



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 11 March 2024 at
10.00 am

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

Also present: Andrew Hudson (Chair i4B Ltd and First Wave Housing Ltd).

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Following her return from maternity leave, Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of Council) formally welcomed Councillor Mili Patel back in her role as Vice-Chair, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform.

The opportunity was also taken to formally thank Councillor Tatler for her support in covering the role of Vice-Chair and Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Reform during Councillor Mili Patel's period of maternity leave.

No apologies for absence were received.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made during the meeting.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Cabinet **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 5 February 2024 be approved as a correct record.

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

None.

5. **Petitions (if any)**

No petitions were submitted for consideration at the meeting.

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

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

7. **i4B Holdings Ltd Business Plan 2024 - 25**

Prior to consideration of the report, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) welcomed Andrew Hudson (as newly appointed Chair of both the i4B Holdings Ltd and First Wave Housing Ltd Boards) to the meeting and invited him to introduce the key themes and strategic priorities within the 2024-25 Business Plans for both companies.

In presenting each Business Plans Andrew Hudson began by outlining the nature of the current challenges faced in relation to the performance of both companies as a housing service, which included rent collection during a cost-of-living crisis; building safety; pressure from disrepair claims as well as longer term issues such as working towards the achievement of net zero.

Focussing on priorities moving forward, he then highlighted the work being undertaken to tackle voids (including minor void performance), which included looking for best practice as well as further activity to streamline processes, as well as other housing management issues which had included the work being undertaken to establish closer links between staff and the areas they covered in order to develop a more holistic approach and relationship with tenants and the Board continuing to closely monitor levels of tenant satisfaction.

In terms of strategic challenges, he advised members that they key focus remained on seeking to maximise the Boards contribution to the Council's wider priorities, with a specific focus in supporting the work being undertaken to tackle the demand for housing given the increase in levels of homelessness. As part of this approach, the Board had identified workstreams over the coming year aimed at seeking to increase i4Bs level of stock (utilising the rise in Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates and increased price cap supported by discussions with the Council on the potential draw down of further funding) with initial activity focussed around the acquisition of 3-4 bed houses in the North West of the borough above the North Circular Road and small blocks as well as supporting tenants to move through i4B. As an example, members were advised of the work already being undertaken with BEAM as a partner organisation to provide specific employment support alongside the focus in developing wider packages of support for tenants.

In thanking Andrew Hudson for his opening comments, the Leader then invited Councillor Tatler (in completing her cover as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform) to introduce the report included on the agenda detailing the final draft of the i4B Holdings Ltd 2024-25 Business Plan for consideration and approval on behalf of the Shareholder. In presenting the report, Councillor Tatler advised that the Business Plan had been designed to set out i4Bs key priorities and strategy for the 2024-25 financial year in support of its key objectives.

In considering the report, Cabinet noted and welcomed the work being undertaken through the company to increase the supply of good quality affordable housing and support tenants, aligned with the Council's strategic objectives in terms of seeking to address homelessness and reduce reliance on more expensive Temporary Accommodation, with the Board thanked for their work and support in this respect. In noting the update provided within the report in relation to operational performance, Members welcomed the ongoing monitoring by the Board and focus in seeking to address the key operational issues identified in relation to voids and rent collection supported by the change in the Housing Management structure

along with the efforts being made to actively support and engage with those tenants (particularly those impacted by the overall benefit cap and cost-of-living crisis) on measures designed to support their financial resilience and improve income collection through the provision of targeted budgeting advice and specific employment support designed to provide a renewed focus on the process for letting properties whilst also seeking to sustain tenancies over the longer term.

In recognising the challenges outlined alongside current performance and welcoming the direction and approach adopted in relation to the strategic priorities identified by i4B, Cabinet **RESOLVED** having noted with the exempt information contained within the appendices of the report:

- (1) To approve the 2024-25 i4B Holdings Ltd Business Plan and financial model as Shareholder of the Company.
- (2) To approve the 2024-25 Service Level Agreement between i4B Holdings Ltd and the Council.

8. **First Wave Housing Ltd (FWH) Business Plan 2024 - 25**

Councillor Tatler (in completing her cover as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform) then moved on to introduce a report, providing Cabinet with the final draft of the First Wave Housing Ltd (FWH) 2024-25 Business Plan along with details of the revised Service Level Agreement with the Council for consideration and approval on behalf of the Guarantor.

In considering the report, Cabinet once again noted and welcomed the work being undertaken through the company to support the Council's strategic objectives in relation to the supply of safe, secure and sustainable affordable housing alongside the update provided within the report in relation to its operational performance including the focus on repairs and voids.

Having noted the introductory comments made by Andrew Hudson (as Chair of the i4B and First Wave Housing (FWH) Ltd Boards) under the previous item including the focus of FWH Ltd (working with the Council) in seeking to maximise opportunities identified through its status as a Registered Provider in contributing towards the supply of affordable housing across the borough, Cabinet **RESOLVED** having also noted the current performance and strategic priorities outlined in relation to FWH, along with the exempt information contained within the appendices of the report:

- (1) To approve the 2024-25 First Wave Housing Ltd Business Plan and financial model as Guarantor of the Company.
- (2) To approve the 2024-25 Service Level Agreement between First Wave Housing Ltd and the Council.

9. **Future of Housing Repairs Service Update**

Councillor Knight (Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Security) introduced a report providing an update on progress with the procurement

and implementation of the new housing repairs service, including relevant pre-tender considerations.

In considering the report Cabinet noted the work undertaken to develop proposals for future delivery of the repairs service following the decision taken in September 2023 to move to a new hybrid delivery model for the service. Members were reminded that the new model would include a framework of local contractors along with a handyman service that would predominantly undertake communal repairs and where necessary provide a rapid response service. Given the need to provide sufficient time for design of the final contract specifications and mobilisation of the new service model, members were advised they were also being asked to consider a revised timetable for delivery of the programme which would include a six (plus six, if required) month extension to the current Wates contract as well as a six-month mobilisation period, as detailed within section 5.3 of the report.

Members welcomed the efforts being made to address concerns relating to current performance of the repairs service through the new model of service delivery along with the approach and support being provided to encourage involvement of local contractors in the procurement process as part of the wider community wealth building opportunities identified.

In thanking all those involved in development of the proposals and recognising the improvements being sought in terms of performance outcomes and resilience of the future repairs service Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve an extension to the current housing repairs service contract with Wates, for a period of six months, with the possibility of extension for a further six months for the reasons set out in paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 of the report.
- (2) To approve the outline pre-tender considerations set out in Section 6 of the report.
- (3) To approve the new timetable for future repairs delivery actions as set out at paragraph 5.3 of the report.
- (4) To approve the proposal that the final cost/quality split be agreed by the Corporate Director, Resident Services, in consultation with the Corporate Director, Finance and Resources.

10. **Amendment to the Procurement of the Framework Agreement For Housing Refurbishment Works**

Following the update provided under Item 9 above on the Future of the Housing Repairs service, Councillor Knight (Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Security) introduced a report detailing changes to the original procurement process proposed for the housing repairs and maintenance service.

In considering the report Cabinet noted that the amendments being sought were to an existing procurement framework required to support the move towards re-procurement of the new responsive housing repairs contract. Members also noted the way in which the amendments would support the ability to further develop and build capacity enabling local contractors to engage in the process, once again

seeking to place community wealth building at the heart of the repair service delivery.

In supporting the approach outlined, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the proposed amendments to the procurement of a framework agreement for Housing Refurbishment Works as set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report to include the increases of Lots from 6 to 16, the amendment to annual framework value and the extension of the framework term from four to ten years compared to that detailed in the Cabinet Report dated 12 October 2020 requesting Authority to Tender for Framework Agreements for Housing Refurbishment Works and Technical Consultancy Services.
- (2) To note that the amended framework for Housing Refurbishment Works will be available to call off by Council officers and contractors appointed in connection with replacement repairs, voids and planned maintenance works.
- (3) To approve inviting tenders for a framework agreement for Housing Refurbishment Works on the basis of the revised pre - tender considerations set out in paragraph 4.9 of the report.
- (4) To approve officers evaluating the tenders referred to in (3) above on the basis of the evaluation criteria set out in paragraph 4.9 of the report.
- (5) To approve reducing the number of Lots from seven to six for the framework agreement for Technical Consultancy Services as detailed in paragraph 4.1 of the report.
- (6) To approve the report in conjunction with the re-procurement of the repairs and maintenance service report (Item 9 above).

11. **Proposal to deliver 60 homes for Social Rent on the Chalk Hill Estate**

Councillor Knight (Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Security) introduced a report detailing the potential for delivering new social housing through the redevelopment and regeneration of garages, parking areas and associated hard standing forming part of the Scientist Estate, Chalk hill owned and managed by Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing Association (MTVH).

In introducing the report Cabinet noted the opportunity outlined to work closely with MTVH as one of the Council's strategic housing provider partners to unlock 60 new social homes for residents through the repurposing of garage sites on the Chalk hill Estate. Highlighting the way in which development of the proposals reflected the approach being adopted towards strategic relationship and place building involving a range of housing providers, members were pleased to note that whilst the estate was wholly owned and managed by MTVH all of the new homes delivered as part of the scheme would be for social rent with the Council holding 100% nomination rights to under the initial lettings process with the scheme to be delivered by MTVH utilising the Council's statutory site assembly Compulsory Purchase powers.

In welcoming the initiative, members recognised the innovative nature of the scheme as a means of supporting the efforts being made to increase the supply of

affordable housing in order to address the ongoing housing crisis and long term needs of residents across the borough, with support also expressed for the new homes being provided at social rent and nomination rights available to the Council. In thanking all those involved for their efforts to bring forward the scheme, members advised they were also keen to continue the development of this type of approach, working collectively with strategic partners, in order to identify any further new build opportunities and to ensure all levers were being utilised to deliver the Council's strategic housing objectives including the ongoing review of statutory CPO and site assembly powers.

In support of the scheme, Cabinet therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve in principle the Council working with Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing Association (MTVH) to support the development objective of delivering new social housing within the Chalk hill Estate.
- (2) To approve in principle to make Compulsory Purchase Orders of land interests within the Chalk hill Estate as identified on Plan 1 under Planning or Housing legislation to bring forward the development objectives, subject to a further specific resolution of Cabinet in respect of the making of each order.
- (3) To agree advancing the preliminary stages of the compulsory purchase process on the Chalk hill Estate, including, but not limited to, land referencing, issuing section 16 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 notices (section 16 notices), engaging, consulting and negotiating with landowners, and preparation of documentation and undertake all matters that the Council might need to undertake to inform a further report to Cabinet to make, confirm and implement the CPO, if required.
- (4) To approve in principle to appropriate, subject to planning, the land identified on Plan 1 under section 203 of the 2016 Housing and Planning Act, subject to a further specific resolution of Cabinet in respect of the making of each appropriation.
- (5) To approve in principle to make stopping up orders using planning or highways legislation for any land identified on Plan 1 and comprising public highway.
- (6) To note the potential for the delivery of new social housing illustrated by MTVH's current design proposals and that the current proposal will be subject to further consultation, design refinement and following that be subject of an application for planning permission to the Local Planning Authority.
- (7) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Resident Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Security to enter into an indemnity agreement with MTVH to indemnify the Council for all costs associated with the compulsory purchase process on Chalk hill Estate.

12. **Corporate Performance Report - Quarter 3 2023/24**

Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) introduced a report, which provided Cabinet with an overview of corporate performance in the third quarter of 2023-24.

In presenting the report, the Leader advised that the performance monitoring update provided a detailed assessment against the full suite of Key Performance Indicators developed to monitor delivery of the desired outcomes and corporate priorities within the new Borough Plan 2023-2027.

In noting the performance monitoring updates and commentary provided within the report, members also recognised the actions being undertaken to address current performance in relation to those targets rated as “red”, particularly in relation to corporate priority “The Best Start in Life” relating to youth inspections of Council and commissioned services. Members noted this work had involved a number of activities designed to influence and help shape service delivery focussed around the engagement of care leavers and support for the care leavers covenant and compact. Members also welcomed the performance identified in relation to level of engagement with Family Wellbeing Centres (FWC), which had exceeded target, and was felt to reflect the success in promotion of the FWC offer across Brent in reaching new families and supporting their access to a range of key services. Members also commended the performance achieved in relation to the provision of access for residents to Community Hubs and the percentage of enquiries being resolved at point of contact (84%) recognising the importance in this provision and with all staff supporting provision of both the FWC and Community Hubs thanked for their ongoing efforts in seeking to ensure those families and residents in need were able to access the range of support available.

In recognising the efforts being made to ensure the continued delivery of services and work being undertaken jointly by Cabinet Members with their relevant Corporate Directors, in seeking to manage and mitigate against the financial challenges and strategic risks identified as part of the overall wider approach towards supporting local residents and in support of the priorities within the Borough Plan Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the Borough Plan 2023-24 performance reporting for Q3 as set out in section 3 and Appendix A of the report.
- (2) To note the current and future strategic risks associated with the information provided and agree the remedial actions on strategic risks identified as appropriate alongside the challenge on progress being provided with responsible officers as necessary.

13. **Request for Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL) Allocation for Three Projects**

Councillor Tatler (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Growth) introduced a report seeking approval for use of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (SCIL) funding to support the delivery of three projects relating to Preston Community Library, the spine road within Northwick Park as part of the One Public Estate Development and a nursery development project at Grove Park Pavilion.

In considering the report, Cabinet noted the benefits identified in relation to the schemes at Preston Community Library and Grove Park Nursery given the impact they would have in the delivery of community facilities designed to enable local communities to lead on the development and management of activities within their area and in terms of the Northwick Park Spine Road as a key infrastructure project assisting to unlock growth in the area and also delivery additional community facilities and housing.

Members were also keen to recognise the positive impact being created through the use of SCIL as part of the wider programme of regeneration activity and its associated benefits for local communities across the borough with thanks expressed for the work being undertaken to deliver the ongoing programme of growth and regeneration across the borough given the benefits identified for both current and future residents.

In support of the wider benefits identified and ongoing commitment to create long lasting and positive change for local communities across the borough supported by the associated infrastructure Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the use of £600k of SCIL for the fit out of Preston Community Library.
- (2) To approve the use of up to £3m of SCIL for the completion of the spine road at Northwick Park as part of the One Public Estate development.
- (3) To approve the use of £500k of SCIL for the nursery development project at Grove Park Pavilion.

14. **Provision of Microsoft Licences - for STS partner borough of Southwark**

Councillor Tatler (in completing her cover as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform) introduced a report regarding the procurement of Microsoft Licences for the London Borough of Southwark as part a partner under the Shared Technology Service (STS) Agreement.

In considering the report Cabinet noted that under the STS Inter Authority Agreement Brent had been designated as the contracting authority for contracts procured for delivery of services to STS partners, which included Brent, Lewisham and Southwark. As a result, agreement was being sought for the procurement of a new contract for the provision of Microsoft Licences to Southwark following expiry of the current contract at the end of March 2024. Members noted that whilst the contract would be for the sole use of Southwark, it would also be expected to support the ongoing effective operation of the Shared Service as a whole.

Having noted the exempt information contained within the appendices of the report, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the award of a contract for the provision of Microsoft Licences for the London Borough of Southwark to Bytes Software Services Limited for a term of three years in the estimated sum of £6,306,449.63.

15. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

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

16. **Any other urgent business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 10.30 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair