consideration at the meeting.

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

There were no references from either the Community & Wellbeing or Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committees submitted for consideration at the meeting.

7. **Draft Borough Plan 2023-2027**

Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) introduced a report presenting the draft Borough Plan 2023-27 along with an outline of plans to engage with residents, partners, stakeholders and staff on the provisional outline of priorities which had been identified.

In considering the report Cabinet noted the work undertaken in developing the draft Borough Plan to capture the achievements made during the previous four-year period and also provide the context, narrative and Administrations strategic priorities and ambitions over the next four-year period in order to best support the borough and its diverse communities.

In recognising the progress made, members were keen to ensure that the Borough Plan was also designed to build on lessons learnt and reflect the impact of challenges arising from the cost-of-living crisis on the capacity and resources available to deliver services, whilst also seeking to build on the strong community spirit and foundations across the borough. Having noted the outcome of the consultation undertaken to date with a range of stakeholders, members were keen to endorse the priorities identified within the Draft Borough Plan in relation to Prosperity, Pride and Belonging in Brent; A Cleaner, Greener Future; Respect and Renewal in Brent alongside providing the Best Start in Life and A Healthier Brent.

In expressing support for the priorities outlined, members were keen to highlight the ongoing commitment to increasing the supply of safe, secure, genuinely affordable and accessible housing alongside the regeneration of the borough linked to delivery of the policies within the newly adopted Local Plan. Whilst recognising the ongoing financial challenges and increased level of demand on services, Members also welcomed the ambition within the Draft Borough Plan to continue prioritising the most vulnerable whilst also seeking to protect essential services in order to support all residents across the borough.

Having considered the report, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To endorse the draft Borough Plan 2023-27 (as set out within Appendix A of the report).
- (2) To note plans for widespread public consultation and engagement on the Draft Plan, as outlined in section 4 of the report.
- (3) To note plans to develop and publish a supporting evidence base alongside the final Borough Plan.
- (4) To agree that the Leader be authorised to make any final amendments to the Borough Plan before its submission to Full Council following, consideration by Scrutiny and outputs from the upcoming engagement programme.

8. **Q2 Financial Report 2022-23**

Councillor Mili Patel (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform) introduced a report, which detailed the current forecast of income and expenditure versus the revenue budget for 2022-23 and other key financial data.

In considering the report, Cabinet noted the current pressures being forecast for the year, which totalled £3.9m and reflected the forecast overspend within Children & Young People. This comprised of £2.2m within the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) and £1.7m within the General Fund in relation to the Localities, Looked After Children & Permanency and Placement budgets. Members were advised of the

management actions being undertaken in order to mitigate the pressures identified in these areas, which it was noted reflected national trends and challenges in the recruitment and retention of social work staff as well as the increased demand and costs for residential placements. The report also detailed the changes made in order to align the budget with the Council's new corporate structure (as detailed within Appendix B of the report) and progress in delivery of the £2.7m savings target for 2022-23 (as detailed within Appendix A of the report).

Members also noted the ongoing risks and uncertainties outlined in relation to inflationary pressures and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis both in terms of the current financial year and Council's overall Medium Term Financial Strategy, given the increased demand on services and also rising costs. Alongside this, members were also advised of the significant risks identified in relation to the Council's Capital Programme, which currently included a forecast slippage of £15.9m and overspend of £2.8m attributable to both the General Fund and HRA Housing Programme. These pressures reflected rising inflation combined with the increased cost of borrowing and a shortage of labour and materials, which it was noted had adversely impacted on the financial viability of schemes within the programme and had resulted in the Council therefore having to explore a range of options to sustain viability including pausing, reducing or reviewing the existing the scope or tenure mix of schemes to ensure funding could continue to be prioritised appropriately.

Commenting on the adverse impact of the measures included in the Governments mini budget delivered in September, members also noted the further announcement of an accompanying medium term fiscal plan now expected at the end of October alongside growth and borrowing forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility. Cabinet was advised that any further impact on the Council's budget arising as a result would be detailed within the Draft 2023/24 Budget Report due to be presented at the next meeting in November.

Having recognised the ongoing challenges and financial pressures being faced across the Council and work being undertaken to manage the Council's overall budget position in relation to the ongoing economic uncertainty it was **RESOLVED** to note the overall financial position and the actions being taken to manage the issues arising.

9. **Request of SCIL Allocation to Support the Delivery of Separate Projects**

Councillor Tatler (Cabinet member for Regeneration & Planning) introduced a report seeking approval for the use of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (Strategic CIL) funding contributions towards the delivery of a number of separate projects.

In introducing the report, Cabinet were advised that proposals put forward for consideration had all been assessed as eligible for Strategic CIL funding, in accordance with the Strategic CIL Regulations. This reflected the fact the funding being sought, whilst assisting in addressing identified viability gaps, had been designed to support development and growth through delivery of the community infrastructure elements of each scheme.

Members thanked all those involved for their efforts in developing the proposals, which it was recognised would assist with the ongoing delivery of the infrastructure

required to support development for local communities across the borough and, on this basis, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

(1) To approve the allocation of Strategic CIL funds as follows:

- £0.9m for use towards Wembley Transport Improvements.
- £413,000 for use towards Wembley Hostile Vehicle Measures.
- £559,100 for use towards Harlesden Library.
- £1,951,162 for use towards the creation of Carlton Vale Boulevard.
- £102,427.26 for use towards the creation of a new community café and external amenity space as part of the Stonebridge redevelopment.
- £1,015,684.77 for use towards the creation of a new community facility as part of the Preston Community Library redevelopment.
- £2,643,445.04 for use towards the creation of a new community centre as part of Learie Constantine Centre redevelopment.
- £2,479,770.31 for use towards the creation of a new community centre as part of the Brent Indian Community Centre redevelopment.

(2) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Finance & Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform, to agree any additional SCIL allocations to the Morland Gardens project and any SCIL allocation to the Church End redevelopment project.

10. **Brent Long Term Transport Strategy Review - Final Version**

Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action) introduced a report providing an update on the work undertaken to review the Brent Long Term Transport Strategy 2015-2035 (LTTS), including details of the feedback received from the public consultation and stakeholder engagement process.

In considering the report, Cabinet noted that the Strategy had been designed to provide the strategic direction for investment in transport across Brent with the overarching aim of improving and providing joined up transport options for all, whilst also seeking to reduce the negative impacts of travel on the borough.

Whilst noting the progress made since publication of the original strategy in 2015, members recognised the nature of the ongoing challenges to be addressed particularly in relation to congestion, air quality and road safety alongside other more recent issues in terms of tackling health and social inequalities and climate change. As a result, the strategy had been reviewed and updated to take account of the challenges and also opportunities identified and to take account of key national, mayoral and local policies and to support the wider delivery of new infrastructure and jobs across the borough.

Whilst recognising that delivery of the strategy would need to be undertaken in partnership with key stakeholders and noting the challenges this created as a result of the ongoing funding pressures being experienced by Transport for London (TfL), members welcomed the strategy and proposed transport improvements identified.

As a result, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To agree the minor amendments, designed to strengthen the strategy (as detailed in section 3.11 and Table 3.3 of the report).
- (2) Subject to (1) above, to adopt the final strategy (as set out within Appendix A of the report)
- (3) To note the feedback received and suggestions made by the public and various stakeholders as part of the public consultation and stakeholder engagement exercises on the draft strategy document (as summarised in sections 3.3 – 3.10 of the report).

11. Highways Capital Maintenance Programme 2022-23

Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action) introduced a report presenting the Highways Maintenance Scheme Programme for 2022-23.

Having introduced the report, Cabinet noted the programme of works delivered as a result of the Highways Maintenance Investment Programme in 2021-22 in relation to Brent's footways, roads and highway structures, based on the allocation of £3.5m of capital investment supported by £1.67m from the Recovery Fund (as detailed within Appendix A of the report). Members were advised these works had covered approx. 1.3% of the borough's road and footway networks. This investment had also been supplemented, up to the end of 2021-22, with an additional £18.5m as part of the £20m Footway Improvement Programme. Once the final scheme within that Programme (Kilburn High Road project) had been completed it was noted that approx. 45 miles of footway would have been resurfaced, equating to about 8.5% of the borough footway network.

As a consequence of the ongoing funding pressures being experienced by Transport for London (TfL), members were also advised of the limited funding which had been made available since 2018-19 towards Principal Road (A-road) improvements, with no specific funding from TfL having been allocated to Brent for this purpose in 2021-22 and 2022-23. Given the relatively poor condition of the Principal Road Network, members welcomed the proposal outlined in the report to invest a further £15m over the next four years in support of a planned maintenance programme. This would involve the allocation of £2m in 2022-23 with the remaining £13m over the following three years and would include £4m for Principal Road maintenance with the remainder of the allocation to support footway reconstruction, which would be subject to a prioritisation process and consultation with ward councillors.

Members noted the details provided in relation to the prioritised programme for major road resurfacing; preventative maintenance; major footway reconstruction; improvements to highway structures and drainage; improvements to public realm and renewal of road markings identified for 2022-23, along with the detailed Highways Asset Management and scheme prioritisation process. Whilst expressing concern at the impact of the funding pressures and current financial settlement agreed with TfL, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the proposed Highways Maintenance Scheme Programme 2022-23 as detailed in Appendix B of the report.

12. **Acquisition of 10X Buy Back Properties**

Councillor Knight (Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Security) introduced a report regarding the proposed purchase of ten properties on the open market for general housing needs and informing members of a further GLA grant award from the London Mayor's fund to support the administrative costs associated with the acquisitions.

In considering the report, Cabinet noted that the proposed acquisitions had been designed to increase the stock of Council owned affordable housing which, in accordance with the conditions of the GLA grant, would be let at social rent levels.

In supporting the proposed acquisitions, Members were keen to recognise the ongoing work being undertaken to support households who were either homeless, at risk of homelessness or in housing need and in terms of increasing the supply of safe, secure and appropriately sized accommodation.

As a result, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the proposed acquisition of up to ten properties from the open market.
- (2) To approve a maximum budget of £3.2m to cover the remaining balance of the acquisition.

13. **Proposals for Future Brent Carbon Offset Fund Allocations and Together Towards Zero Small Grants Scheme Criteria**

Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action) introduced a report outlining proposals for the allocation of two Council climate funding schemes and also providing an update on the "Together Towards Zero" small grants scheme alongside a refreshed proposal for the management of the second phase of the scheme.

In considering the report, Cabinet began by noting the proposed policy framework outlined for utilisation of the Council's Carbon Offset Fund taking account of the specific GLA guidance on its use and available discretion in terms of how funding was allocated in relation to carbon reduction activity. In recognising and commending the progress made to date in terms of the initial tranche of funding allocated and pipeline allocation policy, members were advised that approval was now being sought to extend future use of the available Fund to support energy efficiency improvements for both domestic and non-domestic properties as a means of assisting to tackle carbon emissions. This would be based on a split involving 60% for use on the Council's own housing stock; 30% on the Council's Community and Foundation school estate and 10% held in reserve for general use (which it was confirmed would include match funding for grant and other project schemes). The approach outlined would also support the opportunity available to bid for additional grant funding through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, as detailed within section 5 of the report.

An update was also provided on progress on the Brent "Together Towards Zero" small grants scheme to support environmentally friendly and green local community

projects. Having noted and welcomed the success of the first phase of the scheme, under which 35 projects had been awarded funding totalling £32,490, proposals were also outlined for the second phase of the scheme, due to launch in Autumn 2022. Members were advised that the proposals included an increase in the maximum bid amount from £1,000 to £5,000 along with an updated assessment criteria as detailed within section 7 of the report, which had been designed to further encourage applications for more visible and ambitious community environmental projects.

Members were supportive of the proposals outlined in the report, which it was felt reflected the Council's innovative approach towards the development and use of its carbon offset funding contributions in a way that sought to maximise community engagement as well as the level of funding available.

Having considered the updates provided, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) In respect of the Brent Carbon Offset Fund:
 - (a) To agree the future allocation policy for Brent's Carbon Offset Fund, as outlined in section four of the report (60% to own housing stock; 30% to schools; 10% held in reserve for general use), and to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Resident Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action, to have overall responsibility for the oversight and operationalisation of the policy, with an immediate opportunity to utilise as part of a bid to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.
- (2) In respect of the Together Towards Zero Small Grants Scheme:
 - (a) To approve the proposed amendment to raise the maximum amount payable to successful applicants to the Together Towards Zero Grant Scheme from £1,000 to £5,000.
 - (b) To delegate authority to the Director of Environment and Leisure to approve Together Towards Zero applications up to the overall value of £100k.
 - (c) To delegate authority to the Director of Environment and Leisure to approve any subsequent changes to the key grant documentation such as: guidance notes, application form, frequently asked questions, funding agreements, evidence of community support template and data protection and safeguarding pack.

14. **Customer Access Strategy 2022-2026: Contact Brent**

Councillor Southwood (Cabinet Member for Jobs, Economy & Citizen Experience) introduced a report presenting the Council's Customer Access Strategy 2022 -26.

Members noted that the strategy had been designed to build upon Brent's Customer Promise by setting out the Council's commitment to enhancing the services and customer experience provided for residents involving a whole organisation approach. This recognised that customers accessed Council services in a variety of ways, not only through customer services, and therefore sought to

deliver and embed a more consistent customer experience across the whole Council providing clear expectations of what should be expected from not only staff but also customers and residents.

Members were advised that the Strategy had also been designed to run alongside the Council's Digital Strategy, recognising the need to ensure all customer contact and access to services remained as flexible and easy to use as possible.

In commending and welcoming the strategy, members noted the ambitious nature of the Key Performance Indicators developed to monitor delivery and success of the strategy along with the consultation undertaken with customers, residents and staff as part of its development.

Having recognised the commitment within the strategy to enhancing the way services were accessed and provided for residents and customers Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To approve the Customer Access Strategy 2022-2026, as detailed within Appendix A of the report.
- (2) To note that progress and key performance indicators would be reported to the Council Management Team on a quarterly basis.

15. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press or public.

16. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting ended at 10.35 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair