



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 20 June 2022 at 10.00 am

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

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Knight (Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness & Renters Security).

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 30 May 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. **Order of Business**

Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) advised of a change to the order of business with Agenda Item 7 (Senior Management Reorganisation) to be taken as the final item for consideration. The minutes reflect the order in which the items were considered at the meeting.

8. **Brent Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-22 Progress Update, new 2022-24 Delivery Plan & Carbon Offset Fund (CO2GO) Allocations**

Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action) introduced a report providing an overview of progress made in delivery of

the Climate and Ecological Emergency programme during 2021-22 along with an outline of the proposed new 2022-24 Strategy Delivery Plan. In addition, members were advised that the report was seeking approval to the allocation of grants from the Council's Carbon Offset Fund as part of the C02GO Participatory Budgeting process.

In considering the report, Cabinet noted that following adoption of the Climate and Emergency Strategy in April 2021 the Council had committed to a programme of refreshed yearly delivery plans designed to provide a range of focussed and costed actions that contributed towards Brent's aim of becoming a carbon neutral borough by 2030. As part of the 2021-22 Delivery Plan 23 actions had been listed focussed around the following 5 key themes on which a full summary of progress had been detailed within Appendix F of the report:

- Consumption, resources & waste;
- Sustainable Travel;
- Homes, Buildings and the Built Environment;
- Nature & green space;
- Supporting communities.

Whilst recognising the progress achieved to date, Councillor Krupa Sheth also highlighted the need for continued action in order to achieve greater focus, pace, visibility and impact in tackling the climate emergency. This had resulted in a number of new areas of focus being identified within the 2022-24 Delivery Plan, which it was noted had included:

- A place based approach - piloting up to three sustainable neighbourhoods; ensuring a focus on as green as possible development of the St Raphael's estate; and review of the Brent Local Plan Growth Areas to ensure that sustainability opportunities were maximised;
- Community wealth building through climate action that supported local economic growth and helped to reduce the cost of business;
- Supporting households with the rising cost of living through specific climate action;

Members were advised that the Plan also included a range of actions linked to the above areas of focus, designed to support co-benefits in relation to climate action including cleaner air, greener spaces, warmer homes, healthier travel and a low carbon circular economy whilst also reinforcing other key strategic aims within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Youth Strategy and Black Community Action Plan.

In noting and welcoming the ambitious nature of the programme, members also commended the approach developed in relation to delivery of the participatory budgeting initiative in terms of the Carbon Offset Fund and level of community engagement in the process and thanked officers involved for their ongoing support and efforts.

Having considered the report Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To agree the new 2022-2024 Delivery Plan for the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy attached as Appendix A to the report.

- (2) To approve the pilot of a place-based Sustainable Neighbourhood approach in the areas set out in Appendices B, C, and D of the report and for officers to begin a phased engagement and co-production process with communities in the selected areas.
- (3) To approve the criteria set by the Resident Planning Group (as outlined in section 8 of the report) for the current phase of the Brent Carbon Offset Fund (CO₂GO).
- (4) To approve the proposed allocations for funding in Pot 1 and Pot 2 of the Brent Carbon Offset Fund as set out in Appendix E of the report, ratifying the public vote made on applications during the 'You Decide' Participatory Budgeting Decision Day on 29 January 2022.
- (5) To delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive to award and make grants from the Brent Carbon Offset Fund up to the value of £100k (in line with the powers provided to the Assistant Chief Executive for award of grants at this level for the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy).
- (6) To note the progress made in the year one (2021-2022) Delivery Plan as detailed within Appendix F of the report.

9. Purchase of Housing Units at the Fulton Road Development

Councillor Mili Patel (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform) introduced a report seeking permission to negotiate and thereafter purchase a mix of affordable housing units in Blocks D & E and market units in Block A forming part of a development at Euro House, Fulton Road, Wembley.

In considering the report, Cabinet noted the outlined provided in relation to the site and negotiations between the Council and developer in seeking a buyer for the affordable housing units included within the development. As a result authority was being sought to formally progress the initial negotiations undertaken in order to secure a mix of social and market units that could be delivered to ensure a financially viable scheme. On the basis of negotiations undertaken to date, members were advised that the Council were aiming for a target mix that replaced all intermediate units with the most affordable social rented units. This would involve an uplift in the number of affordable units to be provided by the development from 218 to 252, with the breakdown of proposed tenure mix also redesigned to increase the number of larger 3 bed units to help support current levels of housing demand.

In welcoming the proposal, Cabinet were keen to highlight support for the potential increase in delivery of affordable housing units based on a more optimal unit mix designed to reflect the Council's ongoing commitment towards addressing local housing need.

In recognising that the terms of any scheme were subject to the outcome of final negotiations which would need to reflect current market conditions, Cabinet **RESOLVED**, having noted the exempt information contained within the appendix to the report, to delegate authority to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance Resources and Reform and the Operational Director

of Property and Assets to negotiate a unit mix of social and market units that deliver a financially viable scheme and the terms and thereafter enter into an underlease for up to 60 years (to be made between L.B. Brent and Asset SPV) in respect of the affordable homes and market units within the Fulton Road Development subject to:

- (a) clean and marketable title;
- (b) financial and legal due diligence;
- (c) all commercial terms having been agreed between the parties; and
- (d) vacant possession, with a target completion date as soon as possible after the grant of the long lease of 999 years (the headlease).

10. **CCTV Cameras for Brent Active Travel Programme - School Streets**

Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action) introduced a report detailing proposals for a CCTV camera enforcement protocol to support the Brent Active Travel programme along with associated exemptions.

Prior to consideration of the report, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) advised of a request to speak on the item by a member of the public, which had been received at the start of the meeting. Given the late notice received he advised it had not been possible to accept the request at the meeting.

In introducing the report, Councillor Krupa Sheth highlighted the importance of the School Streets programme as part of the approach being developed within Brent to encourage more sustainable and healthy modes of travel, lifestyles and towards reducing air pollution, tackling congestion and improving road safety as part of the longer term climate and health objectives for the borough. Members noted the benefits outlined in terms of the proposed use of CCTV cameras as a means of enforcing the active travel and schools streets programme along with the priority list of locations, as detailed in Appendix B of the report, assessed against the criteria outlined within section 4.4 of the report.

In addition, details were provided on the proposed exemption policy in relation to CCTV enforcement schemes (as detailed within Appendix A of the report) which members noted had been subject to benchmarking with other London Boroughs. Subject to approval, the CCTV enforcement protocol and implementation would be supported by a full communications plan focussed around schools, parents/carers and drivers.

Cabinet welcomed the proposals and approach outlined within the report along with the level of engagement by schools in support of the programme and importance of the school street initiative as a means of encouraging a change in behaviour designed to support of more active modes of travel. Having noted the financial implications and business case outlined in support of the provision of CCTV, members highlighted the ongoing commitment this was felt to demonstrate towards the longer term benefits of the initiative in terms of health, climate action and road safety.

Cabinet therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the outcome of the exemptions review and approve the officer recommendations in respect of exemptions for school streets enforcement contained within Appendix A of the report.
- (2) To note and approve the suggested approach to identify priority CCTV locations for school street schemes and CCTV camera enforcement protocol for implementation.

11. **Brent Bike Hangars**

Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member of Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action) introduced a report seeking approval to tender for the purchase and management of future bike hangars along with the transfer of management and maintenance of current bike hangars.

In presenting the report, Cabinet were advised that the procurement approach identified had been designed to reduce or remove subsidising costs as well as reducing and standardising annual costs for future and existing bike hangars and users, which as a result was expected to help promote usage as well as cycling across the borough.

In supporting the approach outlined, Cabinet noted the progress being made in promoting sustainable travel alongside the efforts to encourage and promote cycling given the associated environmental and health and well benefits identified, which the provision of appropriate and secure cycle parking (such as bike hangars) would support.

In view of the benefits and level of additional demand identified (as detailed in Appendix A of the report) along with efforts to broaden provision across the borough, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the content of the report and the current bike hangar provision in the borough and the S106 funding that was currently available to provide additional hangars.
- (2) To note the continued delivery of the bike hangar programme under the Waltham Forest Framework, with a negotiated reduction in rental charges.
- (3) To approve the tendering for a contract to purchase further bike hangars and the management and maintenance of all the boroughs bike hangars, for a period of 3 years with an option to extend for 2 years.

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

Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) introduced a report seeking approval to invite a tender using a direct award procedure under the Network Homes Contractor Framework for the design and build contract in relation to the redevelopment at 1 Morland Gardens.

In considering the report, Cabinet were reminded that the scheme had been designed to provide a new education centre, council homes, affordable workspace as well as a café and public realm improvements. The report outlined a change which had needed to be made to the procurement arrangements following a “call-in” of the original contract award decision, which had resulted in the original Framework agreement expiring. Members noted that the call-in had been considered by Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on 9 June 2022 who had agreed to confirm the decision relating to the award of contract.

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

- (1) To approve the inviting of a tender using a direct award process under the Network Homes Contractor Framework agreement on the basis of the pre-tender considerations set out in paragraph 3.6 of the report.
- (2) To delegate 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 Member for Finance, Resources & Reform.

13. **Cost of Living Crisis and the Brent Resident Support Fund**

Councillor Southwood (Cabinet Member for Jobs, Economy & Citizens Experience) introduced a report providing an update on actions being taken by the Council to respond and mitigate against the impact of the cost of living crisis on Brent residents and businesses. The report also outlined a number of planned future activities to support residents and monitor the ongoing impact of the crisis across the borough as well as seeking additional funding for the Brent Resident Support Fund in response to the increase in demand for financial support being experienced.

In considering the report, Cabinet noted the background to the current cost of living crisis and negative impact this was having in relation to local residents standards of living across the borough, with Brent still having one of the highest claimant unemployment rates nationally. Members commended the mechanisms already established by the Council to support those residents struggling financially as a result of the crisis, as detailed within section 3.4 of the report, which had included making funding available through the Resident Support Fund, delivery of a number of Financial and Digital Inclusion projects, employment skills support and use of the Brent Hubs utilising not only funding provided through the Government but also direct financial support by the Council. Whilst supporting residents in hardship the initiatives and interventions outlined had also been designed to complement key elements of key council strategies and plans including the Poverty Commission, Health and Wellbeing Strategy (linked to tackling health inequalities), Black Community Action Plan, Borough Plan and Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy.

Whilst recognising the additional package of cost of living support announced by the Government in May 2022 members highlighted the extent of the crisis and ongoing hardship faced by residents across the borough. Given the ongoing pressures identified in relation to household income, expenditure and utility bills and

resulting increase in projected demand for financial support, support was expressed for the proposed allocation of additional funding to the Council's Resident Support Fund (with members also having noted the breakdown of applications and grant funding awarded to date across all areas of the borough by ward).

Alongside the package of support already identified, members recognised the need to ensure a whole systems and outcome based approach towards addressing the cost of living crisis across the council and partner organisations, which had resulted in the proposals detailed within section 6 of the report to undertake an Outcome Based Review. The aim of the approach identified would to shift focus from individual services on to a model that was designed (based on a wide range of engagement and learning) to create a more cohesive system and overarching framework for support across Brent.

In light of the increasing levels of hardship and need identified, Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To note the proposed approach to implementing the Cost of Living Outcome Based Review (OBR) as outlined in section 5 of the report and the emerging Framework as outlined in section 6 of the report.
- (2) To approve the allocation of an addition £3 million of Council funds for this financial year (2022/23) to the Resident Support Fund for the reasons outlined in section 4 of the report, and agree to discussions to allocate additional funds in future financial years (2023/24, 2024/25).
- (3) To delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Economy and Citizen Experience to amend the eligibility criteria for the Brent Resident Support Fund throughout the lifetime of the scheme as required.

14. **National Non-Domestic Rates - Policy Review and Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief**

Councillor Southwood (Cabinet member for Jobs, Economy and Citizen Experience) introduced a report seeking approval to a proposed revision of the policy relating to the award of discretionary rate relief in respect of National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) liability along with a policy statement and application relating to hardship relief for charities and non-profitmaking bodies regarding NNDR liability.

In considering the report Cabinet endorsed the review of existing policy regarding discretionary relief for NNDR liability along with development of the accompanying policy statement setting out the approach towards the provision of hardship relief along with details of the application(s) for relief received since the last report in June 2021.

Having considered the report Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To approve the revised discretionary rate relief policy in respect of national non-domestic rate liability as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

- (2) To approve the application for discretionary rate relief in respect of national non-domestic rate liability as set out and detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.
- (3) To approve the Council's policy relating to hardship relief in respect of national non-domestic rate liability as set out in paragraph 3.6 of the report and in compliance with section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.
- (4) To delegate authority to make decisions in respect of future applications for discretionary rate relief in relation to non-domestic rate liability in accordance with the revised Discretionary Rate Relief Policy and criteria to the Head of Revenue and Debt in consultation with the Director of Finance and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Economy & Citizen Experience.
- (5) To delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services in consultation with the Director of Finance and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Economy & Citizen Experience to make decisions relating to applications for hardship relief in respect of national non-domestic rates for awards up to £100,000 per annum
- (6) To authorise the submission of a report to Cabinet on an annual basis after the end of each financial year providing details of the awards of discretionary rate relief and the details of the awards of hardship relief in respect of national non-domestic rates for awards up to £100,000 per annum that have been granted.

15. **Uncollectable Debt Write-Off**

Councillor Southwood (Cabinet member for Jobs, Economy and Citizen Experience) introduced a report which, in accordance with Financial Regulations, detailed those debts above £20,000 which had been written-off as unrecoverable by the Director of Finance.

In considering the report Cabinet noted the recovery action taken prior to any debt being considered for write-off which also complied with the Council's Ethical Debt Recovery Policy and Write Off procedure.

In noting the debt identified had related to Adult Social Care client contributions, Housing Benefits and Business Rates, Cabinet **RESOLVED** having noted the exempt information contained within Appendix 2 of the report relating to the individual debt write-offs:

- (1) To note the debt-written off as described within the report.
- (2) To note a total of write-off of £414,823.82 of debt as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

16. **Authority to Award Watling Gardens Design and Build Contract**

As Councillor Knight (Cabinet member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Security) had given her apologies for the meeting, Councillor Muhammed Butt (as Leader of the Council) introduced a report seeking approval to the award of a

design and build contract for Watling Gardens, following additional tenure changes which had been made to ensure the viability of the development scheme.

In considering the report Cabinet noted the update provided in relation to delivery of the development scheme, which formed part of the New Council Homes Programme. As a result of an increase in construction costs members were advised there had been a need to review the proposed tenure mix within the development as a means of ensuring the schemes ongoing viability. This had resulted in the proposed conversion of 19 x 1 bedroom homes and 5 x 2 bedroom homes from London Affordable Rent to Shared Ownership. Cabinet noted the options appraisal, detailed within section 3.5 of the report, undertaken as the basis for returning the scheme to viability along with the update provided at the meeting that the proposed change in tenure would also be subject to the necessary approval by the Local Planning Authority.

Having noted:

- the confirmation provided at the meeting that the total number of homes to be converted to Shared Ownership under the proposal was 24;
- the exempt information contained within appendices 1, 2 and 3 of the report in support of the proposed recommendations; and
- waiver of call-in obtained relating to the decision on the grounds of urgency;

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve (as amended at the meeting):

- (1) The tenure changes of 24 homes (19 x 1 bedroom homes and 5 x 2 bedroom) from London Affordable Rent to Shared Ownership, subject to the approval of the Local Planning Authority.
- (2) To approve the award of the design and build contract for Watling Gardens to Hill Partnerships Ltd in the sum of £38,535,634, conditional on the approval of the Local Planning Authority to tenure changes and subject to such additional sums to reflect the tenure changes and Planning consent amendment referred to under (1) above, to a limit of £480,000.00 allowed for in the total scheme costs as detailed within Appendix 1 (classified as containing exempt information) of the report.

17. Senior Management Reorganisation

Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) introduced a report which outlined proposals for a senior management reorganisation across the Council.

Prior to considering the item all members of the Council Management Team withdrew from the meeting given the nature of the proposals being considered and their impact on the senior management structure, with the Chief Executive and Head of Human Resources remaining in order to provide the necessary advice in relation to any comments raised.

In considering the proposals Cabinet noted the context and rationale behind the review, which had been designed to reflect not only the financial pressure in relation to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-27 but also the progress being made in delivery of the Council's wider transformation programme including work on digital services, community engagement and customer service. The

proposed changes would result in the deletion of four Strategic Director posts along with the posts of Assistant Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Director of Legal, HR, Audit & Investigations and their replacement by six Corporate Director posts who together with the Chief Executive would form the Council's management Team. This would involve a net reduction of one CMT post, with the proposed structure detailed within Appendix 2 of the report. Members were advised that formal consultation on the proposed structure was due to end on 20 June 2022.

Cabinet recognised and supported the rationale outlined in relation to the proposed new structure and in seeking to link:

- universal customer facing services;
- community engagement in terms of driving regeneration, planning, skills and employment work as part of levelling up and promoting equality;

At the same time, however, it was also noted that the extent of changes identified represented a pragmatic approach reflecting the outcome of the consultation process to date.

Having noted the way in which the proposals had been designed to support the ongoing process of strategic and coordinated change alongside the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the content of the report and delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council, to make any further changes required within the structure following the assimilation and job interview processes.

18. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

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

19. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting ended at 10.45 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair