



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 7 March 2022 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor McLennan (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Farah, Knight, Nerva, Krupa Sheth, Stephens, Southwood and Tatler.

Also present: Martin Smith (Chair of i4B Holding Ltd and First Wave Housing Ltd Boards) for Agenda Items 8 and 9.

1. Apologies for Absence

None received.

2. Declarations of Interest

Peter Gadsdon and Gail Tolley declared personal interests in relation to Agenda Item 8 (i4B Business Plan 2022-23) and Agenda Item 9 (First Wave Housing Business Plan 2022-23) as Council appointed Directors on the Boards of both i4B & First Wave Housing Ltd.

There were no other declarations of interest made at the meeting.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 7 February 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 Scrutiny submitted for consideration at the meeting.

7. Approval to Establish a New Special School at Secondary Level

Councillor Stephens (Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills) introduced a report outlining the process and seeking approval to proceed with the establishment of an additional Special School within the borough at secondary level

as part of the refreshed 2019-23 School Place Planning Strategy and Capital Investment Programme for School Place Sufficiency for Children and Young People with Special Education Needs (SEND).

In considering the report Cabinet noted the growing demand for school places that met the needs of children and young people with SEND, as identified within the refresh of the School Place Planning Strategy and new SEND Strategy (2021-25). In order to meet the increasing levels of need and also address the resulting pressures on the High Needs Block of the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) a range of options had been approved by Cabinet on 17 January 2022 which had included the potential build of a new SEND school in the borough. Members commended the work of those officers involved in the subsequent development of proposals for the new school which, subject to the outcome of the Department for Education (DfE) presumption process, it was intended to open in September 2024 providing up to 150 specialist places.

Members noted the indicative timeline for the presumption process and initial contact with the Regional Schools Commissioner (acting on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education) who it was reported had not, at this stage, raised any issues in relation to the proposals.

Having expressed support for the approach and proposals identified within the report Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the establishment of a Special School at secondary level on the site known as London Road.
- (2) To approve use of the DfE (Free School) Presumption process to establish the school, as set out in paragraph 3.7 of the report, noting that the final decision on the selected provider will be taken by the Secretary of State for Education.
- (3) To delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People, in consultation with the Statutory Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care and the Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills to ratify the full business case and to identify and thereafter recommend to the Secretary of State for Education the Local Authority's preferred provider.

8. **i4B Business Plan 2022-23**

Prior to consideration of the main report Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) invited Martin Smith (as Chair of the i4B Holdings Ltd Board) to introduce the key themes in relation to the current performance, strategic priorities and Development Strategy of i4B as detailed within the company Business Plan presented for consideration. In commenting on the Business Plan, Martin Smith provided a brief overview of i4B's operational performance highlighting the ongoing work to address the main issues identified in relation to voids and rent collection, along with the progress made against the objectives within the 2021-22 Business Plan and key strategic priorities for 2022/23. It was noted these remained focussed around increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough; running a viable business; delivering safe and sustainable homes; and providing a consistently good

housing service. Cabinet were advised that the delivery of these objectives remained on track with the Business Plan also having identified i4B now moving into surplus.

In addition, members were advised of the Development Strategy for i4B which had been prepared to support the company's ongoing growth ambitions in relation to increasing the supply of affordable housing and in support of the Council's wider Housing Strategy. Whilst continuing the programme of street property purchases the Development Strategy would also focus on the feasibility of setting up a new purchasing stream for adapted accommodation as well as larger family sized properties and new build market opportunities in different areas of the borough.

Having noted the introductory comments from Martin Smith, Councillor McLennan (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources, Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care) then introduced the report presenting, for approval on behalf of the Shareholder, the i4B Holdings Ltd 2022-23 Business Plan. In considering the report Cabinet expressed support for the contribution being made by i4B towards addressing housing need across the borough through the supply of safe, secure and sustainable affordable housing and for the focus within their ongoing Development Strategy in supporting delivery of the Council's wider Housing Strategy.

Having noted that the current performance, strategic priorities and Development Strategy along with the exempt information contained within the appendices of the report, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the i4B 2022/23 Business Plan.
- (2) To approve the content and proposed strategic priorities of the i4B 2022/23 Business Plan.
- (3) To approve the updated financial model contained within the 2022/23 Business Plan.
- (4) To approve the Housing Companies' Development Strategy.

9. **First Wave Housing Business Plan 2022-23**

Prior to consideration of the main report Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) invited Martin Smith (as Chair of the First Wave Housing (FWH) Ltd Board) to introduce the key themes in relation to the current performance, strategic priorities and Development Strategy of FWH as detailed within the company Business Plan which had been presented for consideration. In commenting on the Business Plan, Martin Smith provided a brief overview of FWH's operational performance along with the progress made against the objectives within their 2021-22 Business Plan and key strategic priorities for 2022/23 which, as for i4B, remained focussed around delivering safe and sustainable homes; increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough; running a viable business; and providing a consistently good housing service. Cabinet were advised that the Business Plan also included detailed on the proposals being developed to progress decarbonisation work across the stock owned by FWH and had also been adjusted to reflect the transfer of the Granville New Homes Blocks to the Housing Revenue

Account (HRA) and i4B. In addition, members were advised that the focus of the Development Strategy referred to as part of the presentation of the i4B Business Plan would also apply in relation to FWH Ltd.

Having noted the introductory comments from Martin Smith, Councillor McLennan (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources, Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care) then introduced the report presenting, for approval on behalf of the Guarantor, the FWH Ltd 2022-23 Business Plan. In considering the report Cabinet again highlighted their support for the contribution being made by FWH towards delivery of the Council's Housing Strategy through the supply of safe, secure and sustainable affordable housing.

Having noted that the current performance, strategic priorities and Development Strategy along with the exempt information contained within the appendices of the report, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the FWH 2022/23 Business Plan.
- (2) To approve the content and proposed strategic priorities of the FWH 2022/23 Business Plan.
- (3) To approve the updated financial model contained within the 2022/23 Business Plan.
- (4) To approve the Housing Companies' Development Strategy.

10. **Annual Complaints Report 2020-21**

Councillor McLennan (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care) introduced a report setting out complaints performance by Brent Council for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The report included details on complaints performance relating to Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care which it was noted were governed by separate statutory complaint procedures.

In considering the report Cabinet noted the impact on the volume and complexity of complaints as a result of the pandemic along with the work being undertaken with those services identified as receiving the highest number of complaints, including housing repairs, housing customer experience and neighbourhood management, to review the complaints handling process and address the root causes of the complaints being received.

In thanking officers for their efforts in monitoring and managing complaints performance, members welcomed the report as a means of focussing on the nature of complaints received and learning provided to inform the ongoing approach to service improvement for residents.

Having considered the report Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note Brent's performance in managing and resolving complaints as set out in the 2020-21 Complaints Annual Report.

11. **Brent Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2026**

Councillor McLennan (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care) introduced a report presenting the draft Brent Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2026 for approval.

In considering the report Cabinet noted that the 2022-26 Strategy had been developed to build on the original strategy introduced in 2019 with the aim of significantly fortifying the Council's systems and services against cyber-attack based on shared learning and the key principles within the Government's Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2030 and Cyber Assessment Framework. Members were advised that Brent's Strategy had been aligned with the Shared Technology Service (STS) Cyber Security Strategy and Technology Roadmap, with its delivery supported by a Cyber Security Implementation Plan designed to comply with the principles of the Government's Cyber Essentials scheme, for which the Council had achieved accreditation in February 2022.

In noting the importance of the Strategy, members were advised of the range of activity undertaken in order to secure and safeguard the Council's systems from attack and embed appropriate and proportionate security by design.

Having considered the report and noted the key strategic corporate risk identified in relation to cyber-attack, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the Brent Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2026 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

12. **Energy Rebate - Non-Discretionary and Discretionary Scheme**

Councillor Southwood (Cabinet Member for Housing & Welfare Reform) introduced a report which, following the Government's announcement in February 2022 regarding an Energy Bill rebate payment for most properties in Council Tax Bands A to D, provided information on the operation of the non-discretionary scheme. In addition Cabinet was advised that provision had also been made for the creation of a discretionary scheme to support properties in Council Tax Bands E to H. Following additional guidance received from the Government, the report was also therefore seeking approval to the establishment of a discretionary scheme.

Cabinet noted the details provided in relation to the operation, eligibility criteria and promotion of the non-discretionary scheme along with the amendment which had been agreed by Full Council on 24 February to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in order to disregard energy rebate income.

In terms of the discretionary scheme, members were supportive of the proposed key focus, in terms of the criteria set out in section 3.18 of the report, on those households within property Bands E to H who were in receipt of Council Tax Support, other income related state benefits (but not Council Tax Support) or had applied for welfare support from the Council where fuel poverty had been identified. Members also noted the plans to promote and publicise the discretionary scheme.

In supporting the proposals outlined in the report, Cabinet were keen to recognise the efforts of all those involved in establishing both schemes so rapidly and therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the Energy Rebate Discretionary Scheme as set out in paragraphs 3.17 to 3.20 of the report, which includes the arrangements for residents who live in a dwelling in Council Tax bands E, F, G and H in the borough of Brent.
- (2) To note that the Energy Rebate non-discretionary scheme would be administered in accordance with government guidance issued in February 2022.
- (3) To note the restrictions of the Energy Rebate Discretionary Scheme regarding payments and unspent funding as set out in paragraph 3.21 of the report.
- (4) To delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform, to make changes that may be required to the discretionary scheme, following a review of the discretionary scheme scheduled to immediately follow phase 2 of the said scheme, as described in paragraph 3.16 (ii) of the report.

13. Covid Additional Restrictions Fund 2022 – Rate Relief Scheme

Councillor McLennan (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources, Children’s Safeguarding, Early Help & Social Care) introduced a report outlining proposals for establishing a discretionary Covid Additional Restrictions Fund 2022 Rate Relief Scheme that would run until the end of September 2022.

In considering the report Cabinet noted that the scheme followed the Government’s announcement regarding establishment of a new Covid Additional Relief Fund on which additional guidance had now been received. The fund had been established to support those businesses affected by the pandemic but who had be ineligible (to date) for support linked to business rates for which local authorities was required to establish a discretionary scheme in order to administer support. In relation to the scheme criteria, members were advised that the businesses being targeted in Brent would include those not previously eligible for Covid related rate relief but still identified as being affected by the pandemic within the manufacturing sector (including factories, workshops, warehouses and food processing centres), information and communication sector (including recording and rehearsal studios) along with non retail stores and distribution depots.

In expressing their support for the scheme Cabinet highlighted its positive contribution in relation to the ongoing support being provided for local businesses as part of the recovery programme from the pandemic and therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the Covid Additional Restrictions Fund – Rate Relief Scheme as outlined in paragraphs 3.7 to 3.16 and Appendix 1 of the report pursuant to the Council’s powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 as amended.
- (2) To delegate authority to the Director of Finance and Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services to implement the scheme as detailed in

Appendix 1 and in accordance with the government's guidance in Appendix 2 of the report.

14. **Authority to enter into a Partnership and Funding Agreement to expand the Brent Electric Vehicle Charging Point (EVCP) Network and to appointment a Charging Point Operator to install and maintain the EVCPs on behalf of Brent**

Councillor Tatler (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning) introduced a report providing an update on the work to expand electric vehicle charging provision in Brent and seeking approval for the Council to enter into a partnership and funding agreement to further expand the charge point network in the borough as well as to the procurement process for the supplying, fitting and maintenance of vehicle electric charging points.

In considering the report Cabinet noted the increase in use and purchase of electric vehicles which had resulted in the need to expand the number of charge points and supporting infrastructure across the borough particularly for those without access to private off-street parking and employed in the taxi and private hire trade. This had resulted in the Council (along with three other London Boroughs) being approached by Uber to enter into a partnership and funding agreement to support the installation of approx. 300 new on street charging points at around 140 locations across the borough, with an outline of the full proposal included within sections 4 – 8 of the report.

In expressing their support for the proposals Members highlighted the positive impact they would have in further assisting to promote cleaner, greener and more sustainable travel options across the borough and in facilitating the welcome increase in use of zero/low-emission vehicles.

Having considered the report along with the information contained in the exempt appendix, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve Brent Council entering into an Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) with Uber to receive grant funding for the procurement, installation, operation and maintenance of additional on-street electric vehicle charging points in various locations within Brent.
- (2) To approve inviting tenders for the supply, installation, operation and maintenance of charge points on the basis of the pre-tender considerations set out in paragraph 8.2 of the report and as required by Contract Standing Orders 88 and 89.
- (3) To delegate authority to the Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning, to award a contract(s) to the successful bidder(s) of the project to provide on-street electric vehicle charge points in residential locations for the term of ten years, as specified in the IFA.

15. **Purchase of Site known as 381-397 Edgware Road, Colindale, NW9**

Councillor Southwood (Cabinet Member for Housing & Welfare Reform) introduced a report seeking permission to purchase the freehold of the site known as 381 – 397 Edgware Road, Colindale, NW9.

In considering the report Cabinet noted the benefits associated with the proposed purchase of the site in terms of it having already secured planning permission and in maximising the opportunity to convert the tenure of the 110 units available to 100% affordable Temporary Accommodated rented as a means of supporting the Council's wider approach towards reducing the reliance on Temporary Accommodation. Members noted that the size breakdown of available units had been confirmed to meet the requirements of existing short and medium term temporary accommodation needs but that the purchase would, subject to approval of the offer outlined within the report, be dependent on acceptance following ongoing negotiations with the developer.

In recognising and commending the ongoing cumulative impact of the work being undertaken to reduce the reliance on use of Temporary Accommodation for those families in housing need, Cabinet **RESOLVED** having noted the contents of the report and exempt information contained within the appendix:

- (1) To approve the proposed acquisition of the freehold interest of the site for purchase price set out in the (exempt) appendix of the report, subject to contract and subject to a) clean and marketable title b) financial and legal due diligence and c) vacant possession, with a target exchange of contract in June 2022.
- (2) To delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Regeneration & Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning to negotiate and agree the terms and thereafter enter into a contract with the seller for the purchase of the site.
- (3) To approve the engagement of section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 (2016 Act) in order to override third party rights and to delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Regeneration & Environment to consult and enter into agreements and if required to pay compensation to third parties whose rights may be affected by the engagement of the 2016 Act

16. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press and public at the meeting.

17. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting ended at 10.35am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair