



## LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

### MINUTES OF THE CABINET

Held as an online virtual meeting on Tuesday 12 January 2021 at 10.00 am

PRESENT (in remote attendance): Councillor Butt (Leader of the Council), Councillor McLennan (Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources) and Councillors Farah, Knight, Nerva, Mili Patel, Krupa Sheth, Southwood, Stephens and Tatler.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

None.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

None.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 7 December 2020 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

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

None.

5. **Petitions (if any)**

None.

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

None.

7. **Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2020-21**

Councillor McLennan, as Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, introduced the report providing an update on treasury activities for the first half of the financial year 2020/21. The report ensured that the Council was embracing best practice in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) including informing members of treasury activities on a twice-yearly basis.

Members noted the updated provided within section 3 of the report on the current economic background in relation to treasury management activity and the impact of the pandemic, along with the Council debt management activity in relation to both short and longer-term borrowing. In accordance with the Council's main Treasury Management objectives, new external borrowing had been kept to a minimum as

the Council considered it more cost-effective in the near term to use internal resources and borrow short-term loans to manage cash flow. Further borrowing would be required during 2020/21 to cover planned capital expenditure. Given the more favourable rates currently available, the Council would continue to borrow from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) but also recognised the need to maintain diversity in its funding sources and would therefore continue to evaluate and pursue lower cost solutions and opportunities as they arose.

In terms of investment activity, Members were informed that the Council had received a number of central government grants to cover activities related to the pandemic, some of which had been temporarily invested in highly secure deposits with the Government's UK Debt Management Account Deposit Facility before being disbursed by the end of September. The Council's current investment position had been detailed in section 3.26 of the report with investment balances at the end of September totalling £24.1m.

Having considered the update, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note the 2020/21 Mid-Year Treasury report and agree that it be forwarded on to Council in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code).

## 8. **Quarter 3 Financial Report 2020/21**

Councillor McLennan, as Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, introduced the report setting out the current forecast of income and expenditure versus the revenue budget for 2020/21 and other key financial data.

Members noted that total pressures for the year amounted to £36.9 million. This included significant additional Covid-19 related pressures identified for both the 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years. Whilst this position had been partially offset by the remaining tranches of emergency government grant funding, compensation for lost fees and service Covid-19 related underspends the current net overspend was currently projected at £8 million. This included the pressures identified in relation to Covid-19 as well as the General Fund and DSG. Members were advised that the figures in the report were more difficult to forecast than at any similar point in previous years due to uncertainty around the severity of the pandemic during the winter period. It was also noted that whilst the forecast had included updated and prudent projections following the announcement of the second national lockdown the position continued to remain unclear in relation to what was expected to follow this period.

Whilst noting the work being undertaken to address and mitigate the pressures identified, members remained keen to maintain pressure on the Government to ensure the necessary level of funding support was provided.

In supporting the recommendation contained in the report, members were mindful of the difficult and challenging nature of the Council's budget position but thanked officers and members for their hard work throughout the pandemic to ensure services had continued to operate effectively and to mitigate the ongoing financial impact of the pandemic.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet note the overall financial position as set out within the Q3 monitoring update and the actions being taken to manage the issues arising.

## 9. **Annual Complaint Report 2019/20**

Councillor McLennan, as Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, introduced the report on complaints performance at the Council for the period April 2019 to March 2020. The report focused on the nature of complaints and the learning that they provided to inform the Council's future approach to service improvement.

Members noted the introduction of a new CRM – Microsoft Dynamics complaints management system in November 2020 and the key headlines for complaints performance in 2019/20 as detailed within section 3.4 of the report. Whilst the number of Stage 1 complaints (corporate and statutory) had decreased there had been an increase in Stage 2 complaints (corporate and statutory) with the top three root causes of complaints relating to housing repairs, parking and council tax/recovery.

Members noted the remedial actions which had been established to address these issues alongside the specific work being undertaken within the Housing Management Service to implement new measures to improve complaints handling linked to the introduction of the new Housing Ombudsmen Code.

In response, Councillor Southwood, as Lead Member for Housing and Welfare, acknowledged the increase in Stage 2 complaints within Housing Management Services and assured members of the steps being taken to address the issues highlighted both in terms of service delivery as well as complaints handling. Members also recognised the progress made by the Council in seeking to offer fair and appropriate remedies, including the use of compensation where warranted.

Having considered the Annual Report, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the Council's performance in managing and receiving complaints.
- (2) To note the comments in the Council's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Code in Appendix D of the report.

## 10. **Emergency Accommodation for Homeless Households**

Councillor Southwood, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform, introduced a report outlining the approach to securing emergency temporary accommodation in Brent to house homeless households (families and single homeless people) and requesting approval to invite tenders in respect of securing this emergency temporary accommodation, as required by Contract Standing Orders 88 and 89.

Members noted the efforts made to support and accommodate homeless households and rough sleepers during the pandemic, including their move into more settled accommodation. There remained a number of single homeless people and families with children who were currently accommodated in emergency temporary accommodation, as appropriate and suitable accommodation was secured. The Council was therefore seeking to procure 200 self-contained rooms in Brent which would provide settled accommodation whilst supporting people to self-isolate and provide additional protection for people who might be particularly

vulnerable if exposed to Covid-19 through sharing facilities. The term of the contract would be 18 months, with a 12-month break clause, to coincide with the Council's own temporary emergency accommodation scheme becoming available at Knowles House.

Members were keen to recognised the efforts made to support homeless households during the current pandemic and Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) approve inviting tenders for 200 self-contained rooms, (with bathroom, toilet and kitchen facilities) in Brent, to use as emergency temporary accommodation for homeless households on the basis of the pre - tender considerations set out in paragraph 3.16 of the report.
- (2) approve officers evaluating the tenders referred to in (1) above on the basis of the evaluation criteria set out in paragraph 3.16 of the report.
- (3) delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Community Wellbeing in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform to award the contract for the provision of 200 self-contained rooms, in Brent to use as emergency temporary accommodation for homeless household for a term of 18 months (with a 12-month break clause).

#### 11. **Six Month Update on Supply of New Affordable Homes**

Councillor Southwood, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform, introduced a report providing a six-monthly update on progress being made towards delivery against the Council's housing target for building new affordable homes over the five-year period (2019-24).

Members welcomed and noted the current position in terms of delivery of the New Council Homes Programme (NCHP), as detailed in section 4.2 of the report, which included 231 new homes having been built and let, 610 currently on site and being built, 332 homes having been given planning consent and now going through procurement to identify a building contractor and 566 homes currently being assessed for feasibility. Members were also advised of the progress being made on the large scale developments set out in section 5 of the report including NAIL provision along with the progress on other development sites as detailed within section 6 of the report. As part of a collaboration arrangement with Network Homes, attention was also drawn to the approval being sought to seek tenders for development of a site in Church End, which would deliver 99 new homes and a new market consisting of 44 pitches as part of a mixed use development that would also provide a high quality pedestrianised through route.

Members fully supported the recommendations contained in the report, expressing their thanks to officers and contractors for their progress in co-ordinating efforts in order to deliver against the housing targets within the programme. Whilst recognising the ongoing challenges, members were encouraged to note that the Council was on track to deliver and potentially exceed the target to build at least 1,000 new council homes through its NCHP, which was felt to demonstrate the Council's commitment towards delivering housing and improving the quality of life for its residents.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cabinet:

- (1) Note the contents of the report and progress to date on delivering both the New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) and other programmes and projects in place to deliver 5,000 new affordable homes in the borough by 2024.
- (2) Note the proposals regarding the Church End development site scheduled to be brought forward as set out in paragraph 5.5 and 9.2-9.8 of the report.
- (3) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director, Community Wellbeing, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform, to agree pre-tender considerations, invite tenders, evaluate tenders and thereafter award development / construction contracts with developers / contractors in respect of the Church End site referred to in (2) above using the procurement approach set out within section 9.2 of the report.
- (4) For the reasons detailed in paragraph 14.17 of the report, to delegate authority to the Strategic Director, Community Wellbeing, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform, agree pre-tender considerations, invite tenders, evaluate tenders and thereafter to award development / construction contracts with developers / contractors in respect of any sites listed in Section 6 of the report, should these be classified as High Value Contracts.
- (5) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Regeneration & Environment in consultation with the Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning for the purposes of entering revised leases with the Brent Indian Community Centre and the West Indian Association, that would allow the Council to progress the next phase of both projects.

## 12. **Northwick Park, One Public Estate – CIL Allocation**

Councillor Tatler, Lead Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning, introduced a report seeking approval to delegate authority for the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to enable the construction of a new spine road for the Northwick Park One Public Estate (OPE) development.

Members noted that the regeneration of the adjacent landholdings at Northwick Park was a joint venture with London Northwest NHS Health Authority (LNWNHS), University of Westminster and Network Homes Ltd which expected to see over 1,600 homes built. Construction of the spine road was an important enabling work for the wider regeneration project. In recognising the benefits arising from the scheme, members were advised that the £10 million CIL contribution being sought was to ensure timely progression of the road design, procurement and delivery in order to cash flow it through to completion. The CIL would then be replenished by the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) grant during the project programme period with the overall financial impact therefore expected to be net neutral.

Members supported the recommendation contained in the report and thanked officers and developers for their work on the project so far. It was noted that the spine road construction was a vital step in enabling the wider OPE development.

In considering the recommendation, Cabinet noted the information provided within the exempt appendices accompanying the report.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cabinet delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Regeneration & Environment in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment, the Lead Member for Planning, Property and Regeneration and the Director of Finance to allocate £10m of Community Infrastructure Levy funding to allow the construction of the new One Public Estate Spine/Access road at Northwick Park.

13. **Authority to Tender for the Design & Build Contract at 1 Morland Gardens, Stonebridge**

Councillor Tatler, Lead Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning, introduced a report seeking approval to invite tenders for the design and build of the redevelopment at 1 Morland Gardens, Stonebridge in order to deliver a new education centre, council homes, affordable workspace, a public facing café and public realm improvements.

Members noted that the report requested approval to invite tenders by way of a mini competition under the Notting Hill Genesis Contractor Framework and to approve the pre-tender considerations as required by Contract Standing Orders 88 and 89.

Members fully supported the recommendations contained in the report and acknowledged the efforts undertaken by officers to progress the redevelopment scheme to this stage given the local support and positive benefits arising including the important and welcomed provision of the new Adult Education Centre.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cabinet:

- (1) Approve the inviting of tenders via a mini-competition under the Notting Hill Genesis Contractor Framework agreement for a contractor on the basis of the pre-tender considerations set out in paragraph 3.5 of the report.
- (2) Approve delegating authority to award the contract for the Morland Gardens Redevelopment Design and Build Contract following the successful outcome of the tender exercise to the Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Regeneration, Property and Planning and Schools, Employment and Skills.
- (3) Should the procurement exercise described in paragraph 3.5 of the report not elicit sufficient bids in order for officers to propose the awarding of the contract, delegate authority to approve inviting tenders using an alternative procurement method and any resultant pre-tender considerations to the Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Regeneration, Property and Planning and Schools, Employment and Skills.

14. **Brent Council's School Admission Arrangements for Community Primary Schools 2022/23**

Councillor Stephens, Lead Member for Schools, Employment and Skills, introduced the report seeking approval for the admission arrangements for Brent community schools for 2022/23 in accordance with statutory requirements.

Members noted that there had been no changes to the admission arrangements since those determined by Cabinet in January 2020 for the academic year 2021/22.

In supporting the recommendations contained in the report, members took the opportunity to thank all schools and their staff across the borough for their hard work, dedication and commitment in responding to the challenges posed by the pandemic

It was **RESOLVED** that Cabinet:

- (1) Approve the proposed admission arrangements for Brent community schools, as detailed within Appendix 2 of the report.
- (2) Note the scheme of co-ordination for maintained schools in Brent for the 2022/2023 academic year, as detailed within Appendix 3 of the report.
- (3) Note the thanks expressed for the hard work, dedication and commitment of all school staff in responding to the pandemic and in terms of delivering the response to the current and previous lockdowns and restrictions.

## 15. **Establishing an Onside Youth Zone**

Councillor Mili Patel, Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care, introduced a report on the development of an Onside Youth Zone (OYZ) in the borough. The report was set within the context of a proposed bid to the Department of Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) Youth Investment Fund (YIF) by OYZ that, if successful, would part fund the capital costs of building an OYZ in the borough. The report therefore sought permission to continue work to secure the bid and enable the establishment of an OYZ.

Members noted the positive offer tailored to individual boroughs provided through OYZs, as detailed within section 3 and Appendix 1 of the report. Several OYZs were already in operation across London that were hugely successful and inspired young people to raise their aspirations and lead healthier and more positive lives.

Members welcomed and supported the proposals and thanked officers for their efforts in moving the project forward in spite of the challenges posed by the pandemic. Alongside the proposal within the report, members also welcomed and thanked officers for their efforts in delivering the Roundwood Alternative Free School, which had now opened with a wraparound youth offer.

Councillor Knight, as Lead Member for Community Safety and Engagement, welcomed the consideration of the York House site in Wembley as the most viable option identified within the report for the establishment of an OYZ, given its proximity to youth offending hotspots.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cabinet:

- (1) Confirms its agreement to the proposed financial solution to enable the establishment of an OYZ in the borough, as set out in section 5.4 of the report.
- (2) On the basis of the above, give permission for officers to progress with a YIF bid, via Onside Youth Zones, setting out the Local Authority's agreement in principle to the establishment of an OYZ, subject to finding a suitable site in the borough.

16. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

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

17. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting ended at 10.52 am.

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT  
Chair