



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CABINET

Held in the Conference Hall, Brent Civic Centre on Monday 16 October 2023 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillor Tatler (Vice-Chair in the Chair) and Councillors Donnelly-Jackson, Farah, Grahl, Knight, Nerva and Krupa Sheth.

Also present: Councillors Conneely and Georgiou.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Muhammed Butt (Leader of the Council) with Councillor Tatler (as Deputy Leader) chairing the meeting in his absence.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 12 September 2023 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

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

None.

5. **Petitions (if any)**

5.1 **Repair of pavements along Lancelot Road, Lancelot Crescent and Lancelot Avenue**

Councillor Tatler (as Deputy Leader) welcomed Mr David Roche to the meeting, who had been invited to speak in support of a petition containing 143 signatures seeking the urgent replacement and repair of the pavements along Lancelot Road, Crescent and Avenue. Whilst welcoming the opportunity to speak on behalf of local residents, Mr Roche began by expressing disappointment that despite numerous requests there had, he felt, been a lack of co-ordinated action to address the urgent issues affecting the damaged and dangerous state of pavements along the roads identified.

In highlighting the safety concerns and impact that the state of the pavements were having on local residents, particularly those who were disabled or elderly, Mr Roche also spoke to detail the personal impact on his family following a fall on the

pavement experienced by an elderly family member which had discouraged them from visiting his home prior to them having sadly passed away.

Referring to recent increases in Council Tax, Mr Roche advised that the local residents who had signed the petition felt these were unjustified given the poor state of the street and the reduction in local services. Furthermore, it was felt that the cost incurred in repaving Wembley High Road, situated in the nearby area, had been unjustified given its ongoing poor state of cleanliness and the worsening condition of other nearby residential streets. In highlighting the works to repave and enhance residential streets elsewhere across the borough, Mr Roche reiterated the neglect felt by the residents of Lancelot Road and outlined the safety, financial and social benefits associated with the works being requested. This was particularly in relation to the impact which it was felt clean and well-maintained streets provided in terms of reducing anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping and in terms of reducing the financial costs and environmental impact associated with a more reactive programme of repairs.

Given the close proximity of Lancelot Road to Wembley High Road and Wembley Stadium, Mr Roche also emphasised what he felt to be the associated financial benefit use of the road provided in terms of parking and access to local businesses on the High Road and in assisting to reduce congestion as an alternative route around Wembley Central and Wembley Park on event days. In contrasting the treatment of Lancelot Road to other nearby streets such as Harrowdene Road, Mr Roche stated that residents and visitors had commented on the difference between the state of the footways in different streets and across the area as a whole.

In addition to the poor state of the pavement on Lancelot Road, Mr Roche highlighted the safety issues that the double yellow lines at the junction with the High Road were also causing. In referring to a fatal accident that had occurred at the junction, Mr Roche called for the double yellow lines to be replaced with red lines.

In concluding, Mr Roche advised that the petition was calling on the Council to commit to repaving Lancelot Road as part of the 2023-2026 Footway Maintenance Programme and if not possible to approve at this stage, for an urgent site visit to be arranged to review the state of the pavement and consider how best residents' concerns and feelings of neglect could be addressed.

In responding, Councillor Krupa Sheth (as Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure & Climate Action) began by thanking Mr Roche for attending the meeting in order to present the petition. In highlighting the ongoing challenge in being able to balance the number of footways and carriageways around the borough that would benefit from maintenance to improve their condition and visual appearance against the limited level of resources available, Councillor Sheth felt it was important to recognise how this impacted on the need to ensure works were prioritised through both a planned and reactive maintenance programme.

In terms of planned maintenance, this process was based around an asset management approach using annual condition surveys, inspection programmes and other data to produce the annual Highway and Footway Maintenance Programmes, with it noted that the current footway reconstruction programme was in the process of being finalised to take account of local ward priorities. Local

residents in support of the petition were therefore urged to contact their local ward councillor(s) in order to ensure Lancelot Road, Avenue and Crescent were included for consideration as part of the ongoing prioritisation process. In terms of more reactive maintenance, these works were initiated via scheduled highways safety inspections or as a result of reports of a particular problem assessed against specific criteria, with work undertaken (over the previous 12 months) to repair 24 investigation level defects identified or reported along Lancelot Road and the other streets which were the subject of the petition. The programme of reactive maintenance would continue as issues were identified. In the meantime, local residents were encouraged to continue engaging with their local ward councillor(s), with Councillor Krupa Sheth advising she would also be willing to arrange a site visit, should that be required by local residents, to discuss their ongoing concerns.

In addressing the issue of red line waiting restrictions Councillor Krupa Sheth ended her response by highlighting that these restrictions were the responsibility of Transport for London and not therefore a matter the Council would be able to address.

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. Highways Capital Maintenance Programme 2023-24

Councillor Krupa Sheth (Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Action) introduced a report setting out recommendations for Brent Council's 2023-2024 Highways Maintenance programme through a prioritised programme of major road resurfacing and preventative maintenance, including injection patching. In presenting the report, Councillor Krupa Sheth highlighted the valuable nature of the Highway Infrastructure as one of the Council's key physical assets along with the asset management approach towards prioritisation of schemes, which included the use of condition surveys and other relevant data to produce the annual road and footway maintenance programmes that had been designed to provide optimum condition improvements utilising the funding available. Taking account of the approach outlined members noted that the report also included details on the budgets for asset condition surveys and analysis, improvements to highway structures and drainage, improvements to public realm, and renewal of road markings.

In considering the report, Cabinet noted the focus on the highway infrastructure as a key issue and concern affecting local residents and impacting in members' casework and as a result welcomed the focus on local engagement with councillors around the process in identification of priorities for the annual maintenance plans and responsiveness to local demand. In addition, members noted the intention to present the Planned Footway Maintenance Programme to a future Cabinet meeting in order to enable further engagement with councillors around local ward priorities.

In supporting the approach outlined and thanking all those involved for their efforts in developing the programme and recommendations outlined in the report, Cabinet
RESOLVED:

- (1) To approve the 2023/24 Planned Carriageway Maintenance Programme as set out in Appendix B of the report.
- (2) To note the budgets allocated for asset condition surveys and analysis, improvements to highway structures and drainage, improvements to the public realm and renewal of road markings.

8. **Quarter 2 Financial Report 2023/24**

Councillor Tatler (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Reform) introduced a report which set out the financial forecast for the General Fund revenue budget, Housing Revenue Account, Dedicated Schools Grant, and the Capital Programme as at Quarter 2 2023-24.

In presenting the report, Councillor Tatler outlined the revised position on the General Fund revenue budget for 2023-24, which members were advised included a forecast overspend of £13.4m against the revised revenue budget at Quarter 2. In recognising the seriousness of the position outlined and scale of the financial challenges faced for 2023-24 and 2024-25 members were advised that in addition to the work already in progress to implement savings and to identify new savings proposals for 2024-25 and 2025-26, the Council would also need to introduce further measures, as detailed within section 1 the report, to control expenditure in order to mitigate against the pressures identified and maintain financial control over the current financial position.

In highlighting the ongoing impact of the current economic environment, members were advised that the main pressure and cause of the forecast overspend related to high levels of demand as a result of an increase in homelessness and a reduction in the supply of suitable accommodation accompanied by an increase in the associated cost of providing temporary accommodation, with the pressure faced recognised as unprecedented and unpredictable. Whilst the issues highlighted were being reported across London and on a nationwide basis the Council had already identified a number of key actions designed to manage these pressures and support vulnerable residents, also recognising the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Cabinet was advised that the measures identified would remain in place until the end of the financial year with updates continuing to be provided for Cabinet as part of ongoing forecast and budget monitoring reports.

In supporting the approach outlined, Councillor Knight as (Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Renters Security) also took the opportunity to highlight the unprecedented and significant nature of the pressures identified in relation to the increase in homelessness, reduction in supply of suitable alternative accommodation and increase in the cost of providing temporary accommodation which the strategy developed in response had been designed to reflect and seek to address.

In recognising and supporting the importance of the work being undertaken across the Council to address and mitigate against the pressures and challenges identified members also welcomed what were felt to be not only the prudent but also responsible nature of the measures identified in order to ensure the Council remained focussed on maintaining a balanced budget whilst also seeking to

safeguard key services and protect residents, given the wider impact of the cost-of-living crisis and economic challenges highlighted.

In support of the approach outlined, Cabinet therefore **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To note the overall financial position and the actions being taken to manage the issues arising.
- (2) To note the savings delivery tracker in Appendix A of the report.
- (3) To note the Prudential Indicators set out in Appendix B of the report.
- (4) To approve the virements set out in section 3.9.10 of the report.
- (5) To agree for new loan facilities of up to £2.31m to be made available to First Wave Housing Ltd for the Refugee Housing Programme, as set out in section 4.5.2 of the report.

9. **Review of Adult Social Care Charging Policy**

Councillor Neil Nerva (Cabinet Member for Public Health and Adult Social Care) introduced the report, outlining recommendations identified for consultation on changes to the Adult Social Care Charging Policy.

In introducing the report, Councillor Nerva highlighted that it was recognised good practice to review charging arrangements on a regular basis, with the last significant review in Brent having taken place in 2016 following introduction of the Care Act. Members were advised the consultation would provide an opportunity for the local authority to engage with residents on future charging arrangements and would be targeted towards residents who were receiving care either in their home or in a community-based setting. The review did not affect the arrangements for those receiving Local Authority commissioned care in residential or nursing settings, which were subject to separate requirements. Following consultation, the proposed changes would then return to Cabinet for final approval, prior to implementation at the start of the 2024-25 financial year.

Attention was drawn to the proposed changes outlined within section 3 of the report, which included worked examples of the potential implications for those receiving care. A summary had also been provided within Appendix 1 of the report, with members recognising the way in which the proposals had been designed to provide greater consistency and had been linked to the wider aims for adult social care in Brent whilst also seeking to ensure delivery of the service remained sustainable and focussed on supporting people to remain as independent as possible.

In considering the report Cabinet, recognised the importance in establishing a robust consultation and engagement process and welcomed the approach outlined within the report to the development of this process with members encouraged to share details with relevant organisations and support also identified as available through the Brent Disability Forum.

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

- (1) To note the proposed changes to the Adult Social Care Charging Policy, as detailed within the report.
- (2) To approve the proposal to allow officers to consult on the policy changes outlined in the report.
- (3) To agree that a report be presented to Cabinet in January 2024 outlining the results of the consultation and confirming the changes to the Charing Policy that would be introduced from the start of 2024/25.
- (4) To approve that any changes to the policy would be implemented to start on 1 April 2024.

10. **School Place Planning Strategy 2024-2028**

Councillor Gwen Grahl (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools) introduced a report seeking approval of the new School Place Planning Strategy 2024-2028.

In introducing the report, Councillor Grahl thanked officers for the work undertaken to develop the strategy, which members were advised had been designed to ensure fairness and transparency in terms of the objectives and operating principles underpinning the Council's approach to school organisation and planning in order to give every child in Brent the best start in life. In outlining the focus of the strategy on both the sufficiency of places and the sustainability of schools, given the context of the current challenges being faced across the education sector and falling demand for places across some areas of the borough, members recognised the range of measures being developed in response. These included, as an example, the additional investment provided in response to the increase in demand for SEND provision, with the Council having approved an investment of £44m to deliver 427 additional SEND places across the borough and the co-ordinated programme of support being developed for early years providers in relation to implementation of the expanded entitlement for early years childcare recently announced by the Government.

Having recognised the challenges identified, particularly as a result of varying patterns of demand, Cabinet welcomed the approach outlined in terms of development of the strategy which it was noted had involved a detailed assessment of the available data in relation to pupil projections and demand in order to ensure that every child in Brent could continue to access to a good quality education locally in the borough. Members also commended the ward member briefings which had been provided as part of the development of the strategy.

In recognising the importance of the strategy in terms of ongoing planning for the sufficiency of school places across Brent, Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the new School Place Planning Strategy 2024-2028, as provided in Appendix 1 of the report.

- (2) To note the focus on planning for the sufficiency of places and the sustainability of schools, based on varying demand patterns impacting on school planning areas in Brent.
- (3) To note there continued to be increasing demand for places that meet the needs of children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 years old and the planned strategies for addressing this need (including the SEN Capital Programme of £44m approved by Cabinet in January 2022 and the Post-16 Skills Resource Centre approved by Cabinet in May 2023).
- (4) To note the change of government funding arrangements for Early Years provision and the planned approach to implementation of the new entitlements.

11. **Review of Primary School Places in Primary Planning Area 4**

Councillor Grahl (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools) introduced a report which informed Cabinet of the intention to informally consult on proposals to manage spare school capacity and falling pupil rolls in Primary School Planning Area 4 (PA4), comprising the wards of Stonebridge, Roundwood, and Harlesden & Kensal Green.

In considering the report, Cabinet noted (following its approval under Item 10 above) the detail provided within the School Place Planning Strategy 2024-28 in support of the proposals, recognising the fall in demand for pupil places within the primary sector across areas of the borough and the highest number of spare places identified within Primary Planning Area 4. It was within this context that the proposals outlined within the report had been developed which involved a reduction in the Primary Admission Number (PAN) of Mitchell Brook Primary School and ceasing primary provision on the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School. Whilst noting the work being undertaken with schools to support them in managing the impact of falling demand, members also recognised the way in which the proposals had been designed to support and ensure the longer term sustainability of all schools in the area.

In commenting on the nature of the challenges identified, members felt it important to note the impact of the current cost-of-living crisis, increase in the cost of housing and changes introduced as a result of austerity to the welfare system which it as felt had all contributed to families struggling to afford to settle in the borough and across London, with the associated impact on varying demand for pupil places made more challenging (especially in relation to the primary sector) by the ongoing pressures on school funding. In attempting to avoid school closures, members noted that the approach outlined had been designed to reduce the most acute level of surplus capacity within PA4. In terms of the proposals outlined, Members were advised that Mitchell Brook Primary School had indicated there were supportive of the proposed reduction in the schools PAN with the Gwenneth Rickus site operated by Leopold Primary School having originally been opened as annexed "bulge" provision in 2013 and sufficient capacity having been identified on the main site and in other local schools to support future demand for primary provision in the area. Subject to the outcome of the informal consultation process, confirmation was provided that any school buildings released as a result of the changes outlined would be retained for future educational use.

In considering the report, Cabinet welcomed the assurance regarding the ongoing support being provided to schools in managing any transition process, recognising the difficult nature of the options being recommended for consideration and decisions needing to be made given the importance of schools and education provision for communities across Brent. Members were reminded that at this stage approval was being sought to undertaken initial informal consultation with key stakeholders, prior to any final recommendation being made on formal statutory consultation. The important role of ward councillors in supporting the consultation process within their local communities was also highlighted along with the work that would also be required to consider any associated implications such as the potential impact on school travel plans.

In recognising the difficult nature of the options available and having noted the support being provided for schools to manage any transition, Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To note and endorse initial informal consultation being undertaken with stakeholders that could lead to subsequent statutory consultation on a proposal to implement a phased closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School. If a phased closure were to proceed, Leopold Primary School would continue to operate from its main site on Hawkshead Road. Ceasing provision on the Gwenneth Rickus site would involve a variation of the PAN for Leopold Primary School from 120 to 60 places for admissions in 2025 and no further admissions to the Leopold Gwenneth Rickus site from September 2025. There would be a phased closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site. The timing of the full closure of the site would be determined during consultation.
- (2) To note that a reduction in the PAN of Mitchell Brook Primary School from 90 to 60 from September 2024 would be recommended for formal consultation in a report at the November Cabinet meeting on the Admission Arrangements for 2025/26.

12. **Complaints Annual Report 2022-23**

Councillor Tatler (as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Reform) introduced a report which set out complaints performance in Brent Council for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. The report focused on the nature of complaints and the learning they could provide to inform Brent Council's future approach to service improvement as well as including 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. Members noted the report also contained the Council's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and Damp and Mould Spotlight Report, as detailed in Appendices C and D.

In considering the report Cabinet noted the key headlines relating to complaints performance in 2022-23 along with the outline of the root causes identified and service improvements which had been implemented as a result of the nature of complaints received.

In recognising that the majority of complaints received during 2022 – 23 had related to the housing service, Cabinet were advised this was felt to have reflected the increased challenges being experienced across the housing sector along with an increased awareness of tenants rights, the Housing Ombudsman and the focus on damp and mould as an issue following the publication of the Damp and Mould Spotlight Report and the tragic death of Awaab Ishak. In welcoming the increased level of awareness highlighted, members were also keen to ensure that the use of complaints continued to feed into the development of key corporate strategies, such as the Equality Strategy with the data provided used to assist in focussing support on those most in need in line with the Public Sector Equalities Duty.

In thanking officers for their efforts in monitoring and managing complaints performance, members felt the issues and areas highlighted as key concerns reflected the nature of current challenges being experienced by many local residents requiring support and also the Council in being able to manage the increased level of demand for key services. As such the report was welcomed as a means of continuing to focus on the nature of complaints received and approach towards service improvement for residents.

Having considered the report Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To note Brent Council's performance in managing and resolving complaints.
- (2) To note and endorse Brent's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and Damp and Mould Spotlight Report.
- (3) To approve the report progressing to the relevant Scrutiny Committees for consideration

13. Exclusion of Press and Public

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

14. Any other urgent business

None.

The meeting ended at 10.30 am

COUNCILLOR SHAMA TATLER
Vice-Chair in the Chair